

Women and Community Development through Posyandu (Pos Pelayanan Terpadu)

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Indonesia is one of the biggest countries in the world with quite a high fertility rate, but on the other hand, the issue of babies' and toddlers' health is also becoming a growing concern due to some cases of malnutrition. Such cases happen especially in congested areas where government officers cannot easily reach out.

Traditionally, Indonesian society is based on so-called "gotong royong" or working together in communities. Men and women are thriving together to make their neighbourhoods a good place for them to live side by side. One of the measures that the neighbourhoods have been conducting is a childcare activity. This activity is called Posyandu (Pos Pelayanan Terpadu) that can be translated as Integrated Health Service which is aimed to take care the health of babies and toddlers, and expectant mothers. Posyandu is most of the time led by women in the neighbourhoods, each consisting of 50 houses or more. Local governments supply them with healthy foods for kids and also send health officers to examine the welfare of kids and expectant mothers.

Posyandu is conducted not only in the congested areas, but also in the middle-class areas. The activities are held once a month, providing services such as weighing kids (up to 5-year-olds), keeping the records of the kids' weight, height and what kind of conditions they are in. The officers from the health service help Posyandu by giving vaccines or health check-ups for the kids. During the Posyandu time, there is health consultation as well. The local governments are always involved in such activities to ensure that the community services are always available and well-documented for future development.

The fact that women always take part in the community service is like a sign on how the women's roles in the society are always important. Regarding health awareness, usually the women take more active roles in the society. And Posyandu has existed in Indonesia for more than 30 years. Besides it's a place for health-related activities, it's also a place where the neighbourhoods gather and also discuss many/various issues related to their neighbourhoods.

On many levels, women's involvement in community development is prominently admitted. Indonesia has a political rule that 30% of the parliament seats must be allocated for women. Such a regulation is like an acknowledgment of women's participation in the development, either on a neighbourhood level or a national level.

It is safe to say that women's empowerment in Indonesia is obviously seen even on a neighbourhood level. Posyandu is basically a way to provide better livelihoods for the kids (babies and toddlers) and also their parents. Women's empowerment is not merely about politics or high-level policy-making. There is a saying that women are the backbone of the society; therefore, their activities also determine what kind of society we live in when the women has their own empowerment activity in the neighbourhood.

To some extent, we can say that in a small-scale neighbourhood where people usually know each other, people might feel more comfortable to be around those whom they know, and that is why such program like Posyandu is conducted everywhere in all over Indonesia. Of course Posyandu is not only for women but also for men to take the burden. In this sense, the men's involvement is usually related to infrastructure preparation while women are most likely to take over the action of service on the designated day.

The local governments also have to actively play a role in the empowerment of women. In such an activity as Posyandu, the involvement of the local government is so imminent because it is also determined by facts such as how the health monitoring and evaluation need the help of the society in the neighbourhood. Posyandu could be used as a monitoring time to see the health's quality of the kids in the neighbourhood. Women will always play an important role in the community development due to the nature of most neighbourhood in Indonesia that is usually relied on the women's activities. Women are leaders in many aspects. They could empower themselves because they are well prepared to do it. Posyandu is an example of many things done by women in community development.



A kid is being weighed in a monthly checking.