

Interview by Jemma Purdey with Vitrionaldi, Melbourne, 30 October 2014

MA, International Relations, Sydney University, 2009-2010



[00:00:06]	Came from Bukittinggi, Sumatra. Went to school there then to Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), graduating in 2003, joined the ministry in 2005 and in 2009 got an ADS scholarship from AusAID. His father was a cleaner at a nearby primary school and his mother was a small trader. He is the eldest son, has three brothers and one sister. His parents went back to school after they'd had children and wanted their children to get an education. He and his sister have master's degrees and four of the five went to university. He was a top student and went to a select entry senior high school.	Family background; Childhood; Early education
[00:04:16]	His favourite subject was chemistry. He did well and wanted to study that at uni but in Year 12 he found he was colour blind and so the university would not accept him. It was devastating but his father encouraged him to find another path. He also liked politics so applied for International Relations (IR) at UNPAD.	Early education; Undergraduate education
[00:08:13]	He chose IR after hearing about it from an alumnus of his high school. The most popular IR courses were at University of Indonesia (UI), Gaja Mada University (UGM) and UNPAD, he chose UNPAD because there were many students from Bukittinggi studying there. UI was a better course but living costs were higher in Jakarta than Bandung. He got a scholarship from an oil company and earned some money working in a friend's secondhand clothes business.	Undergraduate education
[00:11:43]	He started uni in 1998 and it was hard for his parents to support him. He was aware of student	Campus life; Undergraduate

	activism at the universities when he was at school in 1997, but wasn't involved. When he went to Bandung, in 1998, he went to demonstrations with older friends. His parents had told him to concentrate on his studies so he didn't tell them about it. [Reminiscing about the moment he heard that Suharto had stepped down.]	education
[00:14:27]	Studying IR was very different from studying maths and chemistry, hard to start with. The course was a minimum of four years. He went home once a year at Ramadan. He shared a room with a friend. He was planning to work in the corporate world rather than as a civil servant and didn't think he would be able to work in the diplomatic service. He applied to a couple of companies and was rejected, at the last stage of the selection process, because of his colour blindness despite having told them about it at the first stage.	Undergraduate study; Living as a student
[00:18:33]	He went home and after a few months a friend told him about open recruitment for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu). His mother gave him her blessing to go to Jakarta and apply so he did and, after a series of testing and an interview, he got the job. [Anecdote about a question at the interview.] He graduated in December 2003, spent 2004 in Bandung applying for jobs, went home to Bukittinggi early 2005 and worked in the family business until starting the ministry job.	Early career
[00:24:24]	Started in February 2006 and underwent training until October 2006. There were a hundred new recruits, fifteen or twenty were other students from IR at UNPAD and four were from his year. He did his internship in Kenya for three months. It was exciting.	Early career; work experience; overseas experience
[00:27:57]	After Kenya he came back and got married in 2007. [Story about how he met his wife.] Her parents live in Jakarta but are from West Sumatra. She works in the state-run superannuation company. They were married in Jakarta and everyone came.	Family
[00:30:28]	After the internship he was assigned to Directorate of North and Central America, in Jakarta, for a year. Then he was moved to Bureau of Ministry and Missions. At the end of 2008 he wanted to get a higher degree, many Kemlu employees had been AusAID scholars, so he applied to AusAID too. He downloaded the application, filled it out and submitted it to Human Resources who sent it to AusAID. About 20 of them got it, half of those who applied. He wanted to go to Monash to study	Career; International travel; International networks; Scholarships application

	International Trade and Diplomacy but it needed EILTS of 6.5 and his was 6.0. Sydney University had a similar course in Political Economy so he went there. [Story about telling the AusAID interviewer that he wanted to be a Muslim ambassador to Australia.]	
[00:36:06]	Feels the pre-departure training could be updated because he was told not to talk about family with Australians but he found that people loved to talk about family and footy. At university in Sydney he mainly had contact with classmates but in Melbourne he's in contact with people from different backgrounds. The Political Economy class had people from many different countries and he liked that. The lecturers were mostly Australian. One was from Israel and Naldi gained many insights from him. [Comments about learning new ideas, realising that not all Israelis share the same views, parallels with Islam and not all Muslims being the same, alternatives to the official version of Indonesian history, 1965 and the PKI.]	Pre-departure training; Living and studying in Australia
[00:43:51]	He lived in King St, not far from campus, sharing an apartment with other Asians. He travelled a bit to cities around Sydney. His wife could only apply once for unpaid leave from work and they decided to keep that for a posting so she didn't come with Naldi to Sydney. She came to visit and they went to Townsville, to see a relative who was studying at James Cook University, and to the Gold Coast and Cairns. Australian people in big cities are different to those in smaller places that are more monocultural, the cities are more lively. Townsville was very quiet, a place for retirees and the air force.	Living in Australia; Travelling in Australia; Family
[00:47:17]	Generally, in Sydney, when he met people they were pleasant. The Indonesian students' group was mostly undergraduates so he went to an event but didn't join. Postgraduate students went more to pengajian (Muslim gatherings) and he did that. It's the same in Melbourne. In Sydney the pengajian was for just Sydney university, with ten to twenty people there. He played soccer for fun, didn't pass the audition to join the campus soccer club. They were all undergrads and said he was old. He enjoyed watching footy and rugby but not cricket. He watched the 2010 Collingwood – St Kilda Grand Final that Collingwood won after drawing the first time.	Living in Sydney; Indonesian student community; Sports
[00:52:47]	Didn't get invited to Australians' homes but went to bars and felt fine drinking soft drink while others had alcohol. Halal food was	Socialising in Australia; Living in Australia; Family

	sometimes difficult to get but he ate fish or vegetarian food if it wasn't available. Cooked at home too and got everything he needed. After a year he went back to Jakarta and six months later was assigned to Melbourne, arrived in December 2011. His wife and children came in January after he found a house etc.	
[00:55:57]	His sons were born in 2008 and 2013. They really enjoy living in Melbourne. His wife took unpaid leave. Her boss was kind and gave her three years, the maximum. The second baby was born in Melbourne and she missed the family support. [Discussion about grandparents spoiling his son and living in Melbourne giving Naldi the opportunity to raise his son more according to his values.] His parents-in-law have visited but not his parents, they don't want to travel.	Family; Returning to Australia; Career
[01:00:17]	His second son's birth was fine. His first son got on fine at school, learnt to speak English quickly. The teacher advised them to speak Indonesian at home so he would keep his mother tongue. The family socialise with other families at school as well as the Indonesian community. There aren't many Asian students at the school. They got involved in school activities like fundraising sausage sizzles. The education system in Australia develops the right brain while in Indonesia it is more left-brain. He plans to put his son in kindergarten for a while to ease him into school but his son wants to go straight into Grade 1.	Family; Living in Australia; Friendships; Early childhood education in Australia
[01:05:03]	[Comments about students asking questions and challenging their teachers and anecdote about the kindergarten wanting to put his son in the three-year-old class but his son being very confident at the trial run in the older class.]	
[01:08:41]	His wife starts work again next week. They live quite close to her parents again. [Story about teaching his son to save up to buy something he wants and needing to educate the extended family too.] Naldi's siblings are all in Bukittinggi.	Returning to Indonesia; Family
[01:11:23]	Doesn't know which unit he'll be placed in next but hopes he will be assigned to public diplomacy or ASEAN, because that is what he researched for his master's, rather than administration, which he has done before. He will be in Jakarta for two years. He'd like to do a PhD and has approached Monash and Melbourne but has to do a master's by research first because his master's was by course work. The ministry may not let him do another master's.	Career; Further education opportunities

[01:15:15]	He may be assigned to Australia again but not to Melbourne. The Consular General and Ambassador have both been posted to Australia more than once. He keeps in touch, through Facebook, with people from his course at Sydney Uni. He gets the Australia Awards alumni magazine and keeps in touch, through Facebook, with his Sydney university AusAID batch, people from Asia and Africa who had ADS that he met at the introductory course before he started his master's.	Ongoing connections with Australia; International networks
[01:19:28]	He's missing the family now that they're in Indonesia and he's still in Melbourne, but it's only for two months.	Family; Returning to Indonesia
[01:20:04]	END	