

Interview by Jemma Purdey with Dewi Wahab, Indonesian Consulate, Melbourne, 30 October 2014

MA, International Relations, Monash University, 1992-1994.



[00:00:00]	Born in Ngawi, a 2 hour drive from Solo. Her father was a painter and her mother a teacher and primary school principal. When she was three she was adopted by her father's cousin and went to live in Jakarta. Her adoptive mother was the first female gynecologist. She has an older adoptive sister and a younger biological sister. Her adoptive mother and biological father have died, her birth mother is still alive and often visits Jakarta. Did all her schooling and went to university in Jakarta, studied English Literature at University of Indonesia (UI).	Childhood; Family background; Early education
[00:03:48]	Took a year off from studying to go on a youth exchange program to Canada, lived for three months in Saskatchewan. While finishing her studies she worked part time for Jakarta Post, and became leisure editor. The university almost expelled her because she was so busy with Jakarta Post. In 1990 she sat the Department of Foreign Affairs (KEMLU) exam on the way to a Jakarta Post assignment and was accepted. Did diplomatic education for a year then worked part time for Jakarta Post until she was given a position at KEMLU.	Scholarships opportunities; Living overseas; Early career
[00:08:33]	Her husband also worked for Jakarta Post (that's where they met) then he went to Business Indonesia when that started. Dewi continued working for Jakarta Post as well as studying with KEMLU for a few years then got a scholarship to study at Monash. Her aunt was a career diplomat and Dewi was inspired to travel and introduce Indonesian culture to the world by her experience with the youth exchange program in 1985.	Family; Scholarship opportunity for Australia
[00:11:00]	[Discussion about her experiences on the exchange program, Canadians asking political	Living overseas

	questions about Indonesia and friction arising among the delegates from different parts of Indonesia.]	
[00:15:12]	The Indonesian and Canadian delegations had three months together in Canada and three months in Indonesia on Buton Island. She celebrated her 21st birthday there. It took her eight years to do her degree with time off to do the exchange and her work with Jakarta Post. Was in Melbourne, from 1992 to early 1994, doing a master's in development, International Relations (IR), on an AIDAB scholarship. Her thesis compared Confucianism in South Korea and Singapore, why their economic development was so successful.	Living overseas; Early career; Studying in Australia
[00:18:45]	[Discussion about people who were at Monash – Herb Feith, Fakhri Ali, Pak Sobhari, Pak Mahendra, Pak Mulya Manhadat, Bob Hadiwinata, Deddy Mulyana.] There were 26 students from KEMLU who came to study in Melbourne on AIDAB scholarships then.	Studying in Australia; Scholarships opportunities
[00:22:06]	AIDAB had cooperation with KEMLU training and research so it was an internal application. She did three months IELTS training. Wanted to study IR because her background was literature. David Wright-Neville was her tutor. The different learning culture and discussing the readings, was a challenge. Felt comfortable expressing her opinions in class discussions but was inhibited because IR was new for her. David was very helpful. She did classes then chose to do her master's by thesis. She got pregnant at the same time and had to spend a month in hospital, so it was hard but she did it.	Scholarships opportunities; Studying in Australia; Challenges; Family; Living in Australia
[00:28:16]	[Discussion about Australian feeling about East Timor at the time, 1992, and having to be careful about what she said because she was with KEMLU.]	Living in Australia; East Timor
[00:33:23]	[Comments about her KEMLU work on bilateral relations with East Timor, going there with SBY.]	Career
[00:39:33]	Dewi's husband went with her to Melbourne, her older daughter was born there. [Comments about the number of babies born while their parents were studying in Australia and AIDAB's response.] Her husband was a divorcee with six children and four of them went to Melbourne, Dewi wanted them to have the opportunity to go to school in a developed country. Her husband was studying on a scholarship at NMIT. Her	Living in Australia; Family; Child born in Australia

	daughter was twelve months old when they went back to Indonesia.	
[00:43:25]	Went back to Indonesia in 1994, Indonesia was chair of APEC, and Dewi had to work very hard. She didn't realise she was pregnant until the pregnancy was showing, her adoptive mother noticed. Her first daughter, born in Melbourne, was premature and Dewi spent a month just looking after her. Then she went back to her studies, sometimes paying a friend to look after her daughter, sometimes taking her to the library. [Anecdote about her daughter's reactions recently when Dewi took her to the hospital where she was born and to the library where Dewi studied while her daughter slept.]	Returning to Indonesia; Post-scholarship career; Living in Australia; Family; Challenges; Ongoing connections with Australia
[00:48:41]	The older children, three boys and a girl, had a good life. There was some culture shock but they became more confident and independent. When they went back to Indonesia they didn't have a maid, the children and her husband helped with the housework. Her husband is from a very traditional family in Makassar so it was a challenge for him but the time in Melbourne helped prepare him for life as the spouse of a diplomat.	Family; Returning to Indonesia
[00:54:30]	He knew Fakhri Ali and Sobari so he had a standing of his own in Melbourne. The diplomatic life was more difficult. Her first appointment was Geneva and her husband didn't go with her because he was chief editor of Majalah Warta Ekonomi, he visited every three months. The two younger boys and her two daughters went with her. She was there from 1995 to 1998 as the second secretary working on environment development and climate change with the UN.	Living in Australia; Indonesian community in Melbourne; Family; Post-scholarship career
[00:57:05]	From 2000 to 2004 she was at the UN in New York. From 2005 to 2008 she was in Jakarta then back to the UN in New York until 2010. From 2010 to 2014 she was Director for East Asia and the Pacific, bilateral relations with ten ASEAN countries, Japan, Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, Timor Leste and all Pacific countries. Now she is Consul General in Australia. You have to be very adaptable working for KEMLU. [Comments about the difference in relationship between superiors and staff when she was a junior employee and now, human resources challenges in Indonesia.]	Post-scholarship career; International mobility; professional networks; Leadership
[01:01:09]	Learnt a lot from foreign ambassadors e.g. Pak	Leadership; Mentors;

	Greg [Moriarty], and the minister included her whenever he received Australian delegations. [Discussion, with anecdotes, about how her time in Australia helped her relate well to Australian diplomats and helps her relationship with the Indonesian community in Melbourne.]	Connections with Australia
[01:07:35]	[Comments about the importance of openness between Indonesians and Australians – they can be different but don't have to be enemies – some Australians can be a bit arrogant, e.g. about boat people, some Indonesians don't see the wider picture, how complex the connections between the two countries are.]	Connections with Australia
[01:13:25]	Learnt a lot during the four years in Jakarta, it was a difficult time in Australia–Indonesia relations, but the good relationship she had built with people at the Australian embassy helped a lot. [Discussion about SBY and Jokowi's outlooks, comments about bilateral relations and anecdotes about Australian and Indonesian ministers communicating directly.]	Post-scholarship career; Leadership; Connections with Australia
[01:19:05]	[Discussion about Pak Greg and embassy staff and the close working relationship Dewi had with them, anecdote about deployment of US troops in Darwin and a media beat up that didn't reflect the diplomatic situation.]	Connections with Australia; Professional networks
[01:23:41]	When she was at Monash she had the Indonesian community and Australians who were interested in Indonesia, she was invited to a thanksgiving celebration at an undergraduate's house. Now she has to be proactive to engage Australians who are not yet interested in Indonesia. She went to Canberra to visit Pak Sabang (former editor at Jakarta Post) and other friends. Canberra was very dull.	Living in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia; Professional networks
[01:27:28]	When she was at Monash her husband went to the mosque, sometimes preached and led the prayer. Now there are more mosques and more people wearing hijab. Dewi's two daughters were educated in Geneva and influenced by the American style of education – independent thinking. Now they are studying at Jogjakarta, which is good because they're absorbing Indonesian traditions. [Anecdote about how the election is dividing the family, some support Jokowi and others Prabowo, her husband telling their younger daughter who to vote for and her older daughter choosing not to vote.]	Living in Australia; Family; International mobility
[01:32:39]	Her older daughter can adapt to different cultures. All the children can adapt and meet the	Family; International mobility

	challenges of life, Dewi sees it as a benefit of their living overseas. Her daughters wanted to go to university in Indonesia, or the US. Dewi has been encouraging them to study in Australia.	
[01:36:29]	[Discussion about Dewi's fear of her daughters moving far away, one wants to work in refugee camps in Jordan.]	Family
[01:41:35]	[Discussion about Indonesia Council Open Conference in July 2015, Jemma invites Dewi.]	Networks
[01:44:59]	[Discussion about the Executive Fellows Program, from the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, that Dewi is participating in, signing the form and discussion about interviewing Pak Marty.]	Networks
[01:50:44]	[Discussion about other alumni.]	
[01:51:04]	END	