

Gender Analysis in Sexual Abuse against Children: How Far Have We Gone? Ms. Marisna YULIANTI (Indonesia)

Earlier this year, Indonesia witnessed an uproar of horrifying violent crime against children. The public was shocked with the unfold of sexual assault incidents against children as young as 6 years old at a presumably one of the most well-established educational institutions in Indonesia, Jakarta International School (JIS). Almost within the same time span, another case emerged where a man was accused of sexually molesting more than 80 children in Sukabumi, West Java. Perhaps the most troubling case was the sexual abuse and dismemberment killing of 6 children in the Province of Riau. Perpetrators are all male and majority of these abused children are boys.

Indonesia National Commission for Child Protection claimed that throughout 2013 there have been 1620 cases of violence against children. 19% of them is identified as emotional abuse, 30% is physical abuse, and the highest figure comes from sexual abuse incidence which accounts for 51% of the total number of cases. While it is a widely accepted fact that victims of sexual violence are mostly women and girls, sexual abuse evidently also happen to men and boys. According to a survey on violence against children conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia together with the State Ministry of National Development and Planning, Statistics Indonesia, UNICEF and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA, in 2013, among respondents aged 13-17 years who had experienced physical violence, emotional and sexual abuse in the past 12 months, approximately 3 million boys or 1 in 4 boys, admitted to have experienced physical violence of some sort, while 1 in 12 boys and 1 out of 19 girls were found to have experienced sexual violence.

In Indonesia, parents and adults in general perceive girls are being more vulnerable than boys and therefore the society tends to be more protective of girls. This is said to be one of the reasons behind the high number of incidence of sexual violence against boys. The long-existing gender stereotyping that boys are stronger and unemotional, causes embarrassment for male victims of sexual abuse to come out and speak up which makes it even more difficult for the law enforcers to unveil the cases. As most perpetrators are male and there has been a great deal of research findings that say experience of child abuse may increase the possibility to become adult offenders, it is therefore crucial to integrate gender analysis that focus on the needs and the interests of boys and girls in coming up with preventive actions. In the aftermath of the incidents, sex education, or sex ed targeted on children became the trending topic in every discussions. Child

psychologists and activists started to openly speak about the importance of sex education that had been considered taboo and inappropriate for public consumption before. Responding to the issues, government of Indonesia has also recently launched National Movement of Anti Sexual Crime against Children (Gerakan Nasional Anti Kejahatan Seksual terhadap Anak/GN-AKSA) to combat sexual violence against children with the involvement of relevant ministries, civil society, parents and public in which sex education was mentioned as one of the key aspect of prevention.

Apparently parents are still caught up with the myths that misplaced sex education as merely a means for teaching children and young people to have sexual intercourse and hence increase the possibility for them to be engaged in free and unprotected sex. Instead, it actually aims at increasing awareness on the difference of characteristics that make up male and female sexuality, sexual development and reproduction, and the different religious and cultural views on sex so that people can make informed decisions about their behavior and protect themselves from negative outcomes of sexual behavior such as unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual assault/abuse. It is also worth noting that sex education should be age-appropriate which takes into account child development stage in determining the best and most suitable educational materials and methods. For instance, children can be taught to recognize their reproductive organs and to know which areas in their bodies are sensitive and not allowed to be touched by strangers. It is also important for parents to become aware of gender stereotyping that still exist in the society. Gender-based stereotype that says boys are not supposed to wear pink or to cry creates certain expectation for them to behave accordingly. Boys need to be encouraged that it is ok for them to be more open and not to be ashamed of their feelings and emotions.

Finally, let us consider this as a reminder that gender issues are also about men and boys. How many of us have been caught in the wrong perception that gender-based discrimination only affect women and girls? A lot, I am sure. Gender analysis focuses on the differences between men and women and seek means to address the needs of both sexes to be able to equally access to, control, participate in and benefit from development. Hence gender issues concern not only women but also men and how both could achieve substantial equality in various spheres of life. The correct understanding of gender will create means to improve the full enjoyment of rights of men and women including the right to be free from sexual coercion.