

POLICY BRIEF

REMOTE AREA ALLOWANCE AND ABSENTEE LEVELS FOR TEACHERS IN REMOTE AREAS

Teachers are the determining factor in whether the implementation of education is successful. Research has shown that teachers make the biggest contribution to student achievements. In the midst of limited school facilities and infrastructure, especially in remote areas, the teacher's role is even more important. However, various research studies show that the teacher absentee level in remote areas in developing countries is still quite high. This occurs because teachers in remote areas have to deal with many complex problems, including limited facilities within the school, difficulties in accessing the school because of the terrain surrounding the school, lack of transportation facilities, and high cost of transportation. The disproportionate size of the problems faced by teachers, in comparison with the incentives they receive, can lead to teachers being demotivated and can decrease the performance of teachers in carrying out their jobs. Thus, it is very important that a satisfactory incentive is given to teachers in remote areas so that education in remote areas does not continue to be left behind in comparison with more developed areas.

Remote Area Allowance Program

In many cases, giving economic incentives to teachers can increase teacher attendance levels at schools. The distribution of an incentive can also increase student achievement, especially through improvements in teaching methods, extra lessons outside regular teaching hours, and improving teachers' responses to student needs.

In Indonesia, the distribution of an incentive to teachers working in remote areas was regulated under Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers. This law was elaborated in National Education Minister Regulation No. 32/2007 on Allowances for Teachers in Remote Areas, which states that civil servant and non-civil servant teachers who have fulfilled the set requirements will receive the remote area allowance. Teachers participating in the Remote Area Allowance program received an incentive of Rp1,350,000 per month. It was hoped that the distribution of the remote area allowance would motivate teachers to continue teaching in the remote areas in which they were already working.

To investigate the effectiveness of the Remote Area Allowance program, The SMERU Research Institute carried our research on the impact of the remote area allowance on one main indicator of teacher performance; teacher absentee levels in schools. With this, the effectiveness of the program can be examined and, if the program should be continued, what improvements will be needed.

Table 1. Comparison of the Absentee Levels of Remote Area Allowance Recipient (RA) Teachers and Non-RA Teachers in RA Kabupaten (%), 2008

Sample RA Kabupaten	In RA Schools			In Non-RA Schools	Total
	RA Teachers	Non-RA Teachers	Average		
Kabupaten Lahat	25.6	30.8	26.8	12.7	18.9
Kabupaten Sukabumi	12.5	12.0	12.2	13.3	12.9
Kabupaten Lombok Tengah	27.3	23.1	26.1	24.2	25.0
Kabupaten Kolaka	53.1	43.8	50.0	39.7	44.1
Kabupaten Nunukan ^a	-	-	-	25.2	25.2
Average	31.5	25.4	29.3	24.4	25.3

Notes: The teacher absentee levels are average sample amounts and are not weighted. A kabupaten is a district.

^aThe remote area allowance has not yet been received.

Findings

The results of the 2008 survey show that, on average, the absentee level for RA teachers in RA public primary schools (31.5%) is far higher than the absentee level for non-RA teachers (25.4%). The absentee level for RA teachers in RA public primary schools is also much higher than that for teachers in non-RA public primary schools (24.4%). On average, the teacher absentee level for all RA schools is still higher than that for non-RA schools (see Table 1).

In general, the survey results for five RA kabupaten show that the Remote Area Allowance program has not yet had a positive impact on teacher absentee levels in schools in remote areas. However, the survey results also show variations in the effectiveness of the Remote Area Allowance program in the RA sample regions.

This policy brief is based on the results of the Teacher Absenteeism and Remote Area Allowance Baseline Survey (Toyamah et al., forthcoming) conducted by The SMERU Research Institute in 2008. This survey was conducted in five remote area allowance recipient kabupaten: Lahat, Sukabumi, Lombok Tengah, Kolaka, and Nunukan, and in five non-remote area allowance recipient kabupaten/kota (districts/cities): Tuban, Gowa, Pekanbaru, Bandung, and Surakarta.

REMOTE AREA ALLOWANCE AND ABSENTEE LEVELS FOR TEACHERS IN REMOTE AREAS

The Remote Area Allowance program's effectiveness can be seen in Kabupaten Sukabumi and Kabupaten Lahat, but not in Kabupaten Lombok Tengah and Kabupaten Kolaka. Whether the program has been effective in Kabupaten Nunukan cannot yet be identified because when the survey was conducted, the program had not been implemented. In Kabupaten Lahat, the absentee level for RA teachers (25.6%) is lower than that for non-RA teachers in RA schools (30.8%), although this is far higher than the absentee level for teachers in non-RA schools (12.7%). This indicates the positive impact of the Remote Area Allowance program in RA schools in this kabupaten.

In Kabupaten Sukabumi, the absentee level for RA teachers and non-RA teachers in RA schools is almost the same (12.5% and 12.0% respectively) and is slightly lower than the teacher absentee level in non-RA schools (13.3%). This low teacher absentee level for RA teachers in Sukabumi is due to the fact that the regional government implemented a policy that was very conducive with increasing teacher welfare. The policy was to distribute an incentive similar to the remote area allowance as part of the Kabupaten Sukabumi Regional Government policy, as regulated in Bupati¹ Regulation No. 26A/2007.

SMERU's survey also shows that the teacher absentee level influences student achievement. The higher the teacher absentee level, the higher the student absentee level, and the lower the proportion of students that obtain high test scores in tests carried out by schools (see Figure 1). On the contrary, the lower the teacher absentee level in an area, the higher the test scores achieved by the students.

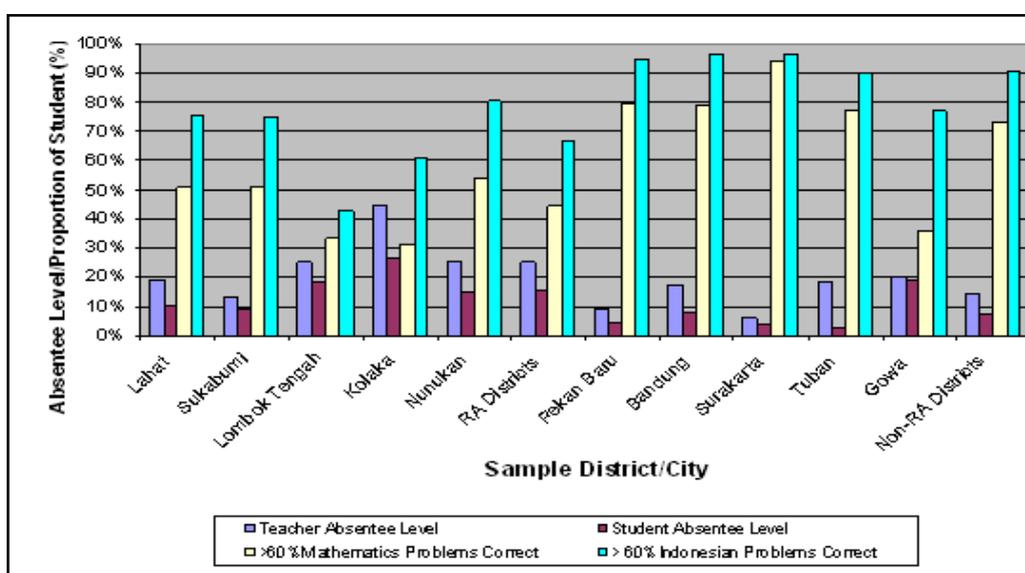


Figure 1. Relationship between teacher absentee levels, student absentee levels, and student test scores.

Recommendations

The implementation of the Remote Area Allowance program has had a different impact on the absentee level of teachers in remote areas in each RA region. The effectiveness of the Remote Area Allowance program in increasing the teacher attendance level in two sample regions shows the importance of the regional government's role in this program. Communication and coordination between the central government, the provincial government, and the kabupaten level regional government in the implementation of the Remote Area Allowance program must be supported proactively by the kabupaten regional government, which is the main authority in the matter of managing basic education and has a better understanding of the conditions and needs of the regions. A good first step in doing this can be regional government initiatives formulating various regional policies related to teacher welfare, for example, complementing the implementation of the Remote Area Allowance program with a similar program. Besides that, the willingness of the regional government to allocate funds to give a (supplementary) local incentive for teachers in the region will also assist in expanding the coverage of the Remote Area Allowance program.

This research examined the relationship between the Remote Area Allowance program and teacher absentee levels, as well as the influence of teacher attendance levels on the quality and achievements of students. Thus, further research using other indicators aside from teacher absentee levels is needed in order to more comprehensively measure the level of effectiveness of the Remote Area Allowance program.

¹Bupati is the head of a kabupaten.

SMERU is an independent institution for research and policy studies which professionally and proactively provides accurate and timely information as well as objective analysis on various socioeconomic and poverty issues considered most urgent and relevant for the people of Indonesia