



KARIN FRANKEN IS AN UNTIRING VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS OF NEGLECTED ANIMALS.

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It was a scene straight out of *Dog Whisperer*. Only this time, instead of watching the pooches from the comfort of my couch, I was confronted by 27 strange hounds, yapping and wagging their tails, at Jakarta Animal Clinic in Kemang, South Jakarta.

While there was no Senor Cesar to intervene, Karin Franken was on hand to calm my apprehension.

Dutch-born Franken plowed through the furry sea of my “welcoming party” with ease, unperturbed by the frenzy

around her. She greeted the dogs with open arms and kisses while bringing to heel a few troublemakers; it was a balanced display of affection and control that could only be possessed by an experienced handler.

We met up before heading to the new headquarters of the Jakarta Animal Aid Network (JAAN) in Cijantung. JAAN was established in early 2008 by Franken and two colleagues, Femke den Hass and Natalie Stewart. The non-profit animal rescue organization has developed into one of the leading animal NGOs in the country, with Franken at the helm of the domestic division.

children and only daughter, grew up with a love of animals. The Franken dogs were considered family and often brought along on holidays abroad.

The family moved to Indonesia in 1990 for her father's work. She volunteered to work at a dog shelter in Jakarta, and was appalled by the conditions.

“The situation at the shelter wasn't good,” Franken, 41 recalls. “It was tough to witness that injustice every day. I cried a lot.”

She struggled to keep her cool until a change in management finally presented her with the opportunity to makeover the system inside-out. Among the changes was a newly adapted adoption plan to screen potential owners before allowing them to bring home a dog.

Never one to sit by idly, however, the former pre-school teacher wanted to do more.

“I have always loved dogs but I also wanted to help other animals in need,” she says. “That is when we decided to build JAAN.”

WILD AT HEART

The JAAN head office consists of 3,000 square meters of open space. The focal point is the main building, a leveled wooden structure situated southeast of the grounds where administrative work and educational activities take place.

A train of enclosures that circle the compound are used for rehabilitation, while the rest of the land remains untouched, enabling its furry inhabitants to roam safely.

JAAN caters to all types of rescue cases, from domestic, like dogs and cats, to more exotic creatures, such as slow lorises and red-backed sea eagles. The organization works together with a network of collaborators both locally and abroad.

Six months ago, the organization helped halt a group of animal smugglers in Yogyakarta in cooperation with the Forestry Ministry and local authorities.

The sting operation successfully recovered 300 animals and 17 different species that were to be traded on the black market.

In October, Governor Joko “Jokowi” Widodo gave an official order to confiscate and ban use of wild monkeys for the *topeng monyet* (masked monkey) roadside shows in response to JAAN's continuing campaign to stop the abusive acts.

The raid made international headlines and resulted in the recovery of 137 monkeys.

Battling demand for wild animals as pets and status symbols is a familiar struggle for most animal organizations. That is why education is an integral part of the JAAN mission.

The network is committed to educating the public on issues involving animal welfare. Workshops and school

all ages, including children.

Without proper knowledge, Franken believes, the cycle of negligence will continue.

“Rescuing is the easy bit,” she quips as we walk through the grounds. “We want to make a change for the animals, so that’s why we need to go all the way and give our best. The process as a whole is very important to us.”

HAPPY ENDINGS

JAAN has completed more than 700 dog rescues in the six years and continues to receive increasing support from applicants ready to take in rescued pups.

Most rescued dogs suffer from harrowing physical conditions; filthy coats, bodies covered in ticks from head to tail, internal



A healthy Aldo (left) and how he looked when he arrived at JAAN

injuries and even missing limbs.

Take black spotted hound Michael. He was abandoned at a house in the Taman Mini area for three years after his owners left.

Today, Michael is among the clean, healthy and happy dogs waiting to be adopted at the JAAN center.

The adoption procedure is simple yet thorough. After an adoption form is completed, a house interview is conducted at the residence of the potential owner to their capability to adopt and their suitability with the dog.

The lengthy process can be intimidating for some but it is a crucial step to ensure the well-being of the dogs, Franken says.

“We are their [the dogs] voice, we need to protect them and make sure we are giving them to a good home. If we cannot do that, then all our hard work would just be a waste.”



Between leading a growing NGO and making time for family – she shares one son with former model and designer Elmo Hilyawan – Franken also has 14 dogs at home. She admits there is little time left to spend on herself.

Would she have it any other way?

“No,” Franken replies adamantly.

“Of course, my son is the most important to me but animals are my passion. The job sucks a lot of my time and energy; it is a real emotional rollercoaster because you see so much suffering. Yet, there are those happy endings. All the animals that we saved and lives we changed is what makes it all worth it. It’s what fuels me to keep going.”

For more information on JAAN's activities, visit the official website at www.jakartaanimalaid.com.

