



TORAJA MELO

Introduction



TORAJAMELO

To preserve traditional weaving culture and increase the income of women weavers

Location: Jakarta, Indonesia

Industry: Fashion & Textiles

Founded in 2010

Image credit to
GreenAsiaForce

Toraja Melo ('Beautiful Toraja') is a company founded by Dinny Jusuf, who has worked as a corporate and consumer banker, training consultant, social worker, and as an activist for women's rights. In 2008, the founder began working with weavers from Toraja, an area in the centre of Sulawesi Island, in partnership with her sister, who is a fashion designer. This idea was extended into an official social enterprise in 2010, and the organisation was separated into a foundation focusing on community development programs for the weavers, Yayasan Toraja Melo (YTM), as well as a fashion brand that will financially sustain their mission, PT Toraja Melo (PTTM). Torajamelo aims to preserve traditional cultures while improving the income of rural women weavers, through the sustainable production of hand-woven textiles. The company produces head-to-toe fashion line made of these textile, which are influenced by traditional designs.

Highlights

- The founder received the "Indonesian Women of Change" Award for the trade and investment category from the U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia on International Women's Day in 2013
- In 2014 Toraja Melo was recognized as one of "50 Leading Companies for Women in APEC"

Social Problem

Toraja Melo focuses on solving the feminization of poverty and the rejuvenation of the “dying” hand-weaving heritage in Indonesia. In Indonesia, 50% of its population of 250 million lives on less than \$2/day and 70% of the poor are women. A key source of income for many homebound indigenous poor women in rural area of Indonesia is back-strap weaving. However, prices and demand are low, made worse by factories copying their indigenous designs and selling them cheaply. The rural female weavers also face the problem of fluctuating tourist numbers, and an insecure market to sell their crafts. Many thus resort to working as migrant workers, and some come back abused with unwanted pregnancies. Toraja Melo aims to stop this cycle of poverty and violence using weaving as the entry point.

More specifically, Toraja Melo aims to tackle the issues of:

1. Women who are treated as second class citizens of society are often subject to violence and abuse
2. The dying tradition of cultural handwoven products
3. Lack of financial and environmental sustainability for women and their communities leading them to live below the poverty line. They often go overseas as migrant workers, which break the families and the passing on of cultural (including hand-weaving) knowledge.



Toraja Melo products from the Kebaya category.

Image credit to Toraja Melo

Social Intervention and Impact Created

Toraja Melo’s work is based on the three principles of community, quality, and design.

- Community: Toraja Melo works with the community of weavers and creates a community of supporters and customers in Jakarta and beyond.
- Quality: Toraja Melo designs and creates high-quality products through strict quality control.
- Compassion: Toraja Melo focuses on cultivating compassion between, weavers, staff and customers, and upholds professionalism and respect.

Currently, Toraja Melo works with approximately 1,000 weavers, not only in Toraja but also Mamasa, West Sulawesi, and Adonara and Lembata islands in East Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. They also employ around 100 underprivileged women in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta who act as their seamstresses, shoemakers and bag-makers. Toraja Melo aims to become “the

shopping destination of Indonesia” by 2025, and to collaborate with at least 5,000 weavers across rural Indonesia and at least 1,000 urban poor women who produce the finished items.

Business Model

Torah Melo presently works in four weaving areas: Toraja, South Sulawesi; Mamasa, West Sulawesi, and Adonara and Lembata islands in East Flores. The business is based in Jakarta, but also has clients in Bali and Japan. It also has an online shop which can ship products to overseas customers. The business is in its growth phase and is looking to expand in order to scale up its social impact.

A significant part of its current sales come from corporates which need gifts for numerous occasions. Such companies are typically state-owned enterprises, high net worth individuals, and multinational companies. Toraja Melo is moving to target younger middle to upper class consumers through retail channels.

Torah Melo has various partnerships with Bank Negara Indonesia, Perempuan Kepala Keluarga (a women organisation), UnLtd Indonesia (an incubator for early state social enterprises), DMID (brand consultants), among others.

Current Marketing Efforts

Online presence and social media

- **E-commerce site:** sales to Indonesia only, through bank transfer.
- **Facebook** (Torajamelo): 1428 likes, frequent updates with product images
- **Instagram** (torojamelo): 1352 followers, with daily update of products
- **Twitter** (@torajamelo): 1577 followers, 54 likes, multiple tweets per day, in Bahasa largely
- **Youtube** (TORAJAMELO): 5 uploaded videos, in Bahasa and sometimes English subtitles
- **Crowdfunding:** On Kitabisa, 5.5 out of 30 million Rupiah (around \$3000 SGD) has been pledged

Online presence is notable with many articles writing about its work, in Bahasa and English, with links to news articles on the company website.

Toraja Melo has 1 physical store located in Jakarta.

Challenges Faced and Project Scope

Torah Melo is currently fully-funded and progressing well in its community work with around 1,000 women weavers. Specifically, Torajo Melo requires assistance from participants in:

- Developing an exponential growth marketing strategy locally (in the community areas), nationally and internationally; offline and online (e-commerce) - towards helping 5,000 weavers in three years' time.

Useful Links and Resources

Company Website: <http://torajamelo.com>

E-Commerce Site: <http://torajamelo.com/shop/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/toraja.melo/>

Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNOs3KUhRPu1Kd650FSgkXQ>

Additional references

Article on Ashoka website

<https://www.changemakers.com/discussions/entries/toraja-melo>

Article by Impact Connect, a social investment portal

<http://impactconnect.asia/social-enterprise/toraja-melo/238/>

Short write-up by Asian Venture Philanthropy Network

<https://2015.avpn.asia/investmentshowcase/>

News article by Jakarta Globe

<http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/features/toraja-melo-mission-empower-female-weavers-across-indonesia/>