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Millennium Development Goals in Indonesia

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) were set up by the United Nations to encourage developing countries to reduce poverty and promote gender equality. They were developed partly because by empowering women and creating gender equality, developing nations would be able to better fight poverty, disease, malnutrition, hunger, environmental issues, and much more. Some countries have made better progress on the MDG's than others, but overall many developing countries have seen some positive change. I will focus on the progress of the MDG's in Indonesia and where the country stands currently in terms of completing the goals. But first I will address Indonesia's history because it is important to understand what women went through in the past before discussing the issues they have today.

Indonesia represents a nation that has undergone many changes ever since it was colonized by the Dutch in the early to mid 1900's. During the Dutch colonization of Indonesia, women were given the right to vote and schooling was for girl's was encouraged. Then in World War II the Japanese defeated the Dutch and during that time the Japanese thought that, "women were obliged to support their men folk and, in the case of some younger women, serve the military as prostitutes" (Blackburn 20). However, women's movements were actually supported by the Japanese regime and were able to function as long as they did so in private. In 1949 the Indonesian people finally gained their long-awaited independence. Unfortunately, because so much attention was focused on the country's independence and becoming a functional democracy, many women's issues were put on the

back burner. But with the help of the Millennium Development Goals, there has been a new focus on women's issues in Indonesia, and steps are being taken to improve their quality of life.

Indonesia has made quite a bit of progress in the last few years, especially with the first two MDG goals. The first goal was to, "halve the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day by 2015 and halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015" (Sweetman 3). Indonesia is now beginning to catch up with other countries in terms of reducing the number of impoverished people. According to the 2005 Indonesian MDG Progress Report:

Indonesia has succeeded in lowering the poverty level which was previously increasing due to the economic crisis in 1999. The number of poor people dropped from 23.4 percent to 18.2 percent in 2002, 17.4 percent in 2003, and 16.66 percent in 2004. Meanwhile, the total number of population whose income is under \$1 also dropped from 9.2 percent in 2001 to 7.2 percent in 2002.

This gradual drop shows that over the past few years, Indonesia has been making fairly steady progress on this goal. Though Indonesia's poverty level on the whole has decreased, it is still higher compared to other ASEAN countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. There are numerous challenges facing the country, such as how poverty tends to affect the people in rural areas more than those who live in urban regions of the country. That disparity especially impacts the women who work in the agriculture industry. Women who work in cities, like Jakarta, are earning more than they used to, however women in rural areas are not doing quite so well and many have no choice but to go abroad and work.

According to *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*, women make up fifty percent and over of those who work in the informal sector, usually in addition to formal employment. This means that these women might work in the food processing, domestic, or agriculture

industry. But the informal sector often does not pay enough and so many Indonesian women have to work abroad as nannies or maids in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and many other places around the world. Thus much of the income that gets to these poor families is actually from money that is made by the mothers and wives who are working overseas.

With poverty declining at such a steady rate, one might be surprised to find that the number of children who are malnourished is on the rise in Indonesia. The 2005 Indonesia progress report recorded that:

The prevalence of malnourished children was decreasing during the period of 1989-2000 and it was slightly increasing during the period of 2001-2003. Meanwhile, the number of malnourished children went up from 24.7 percent to 27.5 percent in 2003.

The main causes of malnutrition for children in Indonesia are the lack of nutritious food available for them and poverty. What must be done to improve the nutrition of these children is to educate families on what kind of healthy food they should give to their kids, provide food subsidy for the impoverished, and give those families better access to healthcare.

The second MDG goal aims to have universal primary school education for every child in the world. It is still very rare for a poor Indonesian woman to obtain schooling beyond junior-secondary level. But the good news is that more young girls (as well as boys,) are attending primary and junior secondary school. This improvement is in large part due to the fact that Indonesia requires children to have nine years of primary education and then three years of junior secondary education. The second MDG goal only requires children to complete primary school and so Indonesia's target of requiring children to attend primary school and some of junior secondary school is, "more ambitious than the international target of universal primary education" (2005 Indonesia Progress Report 9). The number of children enrolled in junior-secondary school varied between provinces. There was also a disparity

between the rich and the poor and those who lived in rural versus urban areas. But overall, the education system has greatly improved and women are increasingly attending school. *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* shows that forty to fifty-nine percent of women are students in university. That is certainly an encouraging statistic because as women gain access to higher education, the more likely they are to become involved in the government and making important decisions for the future of their country.

Overall, the literacy rate has improved. The 2005 Indonesian Progress Report showed that, “the national literacy level of people aged 15-24 increased from 96.2 percent in 1990 to 98.7 percent in 2004.” Though education and literacy has been greatly improved, there are still challenges that lie ahead. There is still quite a large literacy gap between the rich and the poor. Poor people are getting less access to education for their children because, “education at all levels can be quite costly for most families. This is because, “all schools charge some tuition fees and require some form of uniform” (Sullivan 26). Not only that, but children also need money for textbooks, which is just another expense that poor families cannot afford. Therefore, part of the solution for children to obtain more education, is for Indonesia to continue and tackle the issue of poverty. Another challenge is that schools are not available in some of the remote communities (especially where traditional people like the Dayak tribe still live). The quality of education still needs some improvement as well because much of the learning does not require critical thinking and teachers are not always very qualified. The Indonesian government could further improve their education system by providing more funding for education, hire more qualified teachers, improve the infrastructure of the schools, etc.

The third MDG goal is to empower women and promote gender equality. Indonesia has certainly come a long way and for the most part, women have been able to receive an equal education. And in certain job arenas, like tourism, women do receive equal pay as men since “Indonesia’s minimum wage legislation requires equal pay for equal work between the sexes in the tourist industry” (Ford and Parker 87). But there is still gender bias and discrimination, especially within the workplace. For example, women who work in nightclubs or restaurants in tourist areas like Bali often have to dress a certain way so that they can promote more of a “western” image. Even though many of these women are Muslim and feel uncomfortable and embarrassed when wearing short skirts or more revealing clothing, they are required to do so if they want to work. In regards to education, women are attending Junior high school at a higher rate than men, however many still do not attend school because it is too far away and/or they must help take care of their family (this is especially true in rural areas). Men are still chosen more often to work in industries that are related to science or mathematics. Studies have shown that, “the percentage of female students studying at industrial technological high school was only 18.5 percent, agriculture and forestry 29.7 percent, and in business and management 64.6 percent” (2005 Indonesia MDG Progress Report 13).

In 2001, a woman named Megawati Sukarnoputri was appointed president of Indonesia. This did help bring gender issues to the forefront; however Sukarnoputri was seen as a very silent leader who lacked leadership and communication skills. Furthermore, it is said that when she became leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, it “had much more to do with her surname (Sukarnoputri), and her being the oldest child of former president Sukarno, than with her sex” (Bessell and Robinson 65). Women were not very satisfied with Sukarnoputri because they felt she did not try, “to politicize gender issues, or asked women

for their electoral support” (Bessell and Robinson 66). Nevertheless, the fact that a woman got to the highest rank one could possibly obtain in a nation’s government was a huge stride for women in Indonesia. But there are still more men in top government positions than there are women, and so Indonesian women are still struggling to have more of a voice in government decisions.

The fourth goal of the MDGs is to “reduce child mortality by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015. According to the 2005 Indonesian Progress Report, “In 1960, the under-five mortality rate was still high, at 216 per 1000 live births. The Indonesia Demography and Health Survey in 2002-2003 showed the decreasing number of under-five mortality rate to 46 per 1000 live births during the period of 1998 to 2002.” Though the infant mortality rate has decreased dramatically, it is (like poverty,) higher in Indonesia than some other Southeast Asian countries. Vaccinations for newborns such as the Measles vaccine, is available for many in the urban areas of Indonesia, but not as available in the rural regions. Many newborns will die in remote rural areas because of the lack of access to healthcare. If Indonesia started more health services in rural areas, this would continue to help reduce the rate of infant mortality. Access to healthcare for rural women would also improve maternal health.

This brings us to the fifth MDG goal, which is to reduce the maternal mortality ratio. Indonesia has not been making enough progress on this specific goal. Indonesia’s MDG progress report (2005) reports that:

The maternal mortality ratio in Indonesia has dropped to 307 per 100,000 live births (1998-2002). But with 20,000 mothers dying each year due to complication during pregnancy and delivery, the MDG’s targets will not be achieved unless an intensive effort is made to speed up the declining trend.

The maternal mortality rate in Indonesia is among the highest in Southeast Asia and there are many causes for this. Infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, among others, increase the chance of women dying during pregnancy or childbirth. There is also a lack of trained child birth attendants and in rural areas it is common for there to be midwives to help in the birthing process. But the number of village midwives in Indonesia had decreased and getting access to healthcare in rural areas continues to be large problem. The Indonesian government has implemented a new policy to improve maternal health. The Making Pregnancy Safer campaign aims to “improve access and coverage of medical services for mothers and new-born babies” (2005 Indonesia Progress Report 20). Ultimately, more policies like this need to be put in place in order for the maternal mortality rate to decrease.

Another large issue for Indonesia is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The amount of people infected with HIV or AIDS is less than Thailand and Vietnam, but is becoming an increasing problem. The 2005 Indonesia Progress Report states that, “It is estimated that in 2003, there were 90,000-130,000 people infected with HIV/AIDS and in 2010 it is estimated that around 100,000 will suffer or die of AIDS, and 1-5 million will be infected.” Indonesia is attempting to give more people access to healthcare, but ultimately the huge problems are drug-use and prostitution which greatly contributes to the HIV/AIDS rate. Prostitution and sex-trafficking is becoming more and more commonplace in Indonesia and the government unfortunately does not do much to crackdown on that growing issue. If they did so, it would certainly help reduce the high rate of HIV/AIDS.

The incidence of Tuberculosis is also very high in Indonesia. According the 2005 Indonesian Progress Report, “Indonesia ranks third in contributing the highest number of

tuberculosis cases to the world's burden, with an estimated 582,000 new cases each year.” The Indonesian government needs to make fighting tuberculosis one of their top priorities, especially seeing as they are one of the top countries that contribute the highest amount of tuberculosis cases in the world. However, on the bright side, the 2005 Indonesia Progress report said that, “86.7 percent of cases successfully completed treatment in 2003.” So at least recently there has been more success in treating patients than in previous years. Another infectious disease in this region of the world is Malaria. Indonesians who live in rural areas are more prone to contracting Malaria. This disease also affects poor people more often because some families have no access to mosquito nets or bug spray. Women who are pregnant and children under five years old are especially vulnerable and many do not get properly treated.

Goal seven of the MDG's is to, “halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation” (Sweetman 3). The 2005 Indonesian Progress report states that:

The access to drinking water in 2002 was only 50 percent, where 18 percent was through the piping system. In 2004 it increased to 53.4 percent. It shows that access to safe drinking water has improved. However, there is a big amount of fund needed to achieve the MDG targets by 2015.

The Indonesian government did not make gaining access to safe drinking water one of their top priorities and even if they do build water facilities, they are usually not adequately maintained or cease to operate. *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World* also shows that seventy-five to eighty-nine percent of the Indonesian population does not have “improved” water available to them. Though Indonesia has more access to safe water than Cambodia or

Papua New Guinea, it is still an important issue that needs to be addressed and actually funded and supported by the Indonesian government.

Poor rural communities are also not aware of how to improve basic sanitation in their households. According to the 2005 Indonesian Progress Report, “Household’s access to basic sanitation facilities increased from 63.5 percent in 2002 to 67.1 percent in 2004.” Despite this increase, there are still a lot of households, especially in rural areas, without proper sanitation. This lack of sanitation is especially noticed in the slum dwellings that are located in big cities such as Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta. Along with fixing the sanitation and water safety issue, Indonesia wants to improve the life of slum dwellers by 2020. Many Indonesians live in cities live in unsafe and unclean areas and their houses are often crowded and poorly built. Indonesia implemented the One Million Houses Development National Movement with the goal of:

Improving basic facilities in simple and health housing areas, and community-based housing development. In addition, there will be some efforts to develop housing micro credit schemes, a new subsidy scheme, and setting up an institution that will be responsible for housing development in order to increase low-income people’s ability to improve or build their own houses (2005 Indonesia Progress Report 30).

If the basic sanitation standards were met and there was access to safe drinking water, the poverty rate would decrease even further. This is because more girls would finish their education if more schools had proper sanitation facilities and women would be able to work easier, especially if their jobs involve using water and having a clean space to work in. But at this time, it does not look like Indonesia will accomplish this goal by 2015.

One of Indonesia’s own targets is to promote environmental stability in the region. The government wants to, “integrate the principles of sustainable development into national policies and programmes and to reverse the loss of environmental resources” (The 2005

Indonesian Progress Report 27). Deforestation is occurring at alarming rates, in large part due to the logging, most of which is done illegally. Compared to other Southeast Asian countries (other than the Philippines,) Indonesia has much higher deforestation rates. Indonesia recognizes that in order to prevent more illegal logging from continuing, the economy must recover first. This is because many of the illegal loggers do it because it is the only job they can obtain. More sustainable development programs also need to be put in place in order to ensure that the forests and wildlife of Indonesia will survive.

The last MDG goal is to develop a global partnership in development. Indonesia aims to reduce some of their national debt which was US\$67.12 billion in 2005. There is still a reliance on international aid and so another one of Indonesia's goals is to be less reliant on foreign aid. But to do this, Indonesia (along with many other developing countries,) strongly feel that canceling underdeveloped countries debts is a way to solve the problem of countries depending on foreign financial assistance. The country has also not seen much improvement in terms of trade. The Indonesian government feels that, "as far as fair trade is concerned, quota-free and duty-free access to export should be given to less developed countries" (2005 Indonesian Progress Report 31). Indonesia aims to become a developed country and believes global partnership will increase the chance of Indonesia accomplishing the eight MDG goals.

Indonesia is still a developing country, and will continue to be in that stage once the year 2015 finally arrives. But because it is such a young democracy, Indonesia has certainly accomplished a lot. Indonesia has made huge strides in reducing the poverty rate and giving children access to primary school education and above. However, Indonesia still has huge challenges ahead and is still fairly behind in accomplishing many of the other MDG goals such as reducing the HIV/AIDS rate and improving maternal healthcare. Though all the goals

will not be accomplished by 2015 Indonesia will attempt to accomplish all of them, even if it takes a couple more decades to do so. The women's movements in Indonesia are still going strong and as Susan Blackburn writes in her book, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, "Indonesian women leaders are well aware that their movement will need to strengthen its membership base and learn to operate the political system to its benefit in order to face the uncertainties of the years ahead." Indonesian women will ultimately decide the fate of their country and despite the challenges; Indonesia is making slow but steady progress towards a brighter future.

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