



ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

Building on 35 years of collaboration with Muslim organizations in Indonesia, The Asia Foundation currently supports Islamic civil society organizations in their efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, improve local governance, and reduce poverty in Indonesia. These organizations have long formed the vital core of Indonesia's civil society and continue to play a leading role in democratic reform and improving social conditions. They include groups belonging to the mass-based organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah which together claim over 60 million members, with networks that span the country from the national down to the district and village levels. Commanding legitimacy and influence in both state and society in Indonesia, Islamic organizations are a natural partner in Indonesia's development.

ELECTIONS

In 1998, The Asia Foundation supported the founding of the People's Voter Education Network (*Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih Rakyat* or JPPR). JPPR is Indonesia's only national elections network, and is comprised of dozens of Islamic and interfaith mass-based organizations, and Radio News Agency 68H. Many of the member organizations are affiliated with Muhammadiyah and NU, and thus provide unparalleled access to grassroots voters. With ongoing Foundation support, JPPR conducts comprehensive, nation-wide voter education and election monitoring. Beginning with the 1999 elections, and continuing through the 2004 national elections, JPPR trained and deployed over 350,000 community-based voter education volunteers; printed and distributed more than 25 million voter education books, leaflets, and posters; and produced thousands of voter education television and radio public service announcements.

JPPR is also the only national organization monitoring all direct elections for governors

and district heads (known by the Indonesian acronym *pilkada*), a process that started in 2005. Through its *pilkada* program, JPPR has recruited and deployed over 60,000 volunteers as monitors at the village level, helping to ensure that the elections are free and fair, and that citizens can actively participate in strengthening their democracy at the local level. JPPR also develops voter education programs in strategically important regions, with activities including televised candidate debates, voter education brochures with the results of candidate questionnaires, radio public service announcements, and leaflets distributed at mosques. Such activities aim to increase the accountability of leaders once elected, as well as general voter awareness about the elections and important issues.

EDUCATION REFORM

Responding to changes in government education policy which repealed a decades-long mandate on militaristic, top-down citizenship courses, the Foundation collaborated with the Indonesian Center for Civic Education (ICCE) and the Institute of Research and Educational Development of Muhammadiyah University Yogyakarta (LP3UMY) to pioneer new civic education curricula in the State Islamic Institutes and Muhammadiyah University campuses respectively. Over 500 teachers from more than 80 campuses were trained in teaching civic education through participatory methods, and approximately 100,000 students enroll in these courses each year. The Foundation's civic education programs continue to expand, and can now be found at 35 private Islamic universities and 200 junior and senior secondary *madrasah* and *pesantren*. Inspired by the success of these programs, campuses throughout the country have begun to adopt similar courses through their own means.

In Aceh, The Asia Foundation has supported efforts to improve the quality of education



INDONESIA

Indonesian Muslim organizations are actively advocating for pro-poor local regulations and the reallocation of local budgets to enhance public services.

Indonesia's Islamic institutions have been on the cutting edge of civic education curriculum reform -- with an innovative new civics course reaching 100,000 university students yearly.

Indonesian mass-based Muslim groups, through JPPR, will have deployed over 60,000 volunteers to ensure the legitimacy of over 400 local elections between 2005-2008.

at *dayah* (Islamic boarding schools) by building 23 computer labs and 30 libraries. These schools enroll nearly 20,000 students. The Foundation also works to improve life skills for youth in junior secondary schools as part of USAID's five-year Decentralized Basic Education 3 (DBE3) program. Managing program implementation in the provinces of South Sulawesi and West Java, the Foundation also lends to the program an expertise in Islamic education and gender equity.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Islamic civil society has, from the colonial period through the present, been a key driver of democratic reform in Indonesia. Whereas religious organizations are often seen as being resistant to change, in Indonesia, they have long formed the vanguard on issues such as human rights, free and fair elections, gender equality, tolerance for diversity, and a free and open public sphere. Since the 1970s, The Asia Foundation has supported efforts of Islamic civil society organizations in their efforts to strengthen democratic principles and practices in both state and society. Programs such as the Institute for the Study of Islam and Society's (LKIS) short courses on human rights and gender equality, and similar *pesantren*-based courses and trainings have proven successful in helping citizens understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic state. Other programs, such as conflict mitigation through collaborations between religious organizations and police, and measures by religious groups to stem human trafficking, focus on protecting citizens' rights by tackling specific issues. The success of these programs hinges on the legitimacy of implementing organizations and their ability to convey concepts through culturally appropriate contexts.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK FOR THE POOR

While democratic reform has made notable gains in the post-Soeharto era, local governance has not. Half of Indonesia's population lives below the poverty line and lacks access to basic government services such as health and education. Such

conditions are not only grave in their own right, they also undermine the legitimacy of democratic systems as segments of society point to their failure to meet citizens' basic needs. Since 2005, the Foundation has brokered relationships between civil society organizations working on good governance and budget advocacy, with Islamic organizations that have the legitimacy and political influence to affect pro-poor policy change at the local level. It is this collaboration of NU, Muhammadiyah, and other Islamic organizations in pro-poor advocacy that makes this initiative unique and is the key to its success and sustainability. Foundation partners have established citizens' forums, councils, and mechanisms that have been directly responsible for concrete policy and budgetary changes in 12 districts and will continue to ensure pro-poor outcomes in these areas for years to come.

GENDER EQUITY AND ISLAMIC JUDGES

Religious judges play a significant role in the Indonesian community as leading figures of legal interpretation on issues of social and political relevance including Islamic family law. Their decisions and interpretations of religious affairs have a large bearing on the community at large, and it is therefore important that their decisions in the courts are fair and impartial. The Foundation partners with the Women's Studies Center (PSW) at the State Islamic University (UIN) in Yogyakarta and Putroe Kandee, a local NGO in Aceh, to 1) strengthen judicial fairness among Religious Court judges towards women and children in dealing with marriage and family matters in the court; and 2) fortify the understanding of Religious Court judges on issues of gender equality in Islamic law. Judges that participate in these trainings consistently make decisions that show greater gender fairness than they did before the trainings. As of 2007, over 300 judges across Indonesia have received this training.

For more information on The Asia Foundation's development programs in partnership with Islamic organizations, please contact John Brownlee (jbrownlee@tafindo.org).

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation supports programs in Asia that help improve governance and law, economic reform and development, women's empowerment, and international relations. Drawing on 50 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

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