

A Woman's Empowerment Story: Choices Are Ours

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Ega (31) is a working mom, which means she has to go out of her house for work. Her job in the field of communication and public relations has taken her to many places and requires great mobility from her. She sometimes travels for her business. As a woman, mom, wife, and member of society, Ega's tasks are not easy. She has to balance her life, sharing her time and energy to do many tasks.

Although Ega graduated with a degree on communication and public relations, she had a particular hobby that she found when she was a teenager during her high school years: going to the mall and shopping for clothing. She always wondered how the clothes were made, and was curious about the process of dressmaking. So she decided to learn dressmaking on her own and managed to do pattern making and sew the clothes she desired. However, her ambition to formally enroll in a fashion school to become a fashion designer was not approved by her parents. Therefore she decided to study public relations in college instead. And during her college years, she kept her passion for fashion alive by collecting fabrics, and designing as well as sewing her own clothes.

Now that she is a mom of a 3-yearold daughter, Ega has found her passion coming back again especially after she had to buy so many clothes for her daughter. She thought why not make it by herself. Therefore, in between her busy schedule, she started designing and sewing clothes for her daughter as a hobby. From there, she got an idea of developing a clothing line for little girls aged between one and five years. She saw a huge potential market for children's clothes. In this way, Ega set out on a journey as an office worker who is also juggling her clothing line business and her main role as a mom, wife, and daughter.

Nowadays, women have choices of becoming whatever they like. The life choices should be made based on their passion. Of course support from people around them plays an important part of their life. In Ega's case, she had a support system in a form of close family ties and her husband's efforts to always give her necessary support she needed.

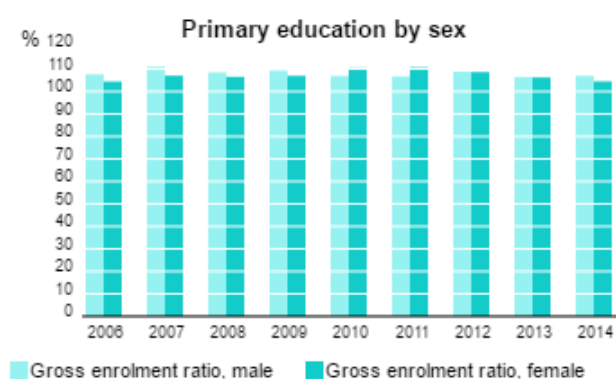
Whichever path a woman chooses—becoming a mom working outside the home or a stay-at-home mom—both choices are good. In modern days, roles that women play in society are becoming increasingly important and basically seen everywhere. In Indonesia, as shown in the table below, the male to female ratio in regard to primary education enrollment is quite equal. It means that both women and men have similar opportunities, unlike in the 1950s when women tend to be told not to pursue higher education.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Socio-economic indicators	
Total population (in thousands)	257,564
GDP in billions - PPP\$	2,842
GDP per capita - PPP\$	11,035
Adult literacy rate	95.44
Female adult literacy rate	93.82
Youth literacy rate	99.71
Female youth literacy rate	99.73
Government expenditure on education as % of GDP (2014)	3.29
R&D as % of GDP (2013)	0.08,489

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

EDUCATION



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Indonesia has been experiencing women's empowerment since the country struggled to win the independence. The country's female heroines such as Cut Nyak Dien, Christina Martha Tiahahu, R.A. Kartini, Dewi Sartika and many others are part of Indonesia's history. Also, the fact that organizations such as Aisyiyah, Muslimat NU and many national as well as local level organizations have female leaders and that their members are engaged in various activities shows us how women empowerment can be achieved in many ways.

Women's empowerment is not just a theory, but a part of life. In Indonesia, I have witnessed women's empowerment activities conducted even in my surrounding neighborhood. They do not have to be fancy activities; mere small-scale neighborhood programs are also a good way to trigger the empowerment.

To return to Ega's story, we can see that she had choices and how she embarked on and has taken steps in her journey toward empowerment as a woman. At every step she's taking, she is empowering herself. She is fulfilling her roles at home, at work and in society, illustrating how to appreciate everything in a woman's life. She seems comfortable in her roles while exemplifying empowerment, something supposed to be gained by every woman.

Photo: Ega working at her shop after working hours at office

