

Examining Poverty Issues from Children's Perspectives



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, various development and poverty reduction programs had shown significant results. However, regional disparities remain a major challenge for the government in providing good and quality public services to disadvantaged and/or rural areas.

This study focuses on children living in areas with limited public services, a condition that makes them more vulnerable to falling into the poverty trap in the future. **To break the vicious cycle of poverty, existing policy interventions need to consider children's perspectives, as they also bear the consequences of uneven development. Therefore, we include children's voices in this poverty analysis.**

Methodology



This research uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative data collection was conducted using several methods, including using postcards for primary school-aged children; focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual contribution sheets for junior and senior high school (or the equivalent) and out-of-school children; and in-depth interviews for parents of toddlers, young adults, local adults, and other informants. Meanwhile, the quantitative data collection employed a questionnaire from UNICEF-Innocenti that had been adapted to the local context.

Kabupaten (District of) Tasikmalaya was chosen as the study location considering the high level of disparity in this region compared to other areas in Indonesia. The three *kecamatan* (subdistricts) of focus in this study are Rajapolah, Cigalontang, dan Bojongsambir.

Findings

Children living in the semiurban area (Kecamatan Rajapolah) have very different life experiences and access to public services from children living in the rural areas (Kecamatan Cigalontang and Kecamatan Bojongsambir).

Education and Employment Opportunities

- Dropout cases due to economic constraints are found in all *kecamatan* in this study. However, children in semiurban areas have more education and employment opportunities.
- In semiurban areas, community learning centers and equivalency (*kejar paket*) programs are quite active, allowing out-of-school children to study while working.
- Children in rural areas lack life skills. Although agricultural land is widely available, young people consider farming as a low-prestige and unattractive job. They prefer working in big cities like Bandung and Jakarta. This affects their aspirations for higher education. For example, very few children in rural areas are interested in pursuing education beyond bachelor's degree.

Economy and Public Services

- Children living in semiurban areas have families with better economic conditions and access to public services (roads, internet connection).
- In rural areas, there are no community-based rehabilitation centers for children with disability and no village ambulances.



Social Relationships



In some areas, children have too close relationships with their friends and neighbors. However, this strong community bond also poses issues.

- Girls are burdened with twice as much domestic work as boys.
- In rural areas, the negative impacts of overly close relationships on teenage mental health are found. They feel worried about their future because of their family's financial constraints and social pressures.

Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions are the most frequently mentioned positive aspect by children (aged 6–18 years) in postcards, FGDs, and individual contribution sheets. They often describe their environment as cool, lush, and full of trees.

- Only a small number of children discuss environmental issues, such as people littering or difficulties in obtaining clean water during the dry season.
- Young adult informants (aged 19–21 years) in rural areas criticize local sanitation more, as residents build facilities for bathing, washing, and lavatory on top of fish ponds.

Recommendations for the Government

The government needs to provide children with more opportunities to have a better livelihood in the future through initiatives in the education and employment sectors:

- 1** Collect data on the number of students by educational level, including out-of-school children, as a basis for informed policymaking, such as by promoting *kejar paket* programs for out-of-school children and providing scholarships to low-income families.
- 2** Provide specialized training for the youth to maximize regional potential, such as agricultural, fisheries, and modern carpentry training for rural areas and marketing and craftsmanship training for semiurban areas.
- 3** Provide affordable and accessible business capital for the youth, so that they are not reliant on direct cash assistance.
- 4** Improve facilities that support children's development, such as libraries with more comprehensive and age-appropriate book collections, talent and art development programs, and community-based counseling and rehabilitation services.

Authors:

- Risa Wardatun Nihayah
- Aisyah Putri Mayangsari

Research Team:

- Luhur Bima
- Michelle Andrina
- Dimitri Swasthika Nurshadrina

Translator:

- Mohammad Gabriell Firdausy Erfan

Design and Layout:

- Muhammad Harits Kamaaluddin
- Novita Eka Syaputri
- Heru Sutapa