



INDONESIA: WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Help children with disabilities to find their right place
in the middle of Indonesian society.

“Your handicap is a punishment from God.” Children with disabilities in Indonesia still suffer from this stigma. A women’s initiative of the Taraja Church breaks through the isolation of these children and stands up for their rights.

A dark corner in the house – that was Augustine’s allotted place. The Indonesian girl is blind and in the first years of her life, she received little attention. Today, everything is different. She sits at table and forcefully cuts a large squash. One only realises she is blind when she stands up to fetch a saucepan. It is quite natural for Augustine to help around the house today. She has even learnt to read and write Braille.

Out of the corner, into the midst of society

Augustine managed all of that with the help of volunteer women of the Taraja Church who have supported the girl for the past eleven years. Their motivation: Indonesian families often lock up children with disabilities in a hidden part of the house. This is because that traditionally, these children are seen as „a

punishment of God“ as a consequence for wrongdoing by the family.

The female co-workers of the RBM try everything to have children with disabilities accepted from an early age as the image of God in families and parishes. They also support the rights of the girls and boys to medical care and education – also at national level. The female volunteers visit the families locally in their mountain villages. Together with doctors they discuss how to support the young children individually according to their skills. In order to overcome prejudices, they organise informative seminars and include the children in worship services and church festivities.

Leading an independent life

The aim of the project is for children with disabilities to lead a more or less independent life. „The fact that this is possible is shown by the many young people we have supported or are still in the process of doing so. They work and so they contribute to their livelihood,“ says Milka Sarangalla with delight. She heads the programme. Augustine is also one of these 550 children and young people. With a small loan from the RBM she opened a kiosk where she mainly sells hand-woven bags which she made herself.

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