

## TETEN MASDUKI

ONE cupboard, a stove, and a refrigerator. Three chickens in a cage. His wife's monthly salary of ten million rupiah (US\$1,105) and his own more modest income of four million rupiah (US\$442) a month. A house, a Kijang van, and fifty million rupiah (US\$5,525) in a bank account. It took Teten Masduki five minutes to enumerate his assets at a 2001 seminar in Jakarta on how to audit the wealth of Indonesia's civil servants.

It was accountability in its truest sense. As coordinator of the non-profit, non-government organization Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), Teten says he has the duty, no less than the public officials, military officers, tycoons, and other Indonesians his group investigates, to be totally transparent about his own finances. It escapes no one's notice how far smaller his modest means were compared with the US\$1 billion in bribes, for example, that executives of the national airline, Garuda Indonesia, were suspected to have pocketed in a leasing scheme. Or the twelve billion rupiah that then Attorney- General Andi Muhammad Ghalib, the government's point man in the fight against corruption, was said to have received in his and his wife's bank accounts in 1999.

These cases are just a tiny sampling of Indonesia's institutionalized culture of graft and corruption, one that had flourished during decades of President Suharto's authoritarian rule, which ended in 1998, and sadly continues even today under a democratic government. But forty-three-year-old Teten and his eight-year-old ICW are undeterred. "Corruption is always related to power, and corruption is by far the most common abuse of power," he says. "The cause [for inaction] is not because people are poor but because people are helpless. They cannot control these powerful figures. That is why we cannot ask the government for help in combating corruption. It is we ourselves who should fight corruption for our own sake."

Established on June 21, 1998, the ICW is doing its part. Funded by The Asia Foundation and agencies in the Netherlands (Indonesia was a Dutch colony for 350 years before becoming independent in 1945) and other countries in Europe, the organization investigates complaints and reports of corruption by tapping legal, accounting and other volunteer experts, including government auditors secretly helping out. The findings are sent to the relevant government agencies, although Teten entertains little hope that these bodies will actually do something. He is banking more on the media and his fellow citizens. According to Teten, "The next step is to empower the local people. ICW alone is not enough and combating corruption is the responsibility of everyone, including religious groups, labor unions, and teachers' unions."

BORN to a farming family in Garut, a one-and-a-half hour bus ride away from Bandung, the capital of West Java, Teten knows how powerless ordinary Indonesians can be. His father's thriving tapioca business failed when Suharto's New Order government promulgated regulations that favored big businesses over small enterprises. The family of ten fell back on farming, but it was hard going. While there was enough to eat from the land they owned, there was barely enough cash to send the eight children to school. At one point, Teten's mother suggested that he enroll in a vocational school, but he resisted the idea. Teten managed to finish high school and went on to study education science at the Institut Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (IKIP, or Institute of Teaching and Education Sciences) in Bandung.

For all the financial worries, Teten had a typical rural childhood. “In the early morning we went to school, in the afternoon we attended the *madrasah* [religious school], at sunset we had to go to the mosque for more lessons, then we played at night,” he recalls. “We had chickens, goats, and sometimes cows.” They also had doves and rabbits—and dogs, something unusual in a Muslim household, that regards these animals as unclean. The dogs came from his father’s business partners, who were Chinese. Teten would bathe the dogs and then “clean myself with oil and soap according to Muslim rules.”

Teten’s father, known as Masduki, belonged to a landowning clan in another village. “He was the first to become a businessman,” says Teten. “His family earned their living by farming. My great grandfather was a man of distinction. He had plenty of rice lands and fields. He was the head of the village and he kept that position until the day he died.” Masduki did not complete the elementary grades but proved adept at being a trader. At one point, he owned four tapioca factories in various places. “He was a hard worker and never complained no matter how hard the situation was,” recalls his son. “He worked all the time.”

But Masduki never asked the children to help out in the business nor did he train them to run it. He wanted them to have the higher education that he and his wife, Ena Indasah, the daughter of a farmer, never had. “My mother was a very strong personality,” says Teten. When his father’s business was buffeted by problems, it was Ena Indasah who took charge of getting the most from their land while Masduki fought a losing battle to keep the tapioca factories afloat. “She was the one who kept control of the family’s financial condition,” says Teten. “She was actually a manager.”

Politics swirled even in Teten’s small village. A devout Muslim, his father was a member of the Nadhlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia. It was once headed by cleric Abdurrahman Wahid, who became the country’s president in 1999. When the organization was still allowed to operate as a political party, Masduki always voted for it in the general elections. When it became a non-political movement in the Suharto era, he transferred his loyalty to the opposition Partai Persatuan Pembungan (PPP, or Unity for Development Party). “The soldiers were always suspicious of him because he did not support [Suharto’s ruling party, Partai Golongan Karya] GOLKAR,” recalls Teten.

Authoritarian restrictions on individual liberties were not the only problem. There were the corrupt civil servants. When he needed licenses for his business, Masduki had to deal with bureaucrats who expected their palms to be greased. These experiences led him to tell his son never to become a soldier or a government official. Despite all these unsavory encounters, however, Masduki and Ena Indasah generally kept out of politics. The village was once a base of Darul Islam, the radical group that aimed to turn Indonesia into an Islamic state. The couple helped save villagers caught in the fighting between government soldiers and the militants, but did not side with one or the other.

Masduki was also neutral on the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), the Indonesian Communist Party. He regarded national issues on the human scale, not in ideological terms. “I’ll tell you a story,” says Teten. “During my adolescent years, there was a PKI member in my village who was arrested and jailed on Buru Island. When he came back to the village, his wife had remarried. His family was ashamed to accept him, because back then the government’s propaganda was that the PKI was very bad. Everybody was frightened. But my father gave this man a place to live, despite humiliating talk from other people. When I asked my father why he allowed a communist in the house, he told me that the man needed shelter. ‘He didn’t have any, but we still have one,’ was his simple answer.”

All these experiences must have imprinted themselves on the growing boy, although it was not evident early on. In high school, says Teten, “I didn’t have any political orientation.” He adds laughingly: “If we didn’t study science, then no girls would want to come close to us. So we had to study science.”

His goal was to enter a good university, something that he realized might not be possible because of the family's precarious financial condition. But Teten worked hard and graduated among the top students in his class, allowing him to enter university without having to take entrance examinations.

HE knew in his third year in high school what he wanted to be. "I wanted to become a teacher," he says. Teten was influenced by his physics teacher, a Mr. Hanafi, whom he considered a brilliant mentor. "He was tall and lean, and he had a certain dignity about him," he recalls. "He could explain to us how physics can be applied to our daily lives, instead of just teaching us all the formulas. That was why we were enlightened and we could see how useful physics was. I admired him very much."

He chose to attend IKIP in Bandung in partly because of financial reasons. "It was cheap," says Teten. "For one semester, I had to pay only 32,000 rupiah." In Bandung, he initially stayed with an older brother who was studying at Padjadjaran University. But he had to walk a long way to get to his own school, so Teten rented a small room closer to IKIP. "The campus was very nice," he says of the institute. "It was a hilly area and always very cold in the morning, so we had to always wear a jacket." He chose to major in chemistry, with mathematics as his minor.

But the young man grew disappointed with IKIP as an educational institution. "I learned merely the techniques of teaching," he says. "I didn't get any values and the idealism that I thought was supposed to be important if I were to become a teacher." The lecturers were "feudal," he adds. "They were not egalitarian. It was as though the teachers were on a high position and the students were very low. We always had to listen to what they said, except for the young lecturers." The students themselves were not very confident, considering themselves third-class scholars who were not really respected by the community. "IKIP did not to make us proud of the teaching profession," Teten concludes.

He turned his energies to extracurricular activities, including the student movement outside IKIP. Reacting to the excesses of the Suharto regime, universities in Bandung, including the Bandung Institute of Technology and particularly Padjadjaran University, became hotbeds of student activism. Teten was drawn to the discussion groups in these schools, to the extent of cutting classes at IKIP. Some of the younger lecturers at IKIP were sympathetic. "I could always approach them to make up for the tests that I didn't take," says Teten. "But then I didn't think about achieving anything anymore with my studies." He had begun to regard his involvement with the student movement as more important, along with a project to revitalize a chemistry department newsletter, which at one point criticized the way IKIP lecturers taught.

The two worlds intersected when Teten was elected president of the student union. Political activities were officially banned, so student unions at that time were focused on religious activities, cultural events, and sports. But seminars were allowed, and Teten arranged leadership and journalism training that sometimes featured sessions with student activists from other schools. He also organized private discussion groups that tackled, among other things, dependency theories in books by Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin. "Students were forbidden to conduct any kind of political activity, so we had lots of discussions instead," says Teten. The goal was to unite the students and push for democracy. He and his friends drew inspiration from student activists in South Korea, who learned how to tap broader public support for their cause.

IN 1985, Teten got involved in the first student demonstration in Bandung. “That was the time when student discussions turned into student action,” he recalls. The military had taken over land occupied by settlers in Garut, Teten’s hometown, with plans to turn it into a training facility. The land belonged to the Ministry of Forestry but under the law, people who had lived and worked there were to be given priority in the issuance of land certificates. Other protesters followed as corporations moved in to acquire land for factories and industrial sites. In one case, the government even took over farming land for a golf course.

Teten joined protest marches. “I wasn’t a leader, I was just a follower,” he says. He also became a volunteer in the Bandung branch of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, popularly known as LBHI, its Indonesian acronym), which defended farmers and other ordinary people in land cases against the government and deep-pocketed companies. The military was unsure at first about how to handle the demonstrations, but as they grew bigger, district commanders initiated a crackdown. Some student leaders were arrested.

Teten helped prepare a calendar called “Land of the People,” which listed all the controversial cases that involved land ownership. One illustration showed Tien Suharto, the president’s wife, wearing a bikini while playing golf. The calendar was banned and the military hunted those it thought were responsible. Teten was not arrested, but one student was pursued and subsequently “declared missing,” Teten recalls. Maria Pakpahan, the woman who brought the calendar layout to the printer, was almost caught. She fled to the Netherlands. The project’s artist, Yaya Kecrit, found refuge in Germany.

Despite these extracurricular activities, Teten won a scholarship, which lightened the financial load on his parents. One of the grant’s conditions was that he was to teach, so Teten accepted a post in Tangerang, an industrial district outside Jakarta, after graduation in 1986. “I taught in a vocational school for girls,” he recalls. The subjects in the school included cooking and sewing, in addition to mathematics and the standard subjects in the high school curriculum. He taught in Tangerang for four years, living in quarters close to a cramped housing area for workers, who toiled in factories that made light industrial products, like garments and shoes.

The teacher, it turned out, also became a student. “I started to see so many bad things about the lives of laborers,” Teten recalls. On his way home from school, he would pass by the shanties where they lived. The units were tiny, two by three or four meters each, inhabited by three to five people, who also cooked inside. “The government line was that these industries were the main tool for our development, but I saw that the workers were very poor,” says Teten. “So what about those who were not the priority for development, like those in the villages?”

HIS nascent advocacy was fanned by his volunteer work with Informasi dan Studi Hak-hak Asasi Manusia (INSAN) or Information and Human Rights Studies, a human rights group in Jakarta, which became a center of activity, along with the LBHI, for former and current student activists, including Teten’s friends from Bandung. But labor problems were not high in the group’s priorities. “People were more interested in matters such as repression by Suharto, the problems of political parties, and so on,” says Teten, who tried to learn as much as he could about labor issues by reading and clipping newspaper articles and other information. “I wanted to help the workers but, of course, I had to know first what the problems were,” he says.

While teaching in Tangerang, Teten would travel regularly to Jakarta, where former student activists from Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Salatiga gathered. “They were affiliated with many institutions, but we met frequently,” he recounts. “Each of us specialized in different issues. Because I

was already interested and involved in labor issues, I took the lead in giving information about labor.” The network was the core of a movement called Indonesian Front for the Defense of Human Rights (INFIGHT), which was active in advocating for land and environmental causes, including the defense of students.

Later, in 1991, Teten would tap the same network to set up Forum Solidaritas Buruh (FORSOL or Labor Solidarity Forum), after the military broke up a labor demonstration that Teten had helped organize against the truck-and-tire company Gajah Tunggal. That workers’ protest had set off alarm bells in the government and the military. “That was the first large demonstration ever, with twenty-one thousand workers,” Teten recalls. “All the military elements infiltrated it --- the infantry, the air force, the police.” The *Komando Distrik Militer* (KODIM or District Military Command), summoned fourteen core activists and forced them to resign from the company. FORSOL was organized to tackle three major issues: better wages for workers, withdrawal of military intervention in industrial disputes, and freedom of association.

By this time Teten had quit his job as teacher. “It was a tough decision,” he says. “I had absolutely no earnings. I wasn’t even sure I could live on my activities.” But as coordinator of FORSOL, he received support from the LBHI and the other institutions that backed its founding. FORSOL filled a need that other non-government organizations (NGOs) were not addressing. “At that time, there were many NGOs that organized labor, mostly on worker education and support of cooperatives, but we didn’t have advocacies for changes in government policies,” says Teten. “So FORSOL received a mandate from workers to push for such changes.”

Part of his work involved interfacing with the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, particularly with Gregory Talcott, who was the embassy’s second secretary for labor issues. “At that time, the U.S. had the Generalized System of Preferences or GSP, a policy that supported exports without any tax from Indonesia to America,” Teten explains, “but the condition was that companies had to respect the rights of labor. So whenever there were visits from U.S. trade representatives to Jakarta, I always took the chance to raise labor issues with them, because the Indonesian government at the time was very afraid of the international community.”

Leaving Tangerang for Jakarta in 1991, Teten became head of the LBHI’s labor division, a post he held for eleven years, in addition to his work with FORSOL (1991-1994) and with the Consortium for Labor Renewal (1996-1998). Tapping LBHI’s branches across the country, Teten helped bring legal support to workers who lost their jobs without employers following the correct procedures. “We defended their rights in court,” he explains. “We established programs to educate laborers concerning their rights and also campaigned for changes in labor policies and regulations issued by the Ministry of Labor.”

WORKING for labor rights under an authoritarian government was dangerous work. One harrowing case involved Marsinah, a twenty-five-year-old worker at a watch factory in Sidoarjo, in eastern Java. She and other employees staged a strike in 1993 to demand for a wage increase. The company agreed to raise salaries, but the local KODIM later forced the strike leaders, including Marsinah, to resign. The young woman then disappeared—to be found days later in a hut, dead and showing signs of having been raped and tortured. “It was the first time ever that a worker died after a demonstration,” says Teten. “I believed that it was very dangerous.” After the case attracted national and international attention, the military (not the police) arrested the owner and eight managers of the watch factory, who the military claimed had confessed to the crime.

Teten was not convinced. “We from the Legal Aid Foundation did some investigation,” he recounts. “And we were certain that [Marsinah] died in the KODIM office.” At their trial, the nine men retracted their confessions, which they said were extracted from them after they were tortured by soldiers. Drawing from the results of LBHI’s investigation, the defense lawyers convinced the court of the men’s innocence and they were acquitted. Until today, however, the question of who killed Marsinah has not been answered.

But the case put the military on notice that they could no longer smash labor movements with impunity. One of LBHI’s notable achievements was the government’s decision to change a policy that allowed the military to intervene in labor issues, even vesting it with the power to fire workers. The military did not actually exercise its right to terminate employment, says Teten, but it used the regulation to arrest workers and infiltrate labor movements. “Every time there was a strike, the Koramil [Sub-District Military Command] and KODIM would arrest the spokespersons and pressure them to resign from their jobs,” he says. “So this the change of policy was our success, not mine but that of the organization.” Another milestone was the government’s acceptance of the United Nations (UN) Convention on Labor Rights, which calls for freedom of association.

These reforms happened after Suharto stepped down in 1998. “I was very surprised,” says Teten of the unexpected resignation. “I was in the midst of student demonstrations in the Parliament at that time. We, [LBHI chairperson] Adnan Buyung Nasution and several other activists, asked and pressured the chairperson of Parliament to terminate Suharto’s tenure while he was abroad.” The protesters had occupied the building. “We felt like it was going to be another Tiananmen incident, that we would be attacked by the military. But we were lucky.” Battered by the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and a wave of violence that saw mobs attack ethnic Chinese, Suharto decided it was time to end his thirty-two-year rule, and passed the reins to his vice-president and trusted lieutenant, B.J. Habibie.

THE regime change opened a new chapter in Teten’s advocacy. “We were sure that, even though Suharto had been toppled, concerns surrounding the New Order era would still be there, especially corruption,” he says. “I involved a lot of my friends, lawyers, lecturers, journalists [in monitoring corruption], and I was appointed as the coordinator.” No one else apparently wanted the job. Launched as part of LBHI, the group received wide media coverage. “It was launched at the very right moment because corruption had been a central issue, particularly since 1997,” says Teten, who initially remained as head of LBHI’s labor division as well as coordinator of the new anti-corruption group.

Established in 1998 and formally named Komisi Penyelidikan Korupsi Masyarakat (People’s Commission for the Investigation of Corruption), the new body is better known as the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), the name proposed by Daniel Dhakidae, one of the founders. “The translation of Indonesia Corruption Watch would be *Pengawas Korupsi Indonesia* but we did not want to adopt this Indonesian acronym of since it would be PKI—and we’re not communists,” laughs Teten. As mentioned earlier, PKI stands for *Partai Komunis Indonesia*, the Indonesian Communist Party. Apparently finding Indonesia Corruption Watch as the catchier name, the media got into the habit of referring to the group as ICW, so this eventually became the common usage.

Teten admits that he felt lost in the beginning. His other co-founders eventually went back to their own advocacies, and he was left to move the project forward. “I had no experience whatsoever,” he recalls. “I didn’t have the knowledge. I looked for research on corruption in the universities, but the material wasn’t available. I had started something that I knew nothing about although [the manifestations of corruption were] not new to me.” From his father’s stories back in his childhood, he knew bribery and

corruption were rampant in the bureaucracy. As a student activist and teacher, he saw the tentacles reach into Parliament and even the judiciary.

“Everybody knows about corruption,” says Teten. “The people knew it was happening, but they didn’t take action because, first, they weren’t courageous enough—it was very dangerous [to act during Suharto’s time]—and also because they had no experience. So I thought about how to open a channel for society’s complaints on corruption cases. We had a lot of journalist friends from the time we handled labor cases, and they report on corruption. We also had volunteers who were willing to open complaint posts in bus terminals, train stations, supermarkets.” And so, even as he was still studying the problem, Teten began receiving reports of corruption from all over the country. It seemed that all the pent-up grudges toward the Suharto regime that the people kept to themselves had finally burst out.

Teten himself was surprised at some of the reports. “There were a lot of cases being reported, starting from corruption within the bureaucracy, problems with power supply, problems in train stations, in state-owned companies, in banking,” he recalls. “So many reports about cases that I myself didn’t know existed.” He began looking for experts to help with the investigation. The response was heartening. Government auditors volunteered their assistance, in their unofficial (and secret) capacity. Bankers came forward, as did lawyers with LBHI and other groups. “There were all kinds of experts to read the cases carefully before we engaged in any investigation and before we exposed our findings in the media,” declares Teten.

The press was another ally. From his experience with LBHI, Teten had concluded that many judges were compromised. “I know exactly how corrupt our judiciary bodies are,” he declares. “So, from the beginning, I didn’t have expectations that we would send our cases to court. What we were building were social sanctions and public awareness.” Not all the reports were investigated and made public. Many were plain narrations with no supporting documents. “We knew that if we were to expose these cases in the media without proper documentation, people would sue us in court,” adds Teten. The group, after all, had no prosecutorial or any other power, except in the court of public opinion.

The Habibie government was under pressure to bring Suharto-related cases to court, but a pattern soon emerged. In investigating reports involving Suharto and his family, ICW always came to a dead end. “It was because the attorney-general was one of the factors that obstructed us from getting into the cases,” says Teten. “That is why I personally thought it was impossible to file charges against Suharto at that particular time.” But then ICW received, in 1999, documents showing that Andi Muhammad Ghalib, the attorney-general tasked among others with prosecuting Suharto, had twelve billion rupiah in eight bank accounts. “Some of the transfers came from suspects who were then being investigated by the Attorney-General’s Office.” Was the nation’s top prosecutor being paid off?

Even with the documents, the ICW could not be sure. Its investigators could not talk to the banks themselves, which were bound to respect client confidentiality. “I didn’t have any way to determine the authenticity of the accounts, so I told someone to send money to them,” recounts Teten. The money got through to each account, so he was at least sure that they existed. Andi Ghalib was out of the country at the time, having flown to Switzerland ostensibly to look for Suharto’s hidden accounts there, so ICW could do some discreet investigating. To further check, Teten asked his friends in the banks’ labor unions to verify the accounts’ authenticity as well.

In perusing the documents, Teten noted that there were purchases made from the accounts to stores that sold gold products, so those transactions were further proof that the bank accounts indeed existed. “When I was sure,” says Teten, “I made a report to the military police.” The attorney-general was also an army lieutenant-general. But Teten did not expect the military to act. “No general has ever been tried by the military for any crime, including even human rights violations,” he explains. “The low-

ranked soldiers are always the ones who were blamed and tried.” On the same day that he reported Andi Ghalib to the military police, Teten also held a press conference at the LBHI offices. “Everybody was shocked,” he recalls.

In denying the charges, Abu Ghalib said that the money transfers were donations made to the national wrestling association, Persatuan Gulat Seluruh Indonesia (PGSI), and to Dharma Wanita, the organization for the wives of government officials. The attorney-general was chairman of PGSI while his wife, Andi Murniati, headed the Dharma Wanita unit in the Attorney-General’s office. But few believed him, not least ICW. Expecting nothing from the military, despite its show of investigating Andi Ghalib, Teten sought only to have him replaced, which happened later in 1999. “After this case,” says Teten, “people trusted us and they knew that we were not just messing around.”

ANOTHER high-profile case was detailed in a December 1998 report on the World Bank’s US\$132.5 million Book and Reading Development Project in Indonesia that began in 1996. “It was a loan for school textbooks and the bidding process was loaded with collusion,” recalls Teten. “The good writers did not win the bidding and there were also problems with the distribution of the books.” The World Bank launched an internal investigation. The fourth round of textbook procurement was cancelled and the project closed in 2001, having disbursed only US\$53.2 million. In 2004, the World Bank announced the debarment from any World Bank-financed project of ten individuals and twenty-six firms in Indonesia because of their fraudulent and corrupt practices in relation to the book project.

In 2000, ICW separated from LBHI and set up on its own. “There were growing expectations of the ICW and this was no longer something I could do voluntarily,” explains Teten. “And I thought that this movement to combat corruption was not an easy task, and therefore it needed to be institutionalized.” With funds from The Asia Foundation and the government of the Netherlands, ICW was able to hire former volunteers as paid employees. By the end of 2000, ICW had issued twenty-four investigation reports on cases that included alleged decisions trading in the Supreme Court, money politics in the election for governor in Kalimantan, and corruption, collusion and nepotism at national air carrier PT Garuda Indonesia.

To ensure its own integrity ICW also established a system that included an Ethical Board a Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, and annual reports on its activities. “A watchdog institution like ICW is also very dangerous,” says Teten. “It can become a political device, a tool for extortion and for business competition. We want to make sure that this is the kind of movement that was both accountable and cannot be used as a political tool. Those on the Ethical Board should be trustworthy people.”

ICW kept its links with the LBHI and, indeed, with many other non-government organizations. Teten also encourages religious organizations, like Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, and labor unions in state-owned companies to create their own anti-corruption division. “From the beginning, we deliberately did not establish any branches for ICW because we were focusing on how to empower the people, especially local people in their own regions,” he says. “We learned from our mistakes during the New Order era, when we didn’t empower the local people in the regions who actually had the strength. This is our main mission: how to make people aware that they themselves are the ones who should combat corruption, because they cannot rely on the government, which is by far the main actor in corruption.”

Another important plank in the fight against corruption is the media. “I feel satisfied if several of the media outlets are willing to expose these cases [the ICW has investigated], such as *Kompas*, *Tempo*,

*Jakarta Post*, and a few television stations,” says Teten. But getting the media’s attention can be tough. “It depends on the case. It’s very difficult if we deal with conglomerates or high-ranking officials or popular politicians. The owner of the media outlet also has interests.” It is easier to have ICW’s findings broadcast if the case has nothing to do with the media outlet’s business interests or political affiliation.

Even so, ICW continues to reveal startling findings.

A year-long investigation into Indonesia’s judicial system culminated in a 2002 report, titled *Lifting the Lid: “Judicial Mafia.”* In it, ICW said that judicial “mobsters” have permeated the entire system, from the police, clerk, lawyer, prosecutor, even the judge and jail officers. Corruption starts “from investigation and inquiry in the police department, inquiry in the judiciary, and trial until the execution” of the judgment. Added the report: “Even the parking [attendant] in the court can enjoy advantages from the broad practice of corruption.”

In 2005, the Coalition of NGOs in Indonesia asked ICW to monitor the effort to rehabilitate and reconstruct areas devastated by the tsunami that hit Aceh province the year before. The coalition had found problems in the rescue stage. “The Indonesian government is not yet capable of disaster management,” sighs Teten. “There were cases of delayed construction of barracks, problems with distribution of relief goods, like food. A lot of people didn’t receive them. [The government] didn’t even have detailed data about the victims and the refugees.” In monitoring the rehabilitation and reconstruction stages, ICW will focus on housing, education, and health.

TETEN and his organization are now moving onto a larger stage. “Our next step is to push for changes within the government system,” he says. Teten had helped draft the bill that created Indonesia’s anti-corruption commission, which became law in 2002. “We are currently proposing three more bills: the Freedom of Information Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, and class action and legal standing for corruption cases.” ICW has also begun a “report card” system to encourage direct participation by the community in monitoring public-service performance in the areas of education and health. “We tried it once in Jakarta and the result was quite good,” says Teten.

ICW has also joined the National Movement for Not Electing Rotten Politicians. It had teamed up with other NGOs to endorse the system of direct presidential polls, that was implemented in 2004 and resulted in the assumption to power of the nation’s current president, the former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. In the preceding legislative elections, “we saw that there were a lot of political parties that still had a lot of rotten politicians as their candidates,” Teten recounts. “That was because the internal elections within the parties were not effective and payoffs were made for a candidate to be ensured a position.”

The movement struggled with the criteria to use in order to come up with a list of “rotten politicians.” The women’s groups that joined the campaign wanted one of them to be polygamy, a proposal that had Muslim parties Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) up in arms. “I received a lot of complaints from Muslim groups,” recalls Teten, who adds that he agreed with the women’s position. “They threatened to sue me in court.” The movement eventually set five general criteria: corruption, serious human rights violations, environmental damage, domestic violence including sexual crimes, and involvement in narcotics, with sitting parliamentarians judged as well on their voting record and attendance in legislative sessions.

There were more threats of lawsuits as groups aside from Teten's came up with their own lists. In the end, the ruling party, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P, or Indonesian Democratic Party), won 20.8 percent of the vote, but it was followed closely by Suharto's GOLKAR with 20 percent, seemingly proving that the campaign against rotten politicians did not quite work. Still, the National Movement for Not Electing Rotten Politicians did focus significant public attention on what makes a good or bad candidate. The active involvement of ICW and other NGOs in politics is a continuing process that may yet bear fruit in future polls.

Teten has become more realistic about elections and democracy. "I used to believe that if an authoritarian government were to change into a democratic government, then corruption would be eliminated and the economy would improve," he says. "It turned out to be wrong." When Suharto was president, economic and political power was centralized in the presidential palace. "Now, since the election in 1999," says Teten, "there is no longer one dominant political power and corruption became widespread. The centers of corruption became fragmented as well." He does not blame democracy, per se, but "political behaviors that never change."

The same people are perhaps not as powerful as before, he concedes, but the system under which they thrived remains intact. "They're still watching us," he says. "We have more liberty in establishing organizations, we have freedom of expression, unlike in the past when we had to be extra cautious whenever we wanted to establish programs or organize meetings." The threats, however, remain. One is the Defamation Act, which government officials, politicians, and conglomerates brandish against their critics, in place of the subversion laws that were used to pressure them during Suharto's time. This is very dangerous, Teten warns, given the corruption in the judiciary.

That sinister forces are still at work was brought home in 2004 when human rights activist Munir Said Thalib, whom Teten knew from his labor activist days, was poisoned on a Garuda Indonesia flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam. A Garuda pilot, Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto, allegedly an agent with Badan Intelijen Negara (BIN), Indonesia's intelligence agency, was sentenced to fourteen years in prison for the murder. Off duty at the time, he was booked in business class on the same flight but switched to an economy seat beside Munir, whose body was later found to have high levels of arsenic. The court noted that Pollycarpus communicated regularly with a senior BIN officer during the flight but no action has so far been taken against the intelligence body.

"I do feel a deep loss," says Teten of Munir. "Ever since we were young, we worked together as labor activists. We learned about the military together. We learned about politics together." The investigation into Munir's murder, he says, has "a lot of missing links." "In the case of military intelligence, there are always cover-ups to protect the military." It is all part of the corruption in the national body politic, the cancer that eats away at the police, military, judiciary, executive and legislative bodies, and even the business sector.

WHAT can be done? Put clean people in the top positions, says Teten. "We have changed a lot of systems, but with the same people nothing went effectively." Religion can also help. "Because the majority of the people of Indonesia pride themselves in being religious, a religious approach can be effective," says Teten. "But, instead of building fear towards God as an abstract being, I believe that teaching in religion should be centered on human rights, on establishing social awareness. In Islam, we call it Muamalat, a doctrine that is useful for establishing social relations with people, not simply with God."

Let us not forget ICW's anti-corruption crusade. Corruption "will become very dangerous if we don't fight against it in the true sense," says Teten. Teten—who has two daughters, aged six and one, with his wife Suzana Ramadhani—knows from experience that corruption is not an abstract problem, but one that impacts on families and human lives. "That is what keeps me going, what keeps me working. What I aim for is to nurture public awareness so that the people will demand their rights, so that eventually they would not want their money to be taken by corrupt officials, the money that rightfully belongs to them. I believe that the anti-corruption movement will eventually become part of a citizen's movement." His daughters, along with Indonesia's millions of children, deserve to grow up in a society that is clean, peaceful, and prosperous.

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