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Country Paper: Status and Major Challenges of Literacy in Indonesia

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I. National Context

The land surface of Indonesia is 1.885 million square kilometers, distributed in around 13.000 big and small islands. The population is 237 million inhabitants, most of them living in Java, which is also the most developed part of the country. There are over 300 ethnic groups and 680 native languages are spoken (most of them in Papua). The national language, Bahasa Indonesia, derived from the Straits Malay, is spoken by most of the literates.

Indonesia is ranked as having the third largest public school system in the world, with over 50 million students distributed in 33 provinces and 490 districts and municipalities. The different age groups in Indonesia are divided into three categories: 7-12, 13-15, and 16-18 years old.

So far, there has been a significant decrease in illiteracy rate from 12.88 million in 2006 to 8.7 million illiterates or about 5.3% of illiteracy rate in 2009.

The primary school (general primary school and madrasah ibtdaiyah-SD/MI) gross enrolment rate (GER) achieved universal coverage by the early 1980s, and stayed high despite the financial crisis of the late 1990s, the net enrolment rate (NER) has made only small increase, from 91.6 percent in 1995 to 95.14 percent in 2008. At the junior secondary (general junior secondary school and madrasah tsanawiyah-SMP/MTs) the GER rose from 65.7 percent in 1995 to 92.52 percent in 2007 while the NER rose from 51.0 percent in 1995 to 71.6 percent in 2007. In 2008, the GER for junior secondary was 96.18 percent while the NER was only 73.69 percent.

The proportion of pupils starting grade 1 in 2001/2 who reached grade 5 of primary school was 81 percent and only 76 percent of them completed primary school. A high drop-out rate resulted in some 19 percent and 24 percent failing to reach grade 5 or complete primary school respectively. Moreover, only 58 percent of pupils commencing grade 1 continue to junior secondary school. For the 2006/7 academic year, more than 3.9 million students attended grade 6, however, about 3.8 million actually graduated from primary school. Only 2.87 million of them continued to junior secondary school, which means that over 1 million children who attended grade 6 failed to transition to junior secondary school.

II. Development

Development in Indonesia is defined as a set of continuous efforts and processes to develop the life of Indonesian people in all aspects of life as mandated in 1945 Constitution. It encompasses protection towards all of Indonesian people, development in people's welfare, education for all, and participation in maintaining the world's peace.

Indonesian development goals are making Indonesia prosperous, democratic, and just. The goals are directed to make Indonesia prosperous, safe, and peaceful, and to put a stronger foundation for a more just and democratic Indonesia.

Historically, in early post-independent period (1945-1965), Indonesia started to combat illiteracy and achieved that all Indonesian knew alphabet and could write their own name and understood simple sentences. In 1966-1970, the attempt to promote functional literacy by teaching job related skills together with reading and writing skills was carried out and resulted in the increased productivity of literate workers who worked in fishery, forestry, agriculture, industry, etc.

Since 2000, Indonesia has been concentrating on the acceleration of illiteracy eradication. Thus, in line with UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment-LIFE (2006-2015), literacy in Indonesia is understood as the foundation of lifelong learning. It is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. It is a pre-requisite for other types of learning. It is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult. It is essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy. It is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies for the 21st century. Literacy Initiative for Empowerment under the above contexts is translated into eradication of illiteracy through basic literacy education, self entrepreneurship literacy, women empowerment education, gender mainstreaming oriented family education, and improving community reading habit.

The broad target of illiteracy eradication is encapsulated in the Presidential Instruction No. 5, 2006 on *The National Movement to Hasten Compulsory Nine-Year Basic Education and the Fight against Illiteracy (NMHFAl)*. Further, the Minister of National Education provides guidelines for implementation at both government and non-government levels to augment the level of literacy in Indonesia.

So far, the achievement of the implementation of NMHFAl has significantly improved literacy rate as shown in the following rate:

Year	Illiterates 15 years above (in million)	Percentage			Gender Disparity
		M	F	M+F	
2004	15,41	6,5	13,8	10,21	7,3
2005	14,89	6,62	12,85	9,55	6,59
2006	12,88	5,40	10,73	8,07	5,33
2007	11,82	5,04	9,36	7,20	4,32
2008	9,76	4,27	7,51	5,97	3,24
2009	8,7	3,64	6,39	5,3	2,75

III. Policy, Planning, and Legislative and Financial Frameworks

There has been a national movement since 2006 in order to improve Indonesian people's literacy ability called National Movement to Hasten Compulsory Nine-Year Basic Education Accomplishment and Fight against Illiteracy (NMHFAl); translated from the Indonesian *Gerakan Nasional Percepatan Penuntasan Wajib Belajar Pendidikan Dasar Sembilan Tahun dan Pemberantasan Buta Aksara*. The movement is also commonly shortened into the acronym **GNP-PWB/PBA**. The success of this National Movement is dependent on the coordination existing between the central government (six ministries), Bureau of Statistics and the local governments (provincial and regency level). The job description of those involved is as follows:

1. **The Coordinating Ministry of Public Welfare:** Creates the network and coordinates the national movement of GNP-PWB/PBA program.
2. **The Ministry of National Education:** Defines, designs, implements, monitors, and evaluates the national movement of GNP-PWB/PBA program. There is a Memorandum of Understanding between central and provincial/district/municipal administration on shared-budget.
3. **The Ministry of the Internal Affairs:** Pushes legal framework of provincial, municipal, and district administrators as well as the private sector, women's organization, youth organization, NGOs and community organizations to participate in this movement.
4. **The Ministry of Religious Affairs:** Participates in the socialization, facilitates, actuates and implements the GNP-PWB/PBA programs in religious based schools (*Madrasah*), boarding religious schools (*Pondok Pesantren*) and religious organizations under their guidance in order to cover the targets, to budget and achieve the target programs.
5. **The Ministry of Finance:** The main duty of this ministry is to plan and allocate the budget on the GNP-PWB/PBA implementations in accordance to the proposal of the Ministry of National Education and other leaders from other approved institutions as their stakeholders.
6. **The Ministry of Women's Empowerment:** Makes social networks and advocate those institutions or NGOs under their guidance.
7. **The Head of National Bureau of Statistics:** Collaborates with the Minister of National Education in providing a detailed updating, especially regarding gender, of the national data in order to support the activities of the GNP-PWB/PBA from each province, municipality, regency and district.
8. **The Governor of each Province (33 provinces):** Forms up the team entrusted with coordinating the GNP-PWB/PBA in each province.
9. **The Head of Municipality or Regency:** Forms up the team coordinator for GNP-PWB/PBA in each municipality and regency.

Furthermore, the following is the budget realization for eradicating illiteracy in Indonesia:

Year	Budget Allocation (in million Rupiah)				
	National Budget Allocation	Provincial Budget	District Budget	Others	Total
2006	197.729	76.791	129.166	36.086	439.773
2007	417.147	141.159	136.022	25.33	719.658
2008	364.175	269.065	94.821	44.363	772.424
2009	582.714	155.743*)	43.315**)	34.483***)	781.772****)

Note:

**) From 30 districts

***) Expected number

****) Is not all local budgets

Apart from the challenge caused by the budget allocated for illiteracy education above, there are some other key challenges in literacy policy and planning in Indonesia. Those are as follows:

- The illiterates reside mostly in rural areas of ten provinces of Indonesia: East Java, Central Java, West Java, South Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Bali, Papua, Lampung, North Sumatra and West Kalimantan.
- Some of them disperse in several isolated, remote, hilly and mountainous areas, and isolated islands.

- Most of them are aged over 44 with visual disabilities.
- They are often unmotivated since they do not realize the importance of literacy for their lives.
- They are having difficulty in coping with Indonesian language due to non-mastery of learning skills in the early years.
- The new literates often become illiterates again, especially for those who got only basic literacy.
- Not enough budget for post literacy programs.

IV. Institutional Frameworks

The institutional frameworks intended to improve Indonesian people literacy rate can be seen from three aspects; legislations and policies, inter-government coordination, and collaboration with wider stakeholders.

In terms of legislations and policies, it could be best described by the following process: The Coordinating Minister of Public Welfare, in 2006, issued a decree and formed a National Coordinating Team to hasten compulsory nine-year basic education accomplishment and to fight against illiteracy. Afterwards, the Minister of National Education, in 2006, issued a guideline for implementing NMHFI that in 2007 was followed by issuing a decree on setting up a secretariat for NMHFI. Then, Director General of Non Formal Education in the Ministry of National Education formed a national task force for NMHFI. Finally, Minister of Internal Affairs, in 2006, issued a letter to governors, Head of district /regency, and to members of Assembly at provincial and district levels on the importance of allocating budget for NMHFI.

In addition, there are some inter-government coordination that the government has made so far. First, there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (2007) between the Minister of National Education and the Minister Religious Affairs on the implementation of literacy education and other non formal education in religious education institution. Second, MoU between the Minister of National Education and governors and Head of district /regency of 26 provinces on budget allocation for NMHFI. Last but not least, there is also a continuous process of setting up coordination inter-government agencies, and coordination with related social organizations, and between central government and local government.

Collaboration with wider stakeholders is also carried out continuously as can be seen from the collaboration, as follows:

- Women organizations: PKK (Women's Family Welfare association), Muslimat NU (Nahdhatul Ulama women organization), Fatayat, Aisiyah (Women Association of Muhammadiyah), Nasyatul Aisiah, Islamic women organization, KOWANI (Women Federation),
- Religious institutions: Churches, Mosques, Majelis Taklim.
- Programs in literacy education for isolated tribes.
- Memorandum of Understanding between Directorate General of Non Formal and Informal (DGNI) and 87 universities/high learning institutions.
- MoU between DGNI and the Director of Forest Corporation.

V. Programs for Youth/Adult Literacy and Development

In order to improve adults' literacy competencies, a program coined as AKRAB (**AKsaRA** *agar Berdaya* – Literacy Creates Power- Akrab also means friendly) has accordingly been set up for

the purpose of supporting adult literacy education. The program means asking the illiterates to familiarize (AKRAB) themselves with letters (*aksara*) in order to achieve empowerment (*berdaya*), and hence the slogan “**AKsaRa agar Berdaya**” could be best translated into ‘literacy creates power’. This slogan is turned into the acronym “AKRAB”, meaning that it is through familiarity with letters that the empowerment promised in LIFE can be achieved. To increase availability, affordability, and quality of literacy education services, Akrab programs are integrated with entrepreneurship education, life skills education, and gender equity.

The programs of AKRAB encompass the followings:

- **Functional Literacy**
Functional literacy is intended to make people functionally literate. In other words, they can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of their group and community and also for enabling them to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for their own and the community's development.
- **Entrepreneurship Literacy**
Entrepreneurship Literacy is a literacy improvement program shaped in the form of entrepreneurship that can improve people's a person or group independently for all of the people who have joined or achieved basic literacy competence.
- **Family Literacy**
Family Literacy is designed for the family empowerment through teaching the family members (by one of the literate family member), communication skills, in text and non text, and numeracy in Indonesian language, so they can get, search and utilize the information for solving family problems and can participate in the country development.
- **Literacy for Special Community Based on Folk Tales**
Literacy for Special Community Based on Folk Tales aims at using folk tales as a teaching approach and media to make people in certain community master and maintain their literacy skill.
- **Local Culture Literacy**
Local Culture Literacy is a literacy strengthening attempt by using local culture as its media of teaching and empowerment for the students and their surroundings.

In addition to AKRAB program, to support implementation of diversified adult educational learning needs, revitalization and improvement of institutional capacity of the community education program providers are necessary. A program called Center for Learning Together (*Balai Belajar Bersama*) will be piloted in 2010 which is aimed at integrating all community education services which provide a better synergy between non-formal and formal education path as well as other social sectors.

VI. Examples of Programs

The leading model for literacy program is from East Java. There are around 964 villages in East Java whose local PKKs (Women's Family Welfare association) are involved in literacy programs. The PKK is a well-structured and rather influential women's organization led by the wife of the governor/district head/village leader in every province of Indonesia. Undeniably, the PKK plays a significant role in “equivalency education” at the grass root level as their members are potentially available at any time. They teach the illiterates by pairing them with literates.

Four women's Moslem religious organizations -- Muslimat NU (Nahdatul Ulama Women's Organization), Fatayat, Aisiyah (Women Association of Muhammadiyah) and Nasyatul Aisiah--

are involved in literacy programs in East Java. Their target groups are not only school aged children but also adults. They teach both Arabic and Indonesian in their literacy programs. The following is an example of the product of a program called *Mother newspaper*.



Another leading program for literacy comes from Central Java. At least 6 districts have devised different innovative programs to eradicate illiteracy. In the district of Wonosobo, every month there is a call up for illiteracy. The Wonosobo district head, together with the local village heads, makes a monthly evaluation of the eradication of illiteracy. They are asked to explain the outcome and results of the literacy program every month. Another place is in the coastal area of Demak, good fishery practices include the training for Innovative Reading and Writing for Fishery Production. The team of the Faculty of Fishery and Maritime Science from Diponegoro University conducted the entrepreneur training called SIMUSAMIN (Simulation of Fishery Entrepreneurship).

VII. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of non formal education institutions and learning providers are conducted through the following:

- a) Internal and external monitoring and evaluation of learning providers/ learning centers.

- Internal is implemented by the main units within the Ministry of National Education, Provincial Education Office, District Education Office, Sub-district Education Office, and Education Units itself.
 - National Board of Education Standardization, inspectorate general, and others.
- b) Learning process evaluation and assessment
 - c) Final exam and certification

VIII. Commitment for the Future

The government of Indonesia has closely reached the target of illiteracy eradication faster than it is planned in Education for All (year 2015). This achievement needs monitoring and keeping up by formulating new paradigm and approaches in the exertion of literacy education based on the guidelines given by UNESCO (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment).

Coordination and partnerships intended to support the eradication of illiteracy between the government and all stakeholders should be maintained since it plays an important role in eradicating illiteracy in Indonesia.

It is also high time to develop the framework of AKRAB! by putting forward multi literacy concept in order to make literacy education program have context and relevance to the development of community.