

Equality in Education and Employment for Sustainable Development of Diverse Indonesia: Enhancing Equal Opportunity, Volunteerism, and Philanthropy

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Abstract—While Indonesia prides it self on its diverse population, diversity can also create disparity in educational access and success among students, generating gaps of participation among people of different economic, gender, and geographical backgrounds. Studies show that inequality can lead to tension, instability and conflicts, impeding the achievement of SDGs. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of inequality in Indonesian education and employment opportunities and to suggest additional ways of constructing equality. For this purpose, this study will provide an analysis that relies on statistics, surveys, and reports on education and employment inequality in three constructs: class (rich vs. poor) which is related to geographical areas (urban vs. rural) as well gender (male vs. female). This paper describes the challenges in these three areas, reviews efforts and policies for equality, and suggests transparency and accountability as well as the promotion of volunteerism and philanthropy for the success of Indonesia's sustainable development.

Keywords—Education and Employment, SDGs, Equal Opportunity, Volunteerism, Philanthropy

I. INTRODUCTION

In line with its position as the third largest democracy, the fourth most populous country in the world, and the largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has some ambitious goals of development in different areas as shown in NAWACITA (the nine-development agenda)[1]. One of the most important challenges in its development is the complex diversity of the population in terms of, among others, ethnicity, geography, religious beliefs, as well as cultural traditions. However, some of the most important challenges in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) are narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor as well as the issue of gender equality.

Poverty eradication has been one of Indonesia's prioritized development agenda and in 2017 Indonesian poverty level reached 10.12%, which is the lowest in the past 10 years[2]. Still, that means about 26.58 million Indonesians are considered poor.

The participation gap between male and female Indonesians occurs not so much in terms of education, but more in terms of employment. As shown in reports from Statistics Indonesia or Central Agency on Statistics (BPS) released in 2017, there is no gender gap in the overall students' education participation, e.g. 61.18 % of urban and 55.19% of rural school age female students attended high school, as opposed to 59.60% urban and 65.06% rural male students attended the same schools[3]. The challenge is when it comes to employment, where there are significantly more males having employment than females in most sectors. In addition to discrimination, it must be admitted that some conservative, traditional and religious discourses have encouraged women to be stay-at-home house wives, strengthening the belief that men are and should always be the breadwinners [4].

An important related factor affecting education participation and employment is the differences between urban and rural population. The best education and employments exist only in major metropolitan districts, especially those attended by students from middle and high class urban communities. Since cities become magnets for better education and employment, in addition to the glamorous city lifestyles and money flows from urbans to rural areas, they have attracted youths from rural areas to migrate to cities. This has changed the rural area demographic trend, which according to BPS, by 2035 rural Indonesian population will have close to only 30%, a significant change from 2010,

when half the population still lives in rural regions[5]. This obviously has a significant affect in the demography of education participation as well as employments and incomes.

This paper discusses the reports and statistics on the issues above while looking into the challenges in these areas in achieving the goals of sustainable development. It will also suggest possible solution in increasing the success of eradicating the gaps in the three areas of gender, poverty, and regions. The suggestions will also take into consideration the cultural, religious, and traditional values and discourses that could help or impede the efforts to achieve these goals.

II. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Disparity in Education Participation: Challenges for the Poor

There are various types of schools and education in Indonesia with participants coming from various backgrounds, including religious, economic, geographical, and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, although most schools are expected to have similar nationally established curriculum, these schools vary greatly in terms of their facilities, instructors, and attendees. It is not surprising, therefore, that, of the approximately 170,000 primary, 40,000 junior-high and 26,000 high schools, some have high achievements while others lack behind greatly in many respects[6].

Indonesian people and government agree that creating equality in education is an extremely challenging task. The consequences of this diversity are among others: 1) some groups of students could not complete the 12 years of education, 2) there is a great disparity on degrees of educational success among these students, 3) many students cannot go to college, and 4) many cannot find suitable employment with sufficient incomes, leading to the widening the gap between the rich and the poor[7].

Fortunately, Indonesia has 9-year-free mandatory schools, allowing many Indonesians, including the poor, 15 years old and younger, to attend schools. However, OXFAM reported that only 55 percent of children from poor families are enrolled in secondary school. In addition, there are issues and challenges in poor, rural, and remote areas where school facilities, transportation, and access are minimal, while availability, quality, and attendance of staffs is questionable[8]. Only schools in more developed rural areas and urbans areas have meet basic requirements of school facilities and programs that

can assist students' success. Some elite private schools called "*sekolah favorit*" (most preferred with high quality) schools or "national plus" schools, which exist only in major urbans affluent areas and attended by the most privileged, further worsening educational disparity in Indonesia[9]. Various reports and data confirms that there is discrimination against the poor when it comes to access to high quality education, including higher education. While the affluent have the means to good education including universities, the poor do not have limited access to good education, preventing them from having adequate employment and a chance for upward mobility[10].

Despite the government funding allocation for education at 20% of the national budget, there continues to be problems in providing adequate educational facilities and dedicated, well-trained staff, especially in rural and remote areas. The problem is worse due to the uneven teacher distribution and allocation, where there is teacher surplus in more urban areas and lack of teachers' presence and attendance in more rural and remote districts[11].

To add to the challenges of improving education in poor and remote areas, opportunities for individual advancements mostly exist in the cities, encouraging urbanization of younger population. According to the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, population aged over 60 in Indonesia will rise 16% by 2050, which indicates the rapidly ageing population[12]. Increasing number of youths moving to cities in search of better employment opportunities leaves behind a large number of the ageing Indonesians in the rural areas. Although the main source of income for the people in the rural areas comes from agriculture, statistics from the Agricultural Ministry show that out of the 140 million farmers in the country, 80% of them are 45 years old and above[13]. Not surprisingly, the disparity in education between the rural and urban districts is evidenced in the wider the gap in actual rate of participation between the urban and rural participants/students and the widest gap occurs at the university levels, i.e. 24.49% (urban) versus 11.03 % (rural)[14].

The above discussion confirms that the poorer tend to be less educated, while the richer tend to have better access to better education[14]. As shown in various surveys, this evidence is the main culprit for the gap between the rich and the poor[15], [16].

B. Inequality in Employment: The Challenges for Women

Statistically, as a developing nation, Indonesia has an acceptable unemployment figures. As of August 2017, the estimated total Indonesia's population is 262.41 million, with 192.08 million people of working age and 121.02 million people who actually work. Unemployment in August 2017 reached 7.04 million people, an increase by 8.5 thousand people from August 2016 (7.03 million people) at the current rate of 5.50 percent[17]. However, as described below women and the poor are the ones that continue to face the challenges when it comes to employment opportunity.

Gender inequality is pervasive around the world and continues to shape societies, cultures and economies that disregard women's rights. According to the IMF, income and gender inequality are closely linked and mutually reinforcing; both can impede economic growth. Indonesia is ranked 88 on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, and received a 'medium' score on the Social Institutions and Gender Index. Indonesian women have less power decision making or influence over their own lives. Indonesian women hold only one out of five parliamentary positions and only 5 to 10 percent of high-level management positions. Women tend to be paid significantly lower than men and are, thus, more vulnerable to poverty. With a gender pay gap of 14.5 percent, on average Indonesian women earn 14.5 percent less than men[18].

According to UNICEF report[19], despite the apparent increasingly limited access to education as students attend higher education levels, Indonesia has obtained a notable progress towards gender equality in overall enrolment ratio especially at primary and junior secondary levels. However, Indonesia still has serious gender problems in some education areas which are less apparent, convoluted and difficult to resolve. Many factors play a role in contributing to gender inequality including religious, cultural, and traditional, in addition to gender biased found in textbooks used in schools that support the gender stereotypes. The analysis in studies on the contents of primary school textbooks confirms this argument, including images of males being depicted much more frequently than females, portrayal of males showing more activities, and creativities in many important roles than those of females, citation of more men's names than women as well as stereotypical selection of specialization based on gender[20].

This type of gender inequality, in turn, leads to gender gap in employment, which urges the Indonesian government to continue the struggle to

close this gap[21]. Despite its commitment and efforts to decrease the difference between male and female labor force participation (LFP) by 2025, the most recent trend shows that the gap actually increases. The Monash research found that gender wage gap in formal sector is 34 percent and in informal sector 50 percent. Factors affecting this also include, inadequate transport infrastructure and services that makes it difficult for women to balance work and family responsibilities, in addition to possible sexual harassments in the work places as well as the lower place of women in the society[22].

As reliance on non-agricultural works increase, the economy moves to other sectors, such as manufacturing and services; but, in the past 25 years, this has not changed Indonesia's female labor force participation (LFP) at the rate of 51%. Studies show that this stagnant labor market and female participation with Indonesian women earning 42% less than their males especially at the informal sectors. 31% of this difference is attributed to the different characteristics between men and women including level of education, career interruptions, and types of employment, with the other factor being attributable to discrimination[23].

C. Efforts for Gender Equality in Education and Employment

According to the Asian Development Bank, if the gender gaps in employment significantly narrow, the per-capita income of Indonesia could increase 14% by 2020. That is why, the Indonesian government has taken some important steps to improve female LFP as a priority in its development programs, but efforts such as increasing women's participation levels or narrowing the wage gap has shown little results[22], [24].

The gender pay gap and inequality in labor market may be traced to lack of discourses and images of women as breadwinners. Despite the data showing that some portions of labor force include single mothers, divorced women, and married women whose husbands do not have full employment, discourses in various media rarely depict women as breadwinners. To help ease the gap and inequality, it is important to exposure female role models engaging in works commonly associated with the roles of males to assuage gender determinism. More exposure of women as role models such as TV shows with women as the principal breadwinners. There are many TV shows portraying working women and mothers but rarely women as breadwinners and portraying women as the breadwinners and men as the stay-at-home dads is still considered taboo[4].

The government of Indonesia has been committed to deal with gender inequality, including enacting the Domestic Violence Law (2004), Law for the Victim Protection (2006) and the Anti-Trafficking Law 007. However, discrimination against women, domestic violence, and work-place sexual harassment is still widespread. Women and gender equality activists continue to campaign for equality such as pointing out at 1974 Marriage Law which regards men as heads and women as mothers of household triggers gender inequality. The law identifies the man as the head of a household, which justifies the lower women's wages[8].

D. Efforts for Equality in Education and Employment for the Poor

Many nations, including advanced ones, are facing problems of inequality, with the gap between the rich and the poor as the main concern. Like in many emerging markets, in Indonesia, this unfairness is mostly attributable to disparity in incomes as a result of inequality in education, employment, and wealth[25]. Studies show that the consequences of inequality in Indonesia include: extremism which have grown significantly, corruption which has been rampant for many years, as well as economic costs that it has drained the nations' budget, time and energy[26]. Although the link between inequality and conflict is not always convincing, there has been findings that inequality plays a role in stimulating and spreading violent political conflict[27]. Studies also show that the government, including the people's representatives, tend to be more responsive to the wealthy constituents than to the less affluent ones[28], [29], confirming that inequality also creates socio-political injustice. Poor population frequently experience alienation socially and politically, leading lack of trust toward the system, as well as resentment and anger that could lead to tension and unrest[30]. Studies also show that equal participation in education has significantly determined the execution and success of sustainable development enhances the success of a democracy[31].

Not surprisingly, there are a few plans and programs aimed at narrowing the gap in education and employment opportunity. First, there have been suggestions and action plans to address issues of human resource and poverty[32]. These include those suggested by the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI) such as to: 1) continue and improve the scholarship, grant-for-school, back-to-school, and matching-grant programs; 2) enhance and improve the education of disadvantaged children (e.g. street children, ethnically and geographically isolated children, displaced children, as well as physically and

mentally disabled children; 3) accelerate the decentralization in the educational system with more community participation[33].

Second, this suggestion has been mostly implemented through the Indonesian government creation and expansion of social programs, such as Smart Indonesia Card (KIP) scheme as a key instrument for greater access to education for primary and secondary students aged 6–21. The government of Indonesia has launched numerous poverty eradication programs, including, among others: *Program Keluarga Harapan* (Family Hope Program) Conditional Cash Transfers, *RASKIN Program* (Subsidized Rice Delivery for the Poor), Family Welfare Card (*Kartu Keluarga Sejahtera-KKS*), Healthy Indonesia Card (*Kartu Indonesia Sehat-KIS*), KUBE (Social Welfare Micro Enterprise), etc.

The scheme aims at improving school enrolments, reducing drop-outs, creating educational equality, and increasing the number of eligible students that need helps. However, the program still could not resolve educational challenges, especially in rural and remote districts. It has not proved to have significantly eradicated poverty in Indonesia, can create dependency on social programs, and may not be sustainable.

Third, there are efforts and strategies of improving educational quality of poor and rural remote areas. One good example is the "KIAT guru" (teachers' performance and accountability) projects, a program that attempted to increase teachers' presence and service performances through community empowerment and increase allowances based on performance. Although this program, that involves monitoring by community representatives, has shown some positive results, the program is costly and has only been attempted in some poor remote areas[34]. The government does not have enough funding for this type of project in many poor and remote districts in Indonesia. In addition, the incentives may not be significant enough for well-trained teachers to relocate to these areas, unless the teachers themselves are highly dedicated and willing to serve[35].

Fourth, there is also an effort of improving tax system for equality. The Indonesian government has planned to maximize the tax potential by increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio, i.e. placing a higher tax rate for the highest income earners and for wealth including higher tax for the highly-valued properties and inheritance. The government should put in place action plans to execute transparent developing a national action plan to create transparency while dealing with tax evasion. It should be noted that the tax scheme should maintain corporate tax rates that

does not harm tax incentives, in order to stimulate growth[8]. The challenges of this plans, like many programs Indonesia, is transparency and accountability in its execution.

It is possible that there is a problem with transparency and accountability or that the poor continues to be dependent on these government's handouts and may not be sustainable[36], [37]. There have been many types of strategies that are important and the government is serious in its efforts to implement them. In practice these efforts are not easy to implement due to several issues, including budget, staffing, monitoring, transparency and accountability[38] as well as the commitment, and dedication of those involved in these efforts.

E. Alternative Efforts for Equality in Education and Employment in Indonesia

While the above efforts still have not shown significant success in enhancing equal opportunity in education and employment, there may be other efforts that need to be considered. First, Indonesia needs an institution, such as a commission that deals with Equal Education and Employment Opportunity. Most advanced countries have relative success in enforcing laws that forbid discrimination against students, employees, and job applicants because of their gender, ethnic, religion, origin, and race. Indonesia still needs to make it illegal to discriminate against anyone complaining or participating in a lawsuit against discrimination.

Equal opportunity becomes standard in hiring in the US, known as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and helps ease the gap in gender, race, and incomes[39]. There is no research on upward mobility in Indonesia, but in the US, 58 percent of Americans born into the bottom fifth of income earners move out of that category[40]. It follows to hope that EEO will stimulate upward mobility for the poor and, thus, help Indonesia in achieving its SDGs.

The Indonesian government and legislators must enforce laws that protect people from any discrimination in work related situations, such as hiring, wages, benefits and promotions, as well as harassment and firing. Indonesia has tried to have equal opportunity regulation some provinces, but there are still laws that discriminate against women[41] and discrimination against women in different forms continue to exist in various Indonesia's workplaces[42].

Another challenge is that Indonesian women-discriminating laws find supports from traditional and religious discourses. Ultra-conservative traditional and religious values that inspired preaching on, for

example, restriction of women's mobility and activities outside of the houses can impede efforts to create gender equality. Some studies show that religious preaching can be dis-empowering to women[43]. If Indonesian conservative and hardline religious movements persist, as Ricklefs[44] and Bruinessen[45] have confirmed, it will be increasingly challenging for Indonesia to create gender equality in education and employment.

F. Character Education through Volunteer Works

One of the main challenge in implementing government social programs as well as other programs by NGOs is transparency and accountability, which is not surprising since Indonesia has been inundated with issues of corruption. According to Transparency International, Indonesia is ranked 96th of 180 countries surveyed in terms corruption perceptions index.

Improvement in transparency and accountability requires the education of character and universal moral values including honesty, respect, tolerance, prudence, responsibility, discipline, helpfulness, fairness, compassion, cooperation, and courage[46]. Although character education has been part of the Indonesian school's curriculum, it does not necessary transformed the Indonesian students into practicing what they learned. Following Aristoteles' principle that a good person is a person that does something good for other people, many schools in advanced countries teach students how to put principles into real actions. In many US schools, for examples, school encourages students to volunteers in various non-profits organizations such as: food banks, soup kitchen, and homeless shelters. Many retirees and those seeking work also volunteer[47].

As part of fighting against inequality, school and community education should emphasize practicing volunteerism and other real acts that help others. Indonesian religious, public, and other private organizations should prioritize volunteerism and other real humanitarian actions over traditional and religious rituals as part of educating their members. Institutions should make volunteering activities, instead of religious practice and rituals, a requirement for promotion,[48] school entrance,[49], [50] and obtaining scholarship,[51] because studies show that traditional and religious rituals do not necessarily relate to real moral actions[52].

Based on the study on volunteerism in the US conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2015, 62.6: 62.6 million Americans have volunteered, 24.9% of Americans over 16 volunteered, with the median number of volunteer per person is 52 hour per

year, 33% volunteered with religious organizations, followed by 25% in educational or youth service organizations. Although a large number of retired people volunteer, employed people ages 35 to 44 were most likely to volunteer[53].

Indonesia can enhance this volunteerism culture as well. Spirit of volunteerism not only helps the poor and the education of children in remote districts, but also enhances transparency and accountability. Volunteerism have many benefits including giving the volunteer a sense of purpose in life, and, thus, happiness and well-being of volunteers as well as improving community life and the responsible implementation of public policies on social programs[54].

G. Promoting the Spirit of Philanthropy

The gap between the rich and the poor is staggering, with the richest 1 percent of Indonesians owning almost half (49.3 percent) of the country's wealth[55] and 10 percent of wealthiest Indonesians holding 77 percent of the whole country's wealth[56]. While this figure is similar to many other countries, in many advanced countries, one of the most common activism to help reduce this wide gap is charity as a universal moral value[57]. In the US, Canada and Western Europe, in addition to variety of government- supported social programs, there are various private charitable organizations that were active in resolving societal problems, and received donations from the wealthy American individuals and institutions.

There are some wealthiest of Americans actively participated in charitable or philanthropic undertakings, such as Warren Buffett, the Berkshire Hathaway CEO, who gave his fortune totaling \$22.7 billions, which is only about 37% of the 99% of his wealth which he plans to give to charity. Bill and Melinda Gates, Microsoft CEO already 31.5 billion or 41% of his total wealth he plans to give in order to help eradicate contagious deceases in the third worlds, such as polio, HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB. In addition, George Soros, investor of Open Society Foundations, gave \$11.4 billion or 47% of his total wealth to help promote human rights, as well as protection of migrants, women, and the disables as well pressed freedom. From these examples of major US wealthy donors,[58] it shows that the wealthiest do not only think of themselves or their own families, but also the welfare and wellbeing of other people, by sharing what they have with the neediest in the world.

Indonesia needs to promote movements for charitable activities by educating especially the wealthy communities about the spirit of philanthropy,

because the Wealthiest 1 to 10 percent of Indonesians are not known as philanthropists[59]. Emphasizing its redistributive effect, philanthropy can reduce inequality, as long as it focuses on the poor and most disadvantaged. Although it can have its negative affect in that the donors tend to have personal and political motives, enhancement of social programs supported by philanthropic and volunteerism can help reduce the gap between the rich and the poor[60].

III. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents surveys, reports, and analysis that help describe the challenges in education and employment inequality in Indonesia, explain the efforts to deal with the issues, and suggest possible alternative solutions. Studies confirm that there is unforeseen discrimination against the poor, women, and those in rural and remotes areas when it comes to access to good quality education that leads to equal employment opportunity. For the poor and rural students, the challenges include lack of transportation, adequate school facilities, staff attendance, and qualified trained teachers.

Although female students have relatively equal access to education, the challenges for women lies in the complexity of discrimination in the form minimal portrayal of women in various media compared to men and the law that limit women's rights. In addition, traditional and religious norms as well as the depiction of men as the sole breadwinners make it challenging for women to have equal pay and employment opportunity.

This paper also presents efforts to deal with these issues and challenges of inequality in education and employments. In addition to suggestions such as those from CGI, the government has launched and expanded the policies as well as social programs, such as KIP, KKS, etc. Others suggested modification and implementation of tax scheme and NGO programs such as KIAT. The significant progress and results of these programs remain to be seen, because there are issues of transparency and accountability.

Finally, this paper suggests the establishment of equal opportunity in education and employment to help upward mobility of the poor. To deal with the idea of transparency and accountability, this paper suggests the education of character in schools, communities, and religious institutions that emphasize moral values supporting volunteerism and philanthropy. Studies confirm that the spirits of volunteerism and philanthropy help reduce inequality and improve welfare and wellbeing of the

communities that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

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