

# Eradicating women's poverty through good governance

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## Eradicating women's poverty through good governance

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### Introduction

Women's poverty is a critical issue in the field of gender studies in the past decades. The problem of women's poverty does not only add to gender inequality but also reflects the condition of economic shortage for women. Early work by Besly and Cord, found that on the international stage, profiles of poverty by gender indicate that important differences remain in several areas, including literacy. (Besly and Cord, 2007).

As quoted from Besly and Cord, in March 2005 during a conference in New York City that became known as the 'Beijing+10', the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women assessed the progress towards the goals outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995. According to the report, as of 2004 women were more likely than men to be poor, and female headed households were more likely than male headed households to be poor. Among

the statistics cited by the United Nations (UN), in Malawi a full three quarters of the poor are women; in Zimbabwe, 72 per cent of female headed households are poor, compared with 58 per cent of households headed by men. Even in the developed world women fared worse than men. According to the UN report, women headed 62 per cent of poor households in the Netherlands. Only Burkina Faso reported that men experienced higher poverty rates: 46.9 per cent of households headed by men experienced poverty in that west African country, compared with 36.5 per cent of households headed by women.

In Indonesia, poverty has been argued to impact more women than men. The National Social Economic Survey in 2004 showed that the total absolute number of poor people is 36.1 millions; in which 16.7 per cent of the women and 16.61 per cent of the men are among the poor. It means that the proportion of women under the poverty line is higher than men. This indicator shows that poverty reduction has not accommodated the interest of women.

The World Bank report on 'Making the New Indonesia Work for the Poor' stated that after the historic economic, political and social upheavals at the end of the 1990s, Indonesia has started to regain its footing. The country has largely recovered from the economic crisis that threw millions of its citizens back into poverty in 1998 and saw Indonesia regress to low income status. Recently, it has once again become one of the world's emergent middle income countries. Poverty level that has increased by over one third during the crisis is now back to pre crisis levels. Meanwhile, Indonesia has undergone some major social and political transformations, emerging as a vibrant democracy with decentralised government and far greater social openness and debate.

The number of people living below US\$2 a day in Indonesia comes close to equalling all those living on or below US\$2 a day

in all of the rest of East Asia besides China. Moreover, although Indonesia is now a middle income country, the share of those living on less than US\$2 a day is similar to that of the region's low income countries such as Vietnam (World Bank, 2006). Recent report on poverty by the National Statistics Bureau of Indonesia stated that there were 31.02 millions (13.33 per cent) people living below the poverty line by 2010.

### Women's poverty in Indonesia

The Indonesian government is committed to the objective of reducing poverty in its medium term plan (RPJM) for 2009-2014 which, in turn, draws on a national poverty reduction strategy (SNPK). In addition to signing on to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for 2015, in its medium term plan the government has laid out its own key poverty reduction objectives for 2009. It includes the ambitious target of reducing the poverty headcount rate from 18.2 per cent in 2002 to 8.2 per cent by 2009. While national poverty rates may be close to pre crisis levels, it means that about 31.2 million people are still living below the national poverty line.

Poverty is highly correlated with the low level of Human Development Index (HDI). Human development report (HDR) in 2009 revealed that Indonesian HDI had increased from 0.711 in 2004 to 0.734 in 2007. This increase is not accompanied by the increase of Indonesia's ranking, which in 2009 still ranks low at 111 out of 182 countries.

On the other hand, Gender Development Index (GDI) in the year of 2009 stated that Indonesia was in number 93 out of 156 countries. This GDI rank shows that Indonesian women still lack behind their male counterparts. United Nations states that GDI measures the disparity between men's and women's attainment by three indicators such as longevity measured by life expectancy

at birth, educational achievement measured by a mixture of adult literacy and mean years of schooling and standard of living measured by per capita expenditure (UN, 2010). Indonesian GDI shows that Indonesian women are still far behind men in these areas.

In the field of economy, improvement of access to employment for women is indicated by a decrease in female unemployment rate from 13.7 per cent in 2006, to 8.8 per cent in 2009. This is indicated by the data of the *Survei Angkatan Kerja Nasional (SAKERNAS)* or the National Workforce Survey of 2006-2009. Gender disparities also occur in the field of labour. In 2005, the labour force participation rate of women was recorded at 50.6 per cent and this was much lower than that of men, which was recorded at 86.0 per cent. In 2006, the gender gap in employment continued to occur despite the expected increase of women's labour force participation rate to 51.4 per cent. Indonesia's MDG Report 2007 also states that the open unemployment rate (OUR) of women was showing a less than encouraging portrait. The female OUR is relatively higher than male. OUR for women rose from 10.55 per cent in 2001 to 13.6 per cent in 2005 and then peaked at 14.71 per cent in 2005. However, there is a decrease in 2007 to 11.83 per cent.

The low Gender Development Index is also paralleled with Indonesian women's general living conditions: living in poverty, often experiencing violence and backwards in many aspects of life. Women are discriminated and marginalised in the informal and economic sectors.

### **Women's poverty discourse**

It is important to know the concept of poverty in general before defining women's poverty. Since the publication of its Human Development Report (1997), the United Nations has defined poverty as the 'denial of choices and opportunities most basic to

<sup>9</sup> human development—to lead a long, healthy, creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, self-esteem, and the respect of others.’ This definition takes into account nearly all aspects of human experiences—personal, political, social, and financial. Not all attempts to define the condition of being poor are as inclusive. More typically, the focus is on the economic side of poverty—how much money a person can make compared with the others. Since the mid 1990s agencies have recognised that poverty affects more than a person’s income and consumption habits, leading to expanded definitions—also called composite indicators—used by the United Nations, the World Bank, and others (Dziedzic and Kepos, 2007).

In 2000 all member countries of the United Nations pledged to meet eight human development goals outlined in the Millennium Campaign, an international effort to eradicate extreme poverty, along with its causes and consequences. The declaration to reduce poverty with its indicators called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a list of eight human development goals to be reached by 2015:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality. 5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

All of these points involve poverty indicators directly or are linked to the problem of poverty in some ways. The MDGs have become a standard way to gauge human development progress in all countries and regions of the world. Whether or not a country is ‘on target’ to reach the goals by the 2015 deadline is a telling indicator in itself of the standard of living in that country. There are four other

purposes which are included in MDGs that specifically address the needs and challenges of women and children affected by poverty:

- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health

Women's poverty is also related to the concept of the 'feminisation of poverty', which was first used in 1978 by a researcher named Diana Pearce, who had found that two thirds of poor adults over the age of sixteen in the United States (U.S.) were female. Although Pearce was referring specifically to U.S. data, the term entered common usage in both poverty research and women's studies.

- The feminisation of poverty is generally understood to have three main causes:
- The increasing number of female-headed households
- Individual and cultural stereotypes about and discrimination against women and girls
- Macroeconomic trends such as globalization and trade that fail to take into account women's roles in economies

There are many reasons women tend to be poorer than men. Lower wages, failed social safety nets, fewer educational opportunities, substandard health care, and a lack of employee protections and benefits such as paid maternity leave and child care all contribute to the problem. In addition, women typically are the primary caretakers of children and elders, which also make them more vulnerable to impoverishment as they have less time to earn money outside the home (Besly and Cord, 2007).

One of the main goals outlined by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was addressing the enormous increase of women living in poverty in the late twentieth century. The Platform

sought to:

- Review, adopt, and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty
- Revise laws and administrative practices in order to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources
- Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions
- Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty

### Gender equality and good governance

Gender equality has become a main issue for women in the world today. It is very important since gender equality is the heart of economic and social progress and is widely accepted as essential to sound development practice. Gender equality could be defined as the achievement of equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities between women and men and also girls and boys (AusAID, 2007).

Further, equality does not mean that women and men will be exactly the same, but the women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on the difference of gender anymore. It shall be understood that gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity among different groups of women and men (ibid.)

The term of equality between women and men is a human right, and a precondition for, and an indicator of, sustainable people centred development. It is also a critical component of efforts to eradicate poverty, enhance economic growth and democratic governance, and achieve sustainable development. Discrimination could impose

large costs on a developing country's capacity to increase economic growth and raise living standards by excluding women or men from access to resources, public services or productive activities. Further, investments in gender equality, particularly in health and education, yield some of the highest returns of all development investments. These investments generate reduced rates of maternal mortality, better educated and healthier children, higher household incomes and stronger economic growth (ibid.)

AusAID (2007) listed four strategies for the achievement of gender equality:

1. Access: Access to economic resources and assets such as land, other property, information, income, and financial services is particularly important, along with skills, leadership and training. It is essential to analyze the constraints that prevent women and girls from accessing resources and benefiting from aid programmes.
2. Decision making: For women to be able to participate equally in decision making, changes in gender relations are essential: in the household, community, and in social, economic and political institutions at local and national levels. Programmes to enhance women's capacity are critical to support women's participation in decision making. Efforts to change the attitudes and behavior of men – husbands, fathers, brothers, and male leaders – are essential to secure women's and girls' participation in development.
3. Women's rights: CEDAW outlines the areas where action is needed to secure women's and girls' rights. Discrimination must be eliminated where it exists in customary law, formal legislation, and in social, economic and political institutions to enable women and girls to realize their rights, access resources, make decisions, and live without fear of violence

and coercion. Efforts that promote awareness by women and men of the human rights of all people are essential to support these changes.

4. Gender capacity building: Strengthening institutional capacity among all development stakeholders underpins efforts in each of the above areas. Donor and partner government agencies, civil society, and regional organizations all need to increase their capacity for integrated gender and poverty analysis. Supporting women's organizations to articulate their priorities, advocate for gender equality, and carry out their own agendas can lead to strategic and sustainable changes in gender relations.

Recognising gender equality is relevant to good governance. The term 'governance' is intended to overcome the drawbacks of the use of the term 'government' which essentially refers to political functions and 'public administration' generally viewed in terms of more technocratic pursuits (Habitat Forum, 2001). Since governance is also a term widely used in connection with private sector management, it reminds us to the fact that there are commonalities between the two sectors in this respect. In addition, governance is also a more neutral concept comprising the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions for the citizens, including women, to articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences.

The moral ground for governance is laden in the concept of 'good governance'. This concept perhaps appeared first in the World Bank vocabulary and was mainly defined as: 'the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development' (World Bank, 1992). Good governance is reflected in the 'effective, efficient, honest, equitable, transparent and accountable performance of governing'. It is obvious

in these definitions that good governance implies the conduct or behaviour that must be upheld by actors in the social interactions that involve state and civil society institutions.

Good governance defines the norms in the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships. For the UNDP, therefore, good governance has three fundamental elements: political, economic and administrative. It is *political* because of its relevance to the process of democratic policy formulation that will affect the whole society. It is *economic* because it implies a country's economic activities which impact upon issues of equity, poverty, and quality of life. And good governance is certainly *administrative* because of its relevance to the system of policy implementation. Encompassing all the three fundamentals, the UNDP defines good governance as a relationship between the state and the society that are characterised by participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision (UNDP, 2002).

### **Gender equality through gender mainstreaming: good governance in poverty eradication**

According to the Agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the <sup>6</sup> Report of the Economic and Social Council 1997, gender mainstreaming is 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men for any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels'.

In Indonesia, in line with the government's commitment to mainstreaming gender, national medium term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2010-2014 states that mainstreaming gender in development is a strategy used to reduce the gap between the male-female population. It includes ways to ensure Indonesian women to access

the same benefits of development as men. Gender mainstreaming [*pengarusutamaan gender*] is done by integrating the perspectives or points of view of gender into the development process in every field.

Implementation of gender mainstreaming will result in more effective public policies to achieve a more just and equitable development for all Indonesian citizens, both men and women. Gender analysis is used to conduct gender responsive planning and governance. For example, it is expected that the integration of gender into planning and budgeting cycle at central and local levels would make the allocation of development resources to be more effective, accountable and fair in providing benefits to women and men.

Achieving gender equality through gender mainstreaming has become a national and local level issue. The RPJMN 2010-2014 mentions that the problem in relation to gender equality is the low participation of women in the development processes. It is caused by the persistence of discriminatory practices against women. Another basic problem is there is still a gap in the political participation of women in public decision making positions. This inequality comes from socio-cultural structure of society. In addition, there are still many gaps women encounter in accessing health care, education and participation in public activities. The next problem is the low quality of women's lives and the increase of violence against women. Even though these issues are long existing problems, much of the solutions have not been effectively implemented.

Realizing the need to tackle gender discrimination, in 1984 Indonesia acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This accession is translated into domestic law through the establishment of the Act No. 7 of 1984 and strengthened by Law No. 29 of 1999. Responding to CEDAW, in 2000 Indonesia issued the Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming, as a concrete effort to incorporate

the goal of gender equality and justice in many public policies including health, education, and employment. Besides that, there are also the Inpres. No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming and Act no. 12 of 2003 which regulate that political parties participating in elections must nominate candidates to the different levels of elections by giving due regard to the ensuring at the representation of at least 30 per cent of women in the candidacies. Other laws to improve women's disadvantaged positions are Law No. 23 of 2004 on Combating Domestic Violence and laws on the prevention of trafficking in women and children.

In the context of poverty eradication for women, the government of Indonesia has implemented gender mainstreaming in this effort by forming Development Performance Poverty Committee, which is an effort to empower poverty solutions at community level. Other similar efforts include the establishment of the Independent Rural PNPM, which has specific programmes for women. The Community Empowerment Post and Family Empowerment Post (both generally termed '*Posdaya*') were also established to respond to challenges like the problem of population, the quality of human resources and family welfare. The activities of the *Posdaya* include population control through integrated health activities, early childhood education and other economic empowerment activities.

In practice, there is always a target and monitoring, to be implemented properly and in accordance with its objectives, namely to improve the welfare and standard of living. Beside *Posdaya*, there is also *Karang Taruna*, Institute for the Empowerment of Rural Communities and other social institutions.

There is still much to be done by the government in eradicating poverty using the strategies of gender mainstreaming. A pro-job, pro-poor approach to poverty eradication must include a gender orientation. The benefits of community oriented or community

based programmes in achieving gender equality may be revisited to include gender perspectives.

In implementing the strategies of gender mainstreaming, the following are steps that have been taken by the Indonesia government:

1. Determination of regional policy implementation of gender mainstreaming in a district/ city.
2. Coordinating, facilitating and mediating gender mainstreaming in the district/city scale. This is done through:
  - a. Facilitating institutional strengthening and development of mechanisms for gender mainstreaming at governmental agencies, research and development, non-governmental institution in district/ city scale.
  - b. Coordination and facilitation policies, programmes and activities that are gender responsive in district/ city scale.
  - c. Monitoring and evaluation of PUG implementation in district/ city scale.
3. Quality of Life and the Protection of Women
  - a. Implementation of district/city policies about the improvement of quality of life of women associated with the field of development especially in education, health, economics, law and human rights, political, environmental, social and cultural in district/city scale.
  - b. Integrating the policy of Women's Quality of Life Implementation of district/city policies to improve the women's quality of life associated with the field of development especially in education, health, economics, law and human rights, political, environmental, social

- and cultural in district/city scale.
- c. Coordination of Policy Implementation of Women's Quality of Life: coordination of the implementation of quality of life of women in the field education, health, economics, law and human rights, political, environmental, and scale cultural district.
  - d. Women's Protection Policy: implementation of district/city policies of the protection of women protection especially against violence, women's labor, elderly and disabled women, and women in conflict areas and areas affected by the disaster in district/city scale.
4. Integrating Women's Protection Policy
- a. Facilitating the integration of district/city policies in protecting women especially protection against violence, women's labor, elderly and disabled women, and women in conflict areas and areas affected by the disaster in district/city scale.
  - b. Coordination of the Implementation of Women's Protection Policy
  - c. Coordination of policies protecting women especially protection against violence, women's labor, elderly and disabled women, and women in conflict areas and areas affected by the disaster in district/city scale.

In the women's poverty eradication efforts, the functions of the family welfare, women's empowerment and family planning agencies are seen by the government as the main elements in implementing gender mainstreaming at local government levels. The main task of these agencies is to be the district authorities in the specific issues within their jurisdictions. This include having the following functions:

1. Formulating technical policy in the field of family planning, family welfare and child protection Women's Empowerment.
2. Providing support for the organization of local government areas of family planning, family welfare, women's empowerment and child protection.
3. Development and the implementation of family planning task in technical guidance in family welfare, women empowerment and child protection.
4. Implementation secretarial agency.
5. The implementation of regional policy programmes in poverty alleviation.
6. Implementation of other tasks given by the Regents in accordance with the duties and functions.

### **Conclusion**

In eradicating women's poverty, the target of gender mainstreaming is to increase gender equality, which is characterised by an improved quality of life and the role of women especially in the fields of health, education, the economy, including access to the control of resources and political access. Eradication of violence against women is another measure to eradicate poverty. Good governance facilitates women to develop their self potential and improve their ability and courage in participating in the development processes on an equal basis with men. Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy for poverty eradication amongst women through promoting gender equality and justice. Gender equality and justice itself means a change in both the tangible (visible) and intangible (invisible) in the conditions and relations between men and women. The government needs to be the agents of gender equitable development so that women will be able to participate in development processes in an

equal and just manner.

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