The Asia Foundation is committed to advancing women’s rights and enhancing the role of women in Indonesia’s democratic and economic development. Drawing on more than 55 years of experience in Indonesia and across Asia, the Foundation partners with civil society and government to support innovative initiatives that expand women’s participation in the policymaking process, increase the representation of women in legislatures, push for greater budget transparency and equitable budget allocations, raise awareness of gender issues and secure women’s rights.

TOWARD GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND PRO-POOR PUBLIC POLICY AND BUDGETING

The transfer of decision-making authority to district and city-level governments that has occurred under decentralization in Indonesia has presented new opportunities for women to influence policy and budget decisions that directly affect their lives. The Asia Foundation collaborates with civil society organizations and local government agencies in 25 districts and cities in eight provinces to advance gender responsive and pro-poor policies and budgets that will improve public services and respond to the needs of women and the poor. Building on its pioneering gender budget advocacy work and extensive research on decentralization, the Foundation has developed a range of gender-budgeting tools in partnership with national experts, such as Pattiro and the Indonesian Forum for Budget Transparency (Fitra). These tools cover performance-based budgeting, gender analysis of budgets, advocacy strategies for gender-sensitive and pro-poor policies, guidelines for participatory community consultations, and integrating gender concerns into development planning meetings. The Foundation and its partners have used these tools to train more than 2,000 local government and civil society representatives. The Foundation also provides direct technical assistance to local government units, such as the health and education offices, during the development of their annual plans and budgets. These efforts have increased gender budgeting skills at the local level, contributing to increased allocations for local health and education programs. At the same time, the Foundation supports its partners to carry out critical analysis of local budgets, form advocacy networks, and use the results of analysis to conduct advocacy activities including community meetings, public policy dialogues, and direct lobbying. To further heighten public awareness of gender issues in budgeting, these activities are complemented by targeted campaigns across broadcast and print media.

ADVANCING WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Asia Foundation supports a range of activities to increase the number and build the capacity of women candidates in Indonesian elections. Women now comprise 18 percent of the 560 elected members of the Indonesian House of Representatives, and in some regions, women’s representation has reached as high as 34 percent. These women are making a difference in the way national and local legislatures work, especially in efforts to promote gender-equity in laws and regulations. To support these women legislators, many of whom are new to the field, the Foundation is committed to advancing women’s rights and enhancing the role of women in Indonesia’s democratic and economic development.

Some 800 religious district court judges, and 50 religious high court judges, nearly a third of the religious judges in the country, have participated in the Foundation’s gender sensitivity training.
Foundation, together with the Center for Political Studies at the University of Indonesia (Puskapol UI), the Center for Human Rights at Airlangga University (Pusham UNAIR), the Institute of Public Policy Studies (LSKP), and other local partners, developed reference materials and are providing training to help women lawmakers better fulfill their legislative roles. The Foundation has also supported the establishment of networks and caucuses, connecting women representatives with women activists and civil society organizations, which can provide technical and political support for women representatives in their efforts to advance gender responsive and pro-poor policies. Technical assistance and programs to support women in politics have reached women parliamentarians and caucus members in 67 districts.

**Supporting Women’s Full and Equal Participation in Public Life**

Gender stereotyping and traditional views of women’s roles continue to disadvantage girls and women in Indonesia, making it difficult for women to be full and equal participants in social, economic, and political life. While Indonesian women are active in many aspects of public life and face no legal barriers, most professional areas continue to be dominated by men. The Asia Foundation is working with Paramadina University to conduct a series of regional seminars to further explore how women, and men, are engaging in political and public life and the challenges they are facing. In addition to looking at the role of Islam in supporting gender equality and the involvement of women in the public sphere, the seminars also provide an opportunity for prominent local women to share their experiences relating to their careers and public life. Given the need to address societal attitudes to women’s participation in public life, the Foundation and Paramadina are supporting these activities with discussions and talk shows on local radio and television stations, helping to increase public awareness and ensure seminars have far reaching impact.

**Economic Empowerment**

Women own 35 percent of Indonesia’s small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and it is these businesses that drive the country’s economic growth. Many woman entrepreneurs, however, have limited knowledge about access to financial institutions and still register their businesses in their husbands’ names. To encourage women to register their businesses in their own names, The Asia Foundation is working with women’s business groups to increase awareness of the benefits of such licenses, namely legal protection to control their own businesses and access to formal institutions. The Foundation has supported mass licensing events in 18 districts across eight provinces, with 2,200 women registering their businesses. The Foundation also supports efforts to improve the entrepreneurial skills of women SME owners and increase access to capital through microcredit. With the Foundation’s assistance, thousands of women in Aceh have gained new economic opportunities through a microcredit revolving fund program. The Foundation and its partner, the Center for the Development of Women’s Resources (PPSW), have provided valuable skills to members of local women’s groups in areas such as business development, bookkeeping, revolving fund mechanisms, and establishing local microfinance institutions.

**Promoting Gender Awareness in Religious Courts**

Religious court judges play a significant role in Indonesian communities as the legal interpreters of Islamic family law and have great influence in determining issues related to women’s rights and gender equality. The Asia Foundation partners with the Center for Women’s Studies at Sunan Kalioga State Islamic University Yogyakarta (PSW UN Sunan Kalioga), Putroe Kandee, the state religious courts body, and the Department of Religious Affairs to train religious court judges and staff on issues of children’s rights and gender equality in Islamic law. More than 50 religious high court judges and 800 religious court judges, out of over 3,000 in the country from across Java, Aceh, Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara, have participated in training, which has included materials on partnership in the family, reproductive health and sexuality, domestic violence, and the rights of the child. Judges and court staff learned how to integrate a stronger gender perspective to fulfill the rights of women and children, at the same time as adhering to religious principles in their work. Judges have reported that they have learned how to incorporate relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child alongside the Marriage Law of 1974 and the Compilation of Islamic Law.

For more information on The Asia Foundation’s Gender and Women’s Participation programs, please contact Hana A. Satriyo (hsatriyo@tafindo.org).

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