

Emily Rourke

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Arts & Letters

Major(s): Economics

Minors(s): International Development

Scholar Group Membership: n/a

Did you received other funding for this project?: n/a

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Female Entrepreneurship, Indonesia

Project Location: Indonesia

ND Faculty Mentor: Melissa Paulsen

Project Type: Research

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Research/experience necessary for senior thesis or capstone project, Prepare for professional school (MD, MBA, JD), Career discernment and/or preparation, Internationalize your Notre Dame experience

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Very Much

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Very Much

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Very Much

Tell us about your experience.

During my research, I underwent an innumerable amount of new experiences. I met dozens of different women throughout Indonesia, navigated my way through the bustling city of Jakarta, and learned the hard way to stay away from street food. However, one of the more challenging aspects of this process is attempting to put what I learned from the six weeks into words. This experience has been extremely unique, and I have managed to learn countless new facts and customs everyday. I have learned about an incredible culture, and I have met incredible people. I learned everything from learning how to make the traditional Batik clothing to getting a grasp on what it takes to be a woman entrepreneur in Indonesia.

Indonesia is a country made up of over 17,000 islands. There are over 500 languages and hundreds of cultures and custom. I decided to conduct research in both Java and Bali to determine the different barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in both areas. I was surprised by many of my findings. Initially, I had expected that I would get widespread generic responses such as the need for more startup funds, the lack of training and education, etc. However, many women differed on the barriers that they faced. I was surprised to find that Indonesians are often

required to include their photo and their age in job applications. Because of this requirement, one woman felt that she had no other option but to start her own business. Others talked about the difficulty of being Christian in a majority Muslim country. About 8% of the Indonesian population is Christian. Specifically in Jakarta, certain job opportunities are not offered to Christians and they are often prevented from going to certain schools. One woman in particular was not able to go to the university of her choice because of her religion, and she was unable to specialize in the medical field. Another woman was unable to enter the public sector because of her Christian background. Indonesian Christians seem to face many barriers when it comes to employment, yet their religion can aid them in other ways. The Christian Indonesians have a tight community and do their best to help each other out. My interviews with three Indonesian Christians working at a pharmaceutical company led me to discover that some Indonesian Christian business owners hire other Christians.

Similar to the Javanese culture, the Balinese culture also helps and hinders woman entrepreneurs. One of the first things I was told about Balinese culture when I first arrived was that the women do all of the work. This statement was quickly confirmed as I drove along the narrow and hectic road. Many of the men seemed to be sitting on street corners while the few women to be seen were carrying outrageously large baskets of food and supplies on their heads. They casually walked down the street with their hands swinging loosely at their sides as if they did not have a 30 lb. basket on their heads. After talking with local women and even some men, it was confirmed that women were responsible for not only the cooking and the cleaning and taking care of the children, but they were also often responsible for providing the income for the family. I was told that the men, on the other hand, spend most of their day gambling and betting on cockfights. Many of the women started their own businesses out of necessity and to fulfil their roles as caretakers and providers. When asked what they would do if their husbands told them that they did not like their jobs and wanted them to quit, multiple women laughed and said this would never happen because their husbands do not work. Balinese culture can be tough on an aspiring woman entrepreneur. As both the caretaker and provider, it is difficult for them to manage their time. Many women brought their children to their work because there is not anyone to look after them at home. In addition, the Balinese are required to attend their banjar's ceremonies. These ceremonies occur an average of two times a week. They are for weddings, coming of age, birthdays, half birthdays, cremations, and many more that are unexplainable in a short two-word description. The required attendance results in women missing about two work days per week. This negatively affects both their business and their income. In fact, the required attendance is one of the reasons that Balinese people are not readily hired by businessmen and women. In addition, the Balinese have to pay the equivalent of taxes to the banjar and pay to put out offerings every morning. For some this cost is hard to keep up with and can also hinder an entrepreneur's ability to start and maintain a business. Similar to the Christian community culture in Java, the banjar also helps women entrepreneurs. One of the women who I talked with was a kebaya maker. She sews the traditional Balinese clothing worn by men and women during a ceremony. When asked how she got the funds to start her own business, she replied that she got a loan from the banjar. It is common for the banjar to give out credit to people looking to start a business. In addition, the kebaya maker's livelihood come from the requirements of the banjar and its ceremonies. The woman has about

three customers a day, but this number can rise to about ten customers a day when there is a big ceremony occurring at the banjar. The community aspect of the banjar also provides many benefits. Everyone in a banjar knows one another and their community is very tight knit. This closeness helps women entrepreneurs if they need extra help or they find themselves with a problem. The community looks out for one another and are more than willing to give assistance. One woman that I talked to was at the top of the hierarchy of her banjar. She runs a salon in which she teaches other women how to apply makeup worn during traditional Balinese dance and ceremonies. Her instruction allows these women to make a living for themselves and empowers them by creating a space to discuss ideas. The woman uses the money she makes through the salon to finance free education classes for men and women who dropped out of school. She aims to empower women in her community. I also interviewed another woman who was very involved in her community. She organized various event for the community in order to increase their banjar pride and to help them gain the skills to provide for themselves and their families. Her previous activities included organizing English classes for the children in the banjar, starting a rock band and teaching some children how to play the bass, and bringing in specialists from all over Bali to teach her community how to weave baskets and make vases. Her most recent activity taught some people of the community how to create hydroponics, and I was lucky enough to be able to attend the opening ceremony. She brought in a man from Java known for his skill in hydroponics. He taught the community how to build the hydroponic system and left the system at their community center for the plants and vegetables to grow. After ten days of sunshine and water, the vegetables were ready to be picked! There were about fifteen community members that arrived for the ceremony, most of them women, and they all took turns picking their vegetables to bring home and cook. They plan to do this every week and eventually make their own hydroponic system. Clearly, these activities not only help the women provide for their family, but it also teaches them skills on how to be self-sustaining. From my experience, the banjar can do a lot to help a woman provide for her family and start her own business. After looking through all of my interviews and doing even more research online, I was hoping to find one key aspect that would link all of the women I interviewed together. Alas, I had great difficulty in doing so. I should have known better. When it comes to entrepreneurship, there are countless barriers that can prevent women from achieving their goals. All of the women I had talked to had done it. How did they do it? Many reflected on patience and persistent being the greatest skill they possessed when trying to start their business. The advice that they would give women looking to start their own business included a mixture of being patient, being passionate, and being determined. of the conclusions that I came to was that there is not one set barrier that women face and there is not one set solution. Each woman faces a slightly different barrier and overcomes it in a slightly different way. Various factors such as culture and religion offer both benefits and hindrances, so it is difficult to give responsibility to either. However, one commonality that I found was that relationships matter. No woman became an entrepreneur completely by herself. Help from family, friends, or the community was key in taking the first step to becoming an entrepreneur. When thinking of women entrepreneurs, the image tends to include the woman who made it. She had what it takes to overcome all barriers and reach her goal. The woman and her business are the two parts that make up the woman entrepreneur. This image leaves out the others involved in the process. In all cases, the woman

had help and was not forced to do it completely alone. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the relationships needed for entrepreneurship to happen. First, community needs to be built. Women need a foundation in which they can receive help in the form of money, training, knowledge and support. In addition, this knowledge needs to be made accessible. There is a growing network of skilled entrepreneurs that are spreading their knowledge across Java and Bali. Expanding programs like this will allow women to gather the skills necessary to start their own business.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

At first, I was very intimidated when talking to the woman entrepreneurs. I had very limited experience interviewing in the past, and I had never used the set of questions before. I was concerned that my questions would fall flat or not be understood. However, the semi-structured interview format allowed me to be more flexible with my questions, and as a result, the interviews were more like conversations instead of a strict question and answer format. I became more confident with the interviews as time went on, and I think this will help me as a student scholar when talking with others for research and in daily conversation.

In addition, the lax interviews resulted in a stronger and more enthusiastic response from the woman. I spent up to three days with each woman which built my relationship with them even more. By the end of each shadowing, I had become very close with the woman and was able to learn a lot about their lives. I was surprised by how eager many of the women were to tell me about their stories and by how strong our relationship was at the end. By the end of my research, the majority of the woman had referred to me as their daughter. I was amazed by the generosity of the women. None of them had any reason to even agree to meet with me yet they went above and beyond what I could have ever expected. They were very eager to introduce me to all types of Indonesian food and have me meet their friends and family. I could not thank them enough for all of their help and their generosity.

Indonesia was a large adjustment for me. The twelve hour time difference was minor in the things I had to get used to. Especially in Jakarta, it was not safe for me to walk outside by myself. I lived in a neighborhood in the Southern part of Jakarta, and when I was not out shadowing or interviewing the women, I stayed in the house, and unfortunately, there was not much to do. The woman that I lived with owned a catering business so I would go to the market with her at 4am and the work for the day would be done by 7am. By the time I got back from the interviews, I would have about five hours by myself in my room. At times, it was tough not to become discouraged, so I had to learn to keep myself busy. As a student-scholar, this taught me how to be self-disciplined. It would have been easy to spend my time watching movies or focusing on my isolation, but I learned how to be productive within the limits of the room. I researched Indonesian culture and other female entrepreneurs which made my experience even more meaningful.

This project not only increased my independence but it increased my dependence on others. I had to figure out how to navigate the city by myself and overcome most of the obstacles solo. However, being in a country in which I did not speak the language, I had to depend on others to

help me. At the start of the project, I relied on my host family to help me with almost everything I did. I have never had to depend on someone to help me purchase food or drive to a destination, and it was humbling to do so. They were more than happy to help me find a driver or even call me when I reached my destination. I was extremely grateful for their kindness, and I could not believe that they would go out of their way for someone they barely knew.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

This project has made me even more eager to continue my research and meet as many people as possible. I loved learning about all of the women's lives in a country so different from our own. I will remember this experience forever, and I plan to stay in contact with many of the women that I talked to. In fact, one of my questions was about the women's future plans for themselves and for their businesses. I think it would be very interesting to contact them all again in five years to see where they ended up and if their goals became a reality.

In addition, this project made me realize that I would like to pursue a graduate degree in entrepreneurship. I plan to apply for Notre Dame's ESTEEM graduate program which involves learning more about entrepreneurship and finding ways to improve the lives of people throughout the world.

I also plan to present my research at the Human Development Conference in the spring.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

Staying with host families really added to my experience and my understanding of the culture. I received the local inside information and was able to learn a lot more about local opinions and other random facts. I got to experience way more of Indonesia as a result. For instance, five hours after I landed in Jakarta, my host family informed me that I would be attending a "small" wedding reception. This reception ended with the bride's mother pulling me up on stage in front of five hundred people and an experience that I would never forget.

Building relationships with the interviewees also added a lot to my experience. Getting to know the participants gave me insight that I would not have gotten otherwise and made my research even more meaningful. At first, many of the woman were apprehensive about the interviews, and it took some time for them to become comfortable with me and the interview style. Once we got to know each other, the women became even more excited about my research and did a lot to help me with it. Many reached out to me after the interviews and told me to contact them if I needed any more information.

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complete my award disbursement until this form is successfully completed. If I have any questions or concerns, I will contact CUSE before submitting this form. To illustrate that you understand all of these points, please enter your Notre Dame email in the box below.
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