

# Projekt Rural Central Flores

## Securing a Livelihood in Rural Central Flores (NTT)

### Project Team:

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### Research Topic:

This anthropological project investigates various ways of securing a livelihood in the district of Ngada, Central Flores (Indonesia's Southeastern province of Nusa Tenggara Timur – NTT). Decision-making processes on the household level will be recorded and analysed. The project team – consisting of three female anthropologists – will combine the three following fields of social action essential for securing a livelihood in rural areas:

- local strategies of agricultural production;
- managing health and illness;
- households and household management.

Since every peasant household is affected by the natural environment, health and budgeting issues in an existential way, the integration of issues related to these fields is basic in answering the key-question: How are the Ngada people of Flores coping with daily life?

### Objectives of research:

The general objectives of research are the following:

- To carry out basic research on and document the manifold strategies of making a living.
- To explore decision-making processes and local practices in the fields of agricultural techniques, health maintenance and household economy.
- To analyse the development of viable networks of exchange and mutual support on individual, household, and communal levels.
- To examine the convergence of different knowledge discourses and their subsequent implications for the rural population in managing daily subsistence.
- To analyse recent developments of local practices and to provide a solid database for interested actors or institutions (capacity and institution building) for the conceptualization of alternative strategies of securing a livelihood.

Location and Background: The approximately 60'000 Ngada speaking people mostly live in settlements scattered on the high plateau surrounding Bajawa, the small capital of the district of Ngada, or in villages on the slopes of the volcano, Mt. Inerie. The project encompasses a sample of Ngada hamlets in the vicinity of Bajawa. The average Ngada village comprises around 1000 inhabitants, consisting of about 100 households. The Ngada people are matrilineally organised. Most of them are peasants engaged in subsistence economies. However, this area has increasingly been drawn into political

and economic considerations of national and international interests. Bureaucracy and tourism are spreading, and economic and social transformations are in full swing. A thorough restructuring of traditional political systems is taking place, knowledge and belief systems are being reformulated. Fulfilling daily requirements now asks for a maximum of flexibility in all social fields. It is in the household where decision-making takes place and strategic flexibility is developed to cope with this seemingly chaotic world. The planned project, actor-centered in its approach, will therefore focus on households and everyday activities of its members. In order to grasp the complexity of the field of investigation an intertwined set of theoretical concepts (situated knowledges, habitus, gender, household, peasants, and agency) will be employed.

### **Duration and research phases:**

Fieldwork will take place from October 2001 to November 2002. The subsequent phases of data analysis, including follow-up research and bibliographic studies, will last from December 2002 until August 2004.

Working in the field encompasses three overlapping phases:

1) The initial and explorative phase will provide an extensive documentation of the basic living conditions of the Ngada people and of the locally important cultural concepts. Based on systematic observation, semi-structured interviews, accompanied by various PRA-techniques (socio-economic profiles, transects, mapping, annual agricultural and ritual calendars, and Venn-diagrams), and on the evaluation of quantitative survey data, a detailed social assessment will be conducted. The collected information serves as data base for the subsequently investigated decision-making processes.

2) In the second phase, as our skills to speak the local language (Ngada) improve, the accumulated knowledge is specified and consolidated. A shift takes place to structured interviews and more emphasis is now laid on the gathering of network-data as well as on the use PRA-techniques oriented towards a hierarchization of values (e.g. ranking-, rating-, sorting-tools, time-budget and work-tables, decision-trees). The main objectives are the identification of relevant social networks, a further elaboration of key cultural concepts, the analysis of interfaces of divergent knowledge-systems, and the tracing of decision-making processes.

3) The third stage of research comprises a systematic integration of the collected findings from the three fields of study. Existing strategies of making a living are reflected upon, and the possibilities of alternative strategies are evaluated. Our results will be communicated to and discussed with local actors and representatives of institutions concerned (feedback-event). The emerging conclusions of the research project will be put at the disposition of all groups involved in the process and will serve as a basis for future small-scale projects to improve living conditions. The results from the three research realms will be written up in a synthesis.

### **International Collaboration:**

Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Singapore are the countries of scientific partnership for this research project: It will run through the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (LIPI) in

Jakarta and will be sponsored scientifically by „Universitas Nusa Cendana“, the University of Nusa Tenggara Timur in Kupang, NTT. The integration of local Indonesian students into the project encourages knowledge transfer and lays the foundation for intellectual partnerships. During all research phases team members will cooperate with locally active Indonesian NGO's as well as with representatives of different agricultural and health offices responsible for the district of Ngada.

**Key Words :**

Securing a Livelihood, Peasants, Household, Agriculture, Health, Gender, Knowledge Systems, Decision-making.

**For further information:**

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