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DISCUSSION PAPER

LIVING AND THRIVING IN CITIES: MAKING CITIES WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Insights from Indonesia



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LIVING AND THRIVING IN CITIES: MAKING CITIES WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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DEVELOPED BY:

PUSKAPA and UNICEF

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AUTHORS:

Clara Siagian, Andrea Andjaringtyas Adhi, Azka Nur Medha, Ishlah Fitriani, Windy Liem, Putri Kusuma Amanda, Nadira Irdiana, Harriz Jati, and Santi Kusumaningrum

DATA COLLECTION TEAM:

Clara Siagian, Andrea Andjaringtyas Adhi, Azka Nur Medha, Ishlah Fitriani, Windy Liem, Putri Kusuma Amanda, Nadira Irdiana, Harriz Jati, and Sarah Hannah Mandari

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As urbanisation increases rapidly in developing countries, cities will become home to most of the world's population, and it is in cities that young people of productive working age will dominate. Indonesian cities are no different. Although, in general, Indonesian cities perform better in primary wellbeing indicators, urban areas tend to hide large pockets of poor, vulnerable and marginalised populations - including children and young people - who are often missing from official narratives. Like many other cities in the world, Indonesian cities must improve the living conditions of their current residents while simultaneously preparing to host many more residents in the future.

This discussion paper aims to highlight the voices and aspirations of children and young people living in cities in order to inform the deliberation among Urban20 (U20) delegates. Online consultations were conducted with young people from different cities, various ages, genders, and backgrounds to understand their experiences of living in cities, their reflections on contemporary urban challenges and their ideas for making cities into better places to live. This paper seeks to increase understanding from the urban point of view of young about the lives of young Indonesians. Findings from the recent publication by PUSKAPA, UNICEF and BAPPENAS, 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities' also inspired and informed the development of this discussion paper.

This paper discusses six themes of urban development relevant to young people's lives: (1) education; (2) employment; (3) health; (4) housing; (5) environment; and (6) youth participation. For instance, regarding education, the paper describes problems with access to quality education, including higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate unequal access to effective online learning which further compounds existing challenges in gaining employment. While cities tend to offer more employment opportunities than rural areas, which in turn prompts young people to move to the cities, the reality is often harsher than they anticipate. With high-level competition and the economy's sluggishness due to the pandemic, young people in our consultation shared their struggles to get decent and meaningful jobs in cities. While the rise of the digital economy may expand the employment market, these jobs are often labour-intensive, precarious, full of risks and without adequate labour protections. Many health problems in the cities are directly and indirectly related to the urban built-environment and inadequate housing, including lack of access to clean water, air pollution and lack of public, green space. At the same time, cities are under threat of environmental crisis due to the negative externalities of urban development that has for decades ignored the ecological capacity of cities. Housing affordability and security, or the lack thereof, are also high on the agenda of young people as the price of houses in the cities increases at a rate much higher than their average salaries.

This document captures young people's eagerness to be heard and reveals their capacity to participate in identifying the problems they are facing, as well as moving towards solving them. The multifaceted issues faced by youth living in cities can only be tackled by engaging young people. The city governments in Indonesia can become the pioneers for integrating meaningful youth participation in their policymaking processes by widening access and diversifying platforms to include young people in problem identification and collaborations for solutions, starting from their neighbourhoods and from schools. Such inclusive participation will realise young people's political rights and facilitate solidarity and stronger communities.

This paper intends to inform the delegates about the situation of young people living in cities. We believe that a deeper understanding of young people's experiences in cities is the starting point for effective solutions. This paper, therefore, curates data and information to enrich U20 dialogues. Delegates are free to take this paper as a whole or to pull out the relevant sections that catch their attention in order to discuss mutual problems and agree on collective ways going forward.



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Urbanisation has increased rapidly in Indonesia with more than 70 per cent of the population projected to live in urban areas by 2045.¹ According to common wellbeing indicators, children in urban areas fare better than their rural peers, but access to services and opportunities for a better quality of life in cities remains limited for the urban poor and vulnerable.² The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the existing vulnerabilities experienced by urban children and young people as it put these populations at greater risk of not surviving the COVID-19 pandemic.³ Cities are confronting challenging issues, including climate crisis, inequality and scarce resources for their current residents. At the same time, cities need to welcome future migrants including young people of productive age. Being an essential part of this urbanization, children and young people have the potential and ability to participate in preparing and building liveable cities for everyone.

OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

In 2022, Indonesia holds the G20 presidency in which the members will discuss the most critical financial and economic issues of the day. Urban20 (U20), a city diplomacy initiative, provides a space for cities to engage in the G20 discussions and collectively inform the G20 policy process. PUSKAPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and the government of Indonesia, is committed to advocating to make cities inclusive homes for children and young people, in part through the development of this discussion paper. This paper aims to highlight and represent the voices and the aspirations of children and young people living in cities to inform the deliberations of the U20 delegates. The findings from the recent publication by PUSKAPA, UNICEF, and Ministry of National Development Planning in 2021, 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities', which focused on children and young people in Indonesian cities has inspired and informed the development of this paper. Since meaningful youth participation is one of the keys to creating inclusive cities for children and young people⁴, we also involved young people as part of the process of writing this paper. As the pandemic restricted mobility, online consultations were conducted with children and young people to understand their experiences of living in cities, their reflections on contemporary urban challenges and their ideas for transforming cities into better homes.

1 Roberts et al. 'Time to Act: Realizing Indonesia's Urban Potential'. Washington, D.C: World Bank, 2019.

2 Kusumaningrum, Santi, Clara Siagian, Widi Laras Sari, Andrea Andjaringtyas Adhi, Wenny Wandasari, Ryan Febrianto, and Shaila Tieken. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities', Jakarta, Indonesia: PUSKAPA, UNICEF, BAPPENAS, November 2021. <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.36250.36803>>.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted a series of online consultations with young people through Zoom video conferences for this paper. We categorised these consultations into six groups:

1. High school students (senior high school/*Sekolah Menengah Atas* and vocational high school/*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*)
2. University students (public and private universities)
3. Young workers (18 to 36 years of age)
4. Representatives from youth-led communities/organisations
5. Representatives from communities/organisations focused on urban issues, youth, and marginalised groups in cities
6. Recent university graduates/jobseekers (21 - 24 years of age)

There were eight to 12 participants in each focus group discussion (FGD). Each FGD lasted between two and three hours. We conversed with 53 participants from cities in Indonesia including Jakarta, Bogor, Kupang, Makassar, Medan, Samarinda, Padang, Jayapura and Salatiga. Some additional interviews were scheduled to accommodate participants who could not attend the FGDs. Thirty-six women participated in the discussions (including one trans woman). Seventeen men also participated in the FGDs and in-depth interviews. The FGDs covered general themes with specific questions tailored to match the participants' characteristics and interests. We sought informed consent from all participants before they took part in the FGDs.

As much as possible, we used the findings from our FGDs as signposts to direct us to relevant literature and data. When statistics were not available, we looked for reports and scientific publications, such as the Situation Analysis on Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities, to explore similar themes that emerged during the consultations. In doing so, we aimed to minimise some unintended biases, attuning this paper to the issues confronting young people at a larger scale. We use quotes to demonstrate how young people narrated their experiences.

ANALYSIS AND WRITING

The recent publication by PUSKAPA, UNICEF, BAPPENAS on the situation analysis of children and young people in Indonesian, that explores children's and young people's characteristics, wellbeing and lived experiences in Indonesian cities,⁵ informed the development of this paper. The study also provides a critical foundation for policymakers to turn the myth of urban opportunity into a reality for all children and young people, particularly those who are socioeconomically marginalised. The study adopts the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and selects several goals relevant to children and young people living in cities⁶. This paper expands on the themes discussed in that study and focuses

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

on six priority issues for young people in urban development: 1) education; (2) employment; (3) health; (4) housing; (5) environment; and (6) youth participation. While this discussion paper provides an overview of the major issues faced by young people in the cities, there are, inevitably, relevant themes that fall outside the scope of this paper.

All FGDs were recorded with the participants' consent and documented in discussion reports. All authors reviewed the reports and agreed on the emerging topics or accounts that correspond with the pre-identified themes of health, education, employment, housing, and environment. Researchers also checked FGD recordings to ensure the participants' quotes were recorded correctly. The lead researcher assessed the reports and synthesised the data into this paper. Throughout the writing, all researchers discussed and debated the findings as part of the interactive analytical process.

The FGDs included young people across a representative group according to age, gender, geographical and socioeconomic background, and ability diversity in Indonesia. However, the authors acknowledge limitations to participation. For example, due to the online nature of the consultations, young people who did not have access to the internet and digital technologies were unable to participate. The group setting may also have deterred some participants from voicing their opinions or sharing their thoughts and experiences in a group.



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

EDUCATION

High-quality education or simply the availability of educational institutions drives people, including children and young people, to migrate from rural to urban areas and from small to bigger cities.⁷ In Indonesia, it is estimated that between 12.6 per cent and 16.7 per cent of total rural to urban migrants in 2005 were children (younger than 12 years of age). It is strongly believed that education is one of the main motivations for their migration.⁸

During our consultations, young people stated that cities offer a better quality of education than rural areas. Moreover, several studies show that rural children who migrate with their parents to cities tend to have better educational attainments than their peers who remained.⁹

FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education in cities hinges on the availability of schools and the qualifications of teachers as well as the more extensive infrastructures and facilities in cities compared to rural areas. Better physical access to schools, public transportation and internet connectivity are some of the things that directly contribute to quality education. The availability of non-academic activities (e.g., extracurricular and internship opportunities) were also highlighted by young people during our consultations.

The scarcity, unequal distribution, and lack of access to tertiary education are reflected in the low rate of university graduates in Indonesia. World Bank data from 2018 shows that only 9.3 per cent of all Indonesians over 25 years old graduated with a bachelor's degree.¹⁰ This can be understood by looking at the effectiveness and efficiency of educational spending in Indonesia. Since 2002, the Law on Education mandated that 20 per cent of the national and sub-national budget should be spent on education but the increased resources have been primarily channelled into expanding enrolment, especially in secondary schools. With improvement in quality given less priority, Indonesia has experienced a learning gap of 4.4

7 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). 'Urbanization: Expanding opportunities but weeper divides', World Social Report, Chapter 4, 2020.

8 Resosudarmo, Budy P., and Daniel Suryadarma. 'The Impact of Childhood Migration on Educational Attainment: Evidence from Rural-Urban Migrants in Indonesia', Asian Population Studies 10, no. 3 (2 September 2014): pp. 319–33 and Resosudarmo, Budy P., Asep Suryahadi, Raden Purnagunawan, Athia Yumna, and Asri Yusrina. 'The Socioeconomic and Health Status of Rural-Urban Migrants in Indonesia', Working Paper. SMERU, October 2009.

9 Ibid.

10 World Bank, Educational Attainment, at Least Bachelor's or Equivalent, Population 25+, Total (%) (cumulative) - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam: World Bank Data, 2021b. <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.CUAT.BA.ZS?locations=BN-KH-ID-LA-MY-MM-PH-SG-TH-VN&view=chart>>

years, among the highest in the world.¹¹ Despite an increased budget allocation for education since 2002, Indonesia's spending on education as a share of GDP still lags behind some other ASEAN countries.¹²

BARRIERS IN ACCESSING QUALITY EDUCATION

While cities offer quality education, this often comes with a hefty social, mental, and economic cost. Daily commuting to cities is impossible for young people in rural areas, often necessitating costly migration to urban areas to pursue better educational opportunities. Some children and young people from rural areas are separated from their families and community to access better education.¹³ A study on orphanages in major cities indicates this. The study reports that 80 per cent of children in orphanages in cities in Jakarta, South Sulawesi, and Central Java (of which some children came from rural areas) do attend school, thereby meeting their parents' expectation of sending them to residential care facilities in order to access education.¹⁴

Children and young people incur significant expenses to enrol in high-ranked schools, especially private institutions, thereby increasing the gap between students from different economic backgrounds. A report by Ministry of Education and Culture, World Bank and DFAT-Australia (2014) shows that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are significantly underrepresented in higher education in Indonesia.¹⁵

“ Commercialisation in the education system renders quality education inaccessible and expensive. A strong nation should focus on its education quality. But now, universities only tend to focus on ensuring their institutions meet national standards or accreditation.”

(ZD, female, university student)

The pandemic and the move to online learning has not necessarily ease the costs associated with education. In our consultations, young people reported that some universities increased their tuition fees without transparent consultation with the students and that there was a lack of accountability from management.

“ There is a lack of transparency and accountability from the campus. Students often questioned the university's decision to increase tuition fees during the pandemic but there is no space for dialogue between the rectorate and the students. When students express their concerns through writing, reports or demonstrations, the campus often responds repressively.”

(HG, female, university student)

11 World Bank. 'Indonesia Public Expenditure Review: Spending for better results', Jakarta: World Bank, Ministry of Finance Indonesia, European Union, DFAT Australia, 2020

12 Ibid.

13 Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'.

14 PUSKAPA UI, UNICEF and DFAT. 'Understanding Vulnerability: A study on situations that affect family separation and the lives of children in and out of family care.' May 2014

15 World Bank. 'Tertiary Education in Indonesia: Directions for Policy', Jakarta, Indonesia: Ministry of Education and Culture Indonesia, World Bank, DFAT-Australia, June 2014.

EDUCATION AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

Cities are often considered to have a comparative advantage in employing workers to produce goods and services.¹⁶ This is particularly important since labour is one of the critical predictors of economic growth. Young people affirm that formal education is the primary source to acquire skills and prepare them to work.¹⁷

Nonetheless, young people participating in our consultations also raised concerns about the current approach to formal education that they perceive as predominantly focusing on creating productive workers to meet the demands of the private sector. The alignment between the educational and industrial sectors should work both ways, with the government also intervening in the current labour and employment structure. Likewise, UNICEF concludes that any intervention to prepare young people for the future must simultaneously address skills gaps, aspiration gaps and information gaps in order to create an enabling environment for them to effectively transition from adolescence to adulthood and to maximise their potential.¹⁸

Furthermore, young people stated that the current educational settings are increasingly hostile to students' critical thinking. Students are discouraged from asking essential questions while compliance to rules is rewarded. Achievement is predominantly defined in academic and business terms and less appreciation is given to students who choose community-oriented activities. Students report that competition among students and the demand for academic achievement stifle their creativity, making learning less enjoyable.

 *The campus should review its curriculum because the current approach is too market-oriented. However, this might be challenging since the campus also has the interest to prepare students according to the current demand from the labour market.*

(ON, male, university student)

Many young people who participated in the consultations felt that nurturing critical thinking skills is critical, and failure to do so would be detrimental to their generation and future. A report by UNICEF and Oxford Policy Management echoes similar sentiment.¹⁹ According to the report, relying solely on what is being taught in formal education is leaving young people with a lack of skills to deal with real-life situations. Instead of viewing their fellow citizens with solidarity, students are encouraged to see them as competitors, fuelling competitiveness instead of collaboration. All of these will eventually affect their generation's collective welfare, development, and wellbeing.

16 Maarseveen, Raoul van. 'The Urban-rural Education Gap: Do cities indeed make us smarter?' *Journal of Economic Geography* 21, no. 5 (9 November 2021): pp. 683-714.

17 UNICEF, and Oxford Policy Management. 'Skills for the Future: Actionable recommendations to help equip adolescents with the skills they need to thrive across different learning pathways,' UNICEF, July 2019.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

“If a student does not want to participate in a [academic] competition and they are more eager to learn democracy, teachers might not support it. I feel that the campus encourages students only to prepare them to work. Rarely does the campus support student activities focusing on community development. They tend to encourage students only to prepare them as workers.”

(ON, male, university student)

Young people understand that curricula also need to be balanced to instil critical thinking and civic obligation, as well as preparing them for future employment. Many young people want to continue to higher education since they consider it a bare minimum to enter the job market, with graduates from reputable institutions more likely to secure well-paid jobs.

“It is as if there is a new anomaly where students should first and primarily focus on learning and exploring knowledge, but the government pushes us toward things related to entrepreneurship and business. It is harder for students to access funding from the campus for community development activities. It seems like we are encouraged to be the next capitalists.”

(ZD, female, university student)

Government initiatives that prepare students for real-life work, such as Kampus Merdeka, are generally appreciated since these projects will allow students to gain valuable practical skills needed for employment. Nevertheless, a recent report by Project Multatuli suggests that despite its good intentions, this initiative should be adequately monitored so as not to put students at risk of overwork, exploitation and even harassment.²⁰

EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

The urban-rural discrepancy in the quality of education became more pronounced during the pandemic, especially with teaching moving online. Online teaching requires a good telecommunication service and the skills and capacity of the schools and teachers to operate the system.²¹ A recent report shows that parents in rural areas have been significantly less likely to communicate with their children's teachers during the pandemic than parents in urban areas due to a lack of internet and telecommunication services.²²

20 Putri, Ann. 'Magang Tak Benar-Benar Merdeka: Dijerat Overwork, Depresi, Pelecehan, Hingga Serangan Buzzer. [Internship is not truly liberating: Trapped by overwork, depression, abuse, and buzzer attacks]', Project Multatuli, 16 December 2021.

21 Alifia, Ulfah, Arjuni Rahmi Barasa, Luhur Bima, Rezanti Putri Pramana, Shintia Revina, and Florischa Ayu Tresnatri. 'Learning from Home: A portrait of teaching and learning inequalities in times of the Covid-19 pandemic', SMERU Research Note. Jakarta, Indonesia: SMERU, KSI, 2020 and Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'

22 Ibid.

The pandemic has also reduced interaction between students and their teachers/lecturers, making students less willing to ask questions and be involved in class discussions.²³ Having to adapt and learn new digital technology, some teachers experience challenges when conducting online teaching and learning for their students.²⁴ Students from vocational schools or disciplines that rely on practises (i.e., laboratory, apprenticeship) are most disadvantaged with online learning.²⁵

However, even within urban areas, students from elite private schools are weathering pandemic learning much better than students from other schools, exacerbating the gap between students according to their socioeconomic capacity.²⁶ Children from low socioeconomic households also could not keep up with the financial and technical demands of online learning, such as internet costs and more sophisticated gadgets.²⁷

EMPLOYMENT

The sheer volume and diversity of employment opportunities attracts an increasing number of young people from different parts of the country to move to cities, with job opportunities ranging from entrepreneurial activities to employment in specific industries such as the arts. As a result, the level of competition to get jobs, mainly but not limited to well-paid jobs, in cities is very high.

THE PANDEMIC AND THE EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

The pandemic and its economic consequences have further exacerbated the employment landscape in the cities.²⁸ The Bureau of Statistics (BPS) estimated the unemployment rate at around 20.99 per cent of Indonesians of productive age in August 2021. Urban unemployment for young people was higher than rural unemployment (22.68 per cent compared to 15.19 per cent), suggesting that service and manufacturing industries suffered more than the agricultural sector.²⁹ Furthermore, it is estimated that 2.4 per cent of Indonesians of working age (approximately 5.1 million people) lost their jobs during the pandemic while 24 million had their working hours reduced. As a result, earnings significantly reduced for at least 50 per cent of the working population.³⁰

23 Alifia et al. 'Learning from Home: A portrait of teaching and learning inequalities in times of the Covid-19 pandemic' and ILO, 'How Indonesian Youth Respond to COVID-19 Pandemic' 10 February 2021. <www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/fs/WCMS_772479/lang-en/index.htm>

24 Ibid.

25 Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'

26 Alifia et al. 'Learning from Home'

27 Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'

28 Warr, Peter, and Arief Anshory Yusuf. 'Pandemic-Induced De-urbanisation in Indonesia', The Australian National University, Arndt-Corden Department of Economics, 2021.

29 Ibid.

30 World Bank. 'Beyond Unicorn: Harnessing Digital Technologies for Inclusion in Indonesia' World Bank, 2021a. <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36018/162061.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>>

Against this background, young people have struggled. Young people aged 15-24 years of age are over-represented in the current unemployment figures with youth unemployment reaching 19.55 per cent. Unemployment among young men is higher than among young women.³¹ For instance, fresh graduates who participated in our consultations expressed difficulty in finding stable and secure jobs stating that they are competing with early career professionals recently laid off due to the pandemic. To increase their odds of getting hired, some fresh graduates are jumping from one internship to another, often unpaid or underpaid, to improve their working experience and demonstrate their skills. Many ended up with a job below their educational qualifications.³²

“Education is like the key to open future doors. But apparently, the key does not fit all doors. More often than not, the key that we have does not fit the door we find.”

(DR, female, jobseeker)

Although higher education is still highly regarded as the key to getting middle-class jobs, young people increasingly find that graduating from reputable institutions no longer guarantees better employment prospects.³³ The variegated nature of the current job market, with emerging lines of employment that demand different sets of skills, has put immense pressure on educational institutions. Employers demand prospective employees have readily applicable and tradeable skills while more new jobs require high-level critical thinking and problem-solving capacity. Students do not necessarily learn these skills and acquire these capacities in school. With high-level competition, young people shared that personal and social connections become critical ingredients to landing a job.

Since 2020, the national government has launched an unemployment benefits program called *Kartu Prakerja*. *Kartu Prakerja* combines vocational training and cash transfers for people who are laid-off, actively seeking jobs or require capacity building. The aims are to develop and to augment work and entrepreneurship skills. It is one of a few social protection products that tend to benefit young people due to the nature of the current unemployment structure. Early evaluative findings of the program suggest a positive correlation with an increase in entrepreneurship and business ownership.³⁴ As mentioned by a participant in our consultation, the program had helped him acquire new skills as a barista. However, he lamented the lack of subsequent support in finding appropriate employment that matched his new skillset.

31 BPS. 'Booklet Survei Angkatan Kerja Nasional Agustus 2021. [National employment Survey August 2021.] Badan Pusat Statistik, December 22, 2021. <<https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2021/12/22/52d405e2dc5dc6f2ba57bf83/booklet-survei-angkatan-kerja-nasional-agustus-2021.html>>

32 Goodwin, Nicholas and Irma Martam. 'Indonesian Youth in the 21st Century', UNFPA, 2014; and Greenstone, Michael, and Qing Fan. 'Indonesia's Worsening Air Quality and Its Impact on Life Expectancy', Air Quality Life Index, March 2019

33 Ibid.

34 Alatas, Vivi, Rema Hanna, Achmad Maulana, Benjamin A. Olken, Elan Satriawan, and Sudarno Sumarto. 'Kartu Prakerja Impact Evaluation: Preliminary Findings', J-PAL SEA, LPEM FEB UI, 4 October 2021

RESILIENCE AND RISKS IN INFORMAL ECONOMIES

“Informality is about being ‘street-smart’. Someone who works informally is not only theoretically smart. They also require problem-solving, how to adapt in Jakarta, and what they need to do to survive.”

(NA, female, urban organisation)

Employment opportunities, however, are not limited to formal sectors. Informality still offers the dominant livelihood option in Indonesian cities. In 2020, it was estimated that 45.04 per cent of Indonesian workers in urban areas throughout Indonesia were in the informal sector.³⁵ The bulk of urban young people are employed in the informal sectors. Informal sectors also absorb most young people with disabilities or from marginalised backgrounds as they often experience discrimination in the formal sector, as well as young people coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds with a low level of education.

Several studies have shown that informality comes with positive and negative consequences. Informal sectors tend to be more diverse, adaptive, agile, and resilient to external shocks.³⁶ People employed in informal sectors could quickly switch sectors depending on the market demands. However, jobs in the informal sector tend to be characterised by precarity, low wages, lack of protection and benefits (e.g., pension and health insurance) and absence of career advancement. Only approximately 4 to 5 million out of the estimated 70 million informal workers are registered with BPJS Ketenagakerjaan.³⁷ Thus, many young people still aspire to build their careers in the formal sector.

Nevertheless, young people in our consultation groups are acutely aware that even formal jobs are increasingly prone to exploitation and casualisation. The government’s current approach to the labour market favours flexibility which has resulted in a steady decline in the security and stability of formal employment. At the same time, such policies do not necessarily translate into higher employment opportunities.³⁸

THE COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

A survey by UNICEF (2019) finds that young people perceive that digitalisation and information technology (IT) will dominate the future.³⁹ They describe technology as a powerful economic tool and, as a result, acquiring digital skills is essential. Despite its perceived potential, the digital economy is still a complex sector with little certainty. While Indonesia is one of the countries with the fastest-growing population

35 BPS, National employment Survey August 2021

36 Ablaza, Christine, Mark Western, and Wojtek Tomaszewski. ‘Good Jobs and Bad Jobs for Indonesia’s Informal Workers’, International Labour Review / International Labour Office, no. ilr.12167 (April 17, 2020). <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12167>>

37 Octavia, Joanna. ‘Towards a national database of workers in the informal sector: COVID-19 pandemic response and future recommendations’, CSIS, May 2020

38 ILO. ‘Promoting Employment and Decent Work in a Changing Landscape’ Geneva: ILO, 2020.

39 UNICEF and Oxford Policy Management, ‘Skills for the Future: Actionable recommendations to help equip adolescents with the skills they need to thrive across different learning pathways’

connected to the internet, its digital economy still contributes little to the overall GDP.⁴⁰ Regional and income disparities still characterise access to the internet with the population in Java and those from higher income brackets having better connectivity. This leads to digital inequality.⁴¹

Although Indonesia is known for several major digital start-ups, the current digital economy environment is yet to create middle-class job opportunities that are better paid and more secure. For instance, Indonesia was ranked 125th out of 131 countries regarding the proportion of so-called ‘knowledge workers’ that demand analytical thinking and problem-solving skills.⁴² Some studies suggest that the relatively weak foundational skills of school graduates—including low levels of reading comprehension, critical and analytical thinking, digital literacy and complex problem-solving—might explain the slow growth of a high-level digital economy.⁴³

Most people employed in digital economies in Indonesia are urban citizens with low socioeconomic status and educational backgrounds. A survey by The Prakarsa in 2017 found that 67 per cent of online drivers were senior high school graduates while almost 23 per cent have a higher degree certificate.⁴⁴ They are mainly employed as the ‘foot soldiers’ of the digital economy whose jobs are predominantly manual and labour-intensive (e.g., as online motorbike drivers and couriers).⁴⁵ While there are currently no statistics on the proportion of young people who are part of the labour force associated with the digital economy, anecdotal evidence suggests that they make up a large part of the workforce in the gig economy as they are early adopters of digital technology and more intensively connected to the internet.⁴⁶

There is a significant power imbalance between ‘workers’ and companies in the current digital economy. Although they are dubbed as ‘partners’, online drivers are not involved in company decision-making and are primarily at the mercy of company policies.⁴⁷ At the same time, being ‘partners’, not workers, means they are not entitled to a list of workers protections and rights guaranteed by the laws.⁴⁸

While it has been suggested that the gig economy provides a higher income than informal sectors and may offer opportunities for women and people with disabilities who value flexibility, these jobs are characterised by long working hours, precarity with no certainty of income and long-term job security, risks, as well as the lack of protections traditionally available to workers in formal sectors.⁴⁹ Our consultations

40 Bachtiar, Palmira, Rendi Diningrat, Ahmad Kusuma, Ridho Al Izzati, and Abella Diandra. ‘*Ekonomi digital untuk siapa? Menuju ekonomi digital yang inklusif di Indonesia. [Digital economy for who? Toward inclusive digital economy in Indonesia]*’, SMERU, 2020. <<https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=rhilzgEACAAJ>>

41 Ibid. and World Bank. ‘*Beyond Unicorn: Harnessing Digital Technologies for Inclusion in Indonesia*’

42 Goode, Kayla, and Heeu Kim. ‘*Why Indonesia’s Youth Hold the Key to Its Tech Sector Progress*’, Council on Foreign Relations, 18 October 2021

43 AfDB, ADB, EBRD, and IDB. ‘*The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives*’, Washington D.C., 2018

44 Afrina, Eka, Robbie Peters, Victoria Fanggalda, and Maria Lauranti. ‘*The ‘Go-Jek’ Problem: Congestion, Informality and Innovation in Urban Transport in Indonesia*’, Jakarta: University of Sydney, The Prakarsa, LIPI, 2017

45 Mustika, Wening, and Amalinda Savirani. ‘*Ghost Accounts, ‘Joki Accounts’ and ‘Account Therapy*’, The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies 39, no. 1 (31 March, 2021). <<https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v39i1.6175>>

46 World Bank. ‘*Beyond Unicorn: Harnessing Digital Technologies for Inclusion in Indonesia*’

47 Mustika et al. ‘*Ghost Accounts, ‘Joki Accounts’ and ‘Account Therapy*’,

48 Ibid. and Afrina et al, ‘*The ‘Go-Jek’ Problem: Congestion, Informality and Innovation in Urban Transport in Indonesia*’

49 AfDB, ADB, EBRD, and IDB. ‘*The Future of Work: Regional Perspectives*’ and Mustika et al. ‘*Ghost Accounts, ‘Joki Accounts’ and ‘Account Therapy*’

reveal that young people still aspire to have a permanent job with a fixed, regular salary that will enable them to manage their finances and plan their lives. Instead, involvement in the digital economy is used as an additional source of income and a safety net in times of economic crisis.

“*Even though I have a permanent job, I will continue to be an online driver in my spare time. This is as a backup just in case there is another downsizing (as before). I prefer a fixed salary job over a daily income as an online driver. The monthly salary allows me to manage my finances better and save some money too. My current job (as a barista) also has lower risks than being an online driver.*”

(DW, male, barista & online driver)

IN SEARCH OF MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

“*Many of my disability fellows who got a job through the disability track complained because they were not recruited to be empowered. So, the institution/company seems to only “display” them; to show they have recruited people with disabilities. But they are not given clear tasks, no clue about their future (careers), nor given chances for self-development, even at a big institution. Working in that condition only results in a salary, but no meaning at all.*”

(AT, female, youth organisation)

For young people, good and meaningful employment needs to provide them with salaries commensurate with the tasks and responsibilities and the cost of a dignified life in cities. But young people are prone to exploitation under the rhetoric of ‘working for passion’. Young people pointed out the precarious and exploitative working conditions in cities, including long working hours with low payment, casualisation of contracts (lack of permanency and security) and the absence of insurance and protection.

Aside from a commensurate wage, a good and meaningful job also needs to be meaningful and offer space for self-development. However, there are categories of jobs that could be classified as ‘tokenistic’, for instance, the quota for people with disabilities, whereby these positions do not allow the employee to develop themselves and be empowered through their jobs.

“ I tried to walk regularly for a week, and my throat aches.”

(DS, Female, Environmental organisation)

Many health issues in Indonesian cities are directly and indirectly related to the built environment where urban residents live, from lack of access to clean water to inadequate housing. It has been widely established that children and young people living in inadequate housing and settlements are lagging in several health indicators compared to their peers living in well-served settlements.⁵⁰

WATER AND AIR-BORNE DISEASES

Lack of clean piped water and suboptimal sanitation leads to water-borne diseases, while congestion and industrial activities often cause air pollution which is associated with a range of pulmonary health issues.⁵¹ In Jakarta, most households are not connected to centralised piped water, while groundwater is primarily contaminated.⁵² Consequently, urban households have to rely on multiple water sources for their water needs.⁵³



50 Corburn, Jason, and Alice Sverdluk. 'Informal Settlements and Human Health', In Integrating Human Health into Urban and Transport Planning: A Framework, edited by Mark Nieuwenhuijsen and Haneen Khreis, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019, pp. 155–71

51 Agustina, Rina, Tirta P. Sari, Soemilah Satroamidjojo, Ingeborg M. J. Bovee-Oudenhoven, Edith J. M. Feskens, and Frans J. Kok. 'Association of Food-Hygiene Practices and Diarrhea Prevalence among Indonesian Young Children from Low Socioeconomic Urban Areas', BMC Public Health 13, no. 1 (2013): pp. 1–12.

52 Delinom, Robert M., and Tantrina Dwi Aprianita. 'Ancaman Bawah Permukaan Jakarta: Tak Terlihat, Tak Terpikirkan, Dan Tak Terduga. [Underground threat in Jakarta: Out of sight, out of mind, and unpredictable]', LIPI Indonesia, 2015.

53 Kooy, Michelle, Carolin Tina Walter, and Indrawan Prabaharyaka. 'Inclusive Development of Urban Water Services in Jakarta: The Role of Groundwater', Habitat International 73 (1 March 2018): 109–18.

Regarding pulmonary health, a study by Air Quality Life Index estimated that if the current level of air pollution is to be maintained, an average Indonesian can expect to lose 1.2 years out of their life expectancy. In Jakarta, it rises to 2.3 years.⁵⁴ Air pollution has also been associated with low birth weight, infant death and respiratory infection.⁵⁵

Analysis of SUSENAS 2019 finds that access to improved sanitation remains substantially greater in urban areas than in rural areas.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it is estimated that 22 per cent of urban residents (around 29 million people) live in slums. Additionally, one-third of the households live in overcrowded spaces with poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate housing or open public spaces.⁵⁷ Lack of access to improved water prevents the adoption of protective measures among households, such as handwashing. The lack of access to water and sanitation may compromise people's ability to adhere to health advice during this pandemic.

CITIES AND THE PANDEMIC

 *Health is a basic human right for people to survive. Don't let it be segmented by social class. We should not prioritise only privileged groups of people."*

(RA, female, university student)

The pandemic response dominated young people's concerns about health in cities during the consultation. Due to their high density and interconnectivity, urban areas have to deal with high cases, hospitalisation and COVID-19-related deaths in a more considerable magnitude than rural areas. Jakarta, for instance, has been the epicentre of several transmission waves in Indonesia, recording 265 deaths in a day and 14,619 daily cases at its peak during delta wave in July 2021.⁵⁸

For young people in the consultation, the pandemic has been a wake-up call, reminding them about the importance of healthcare as a basic human right. Many criticised the way the existing healthcare service is structured around socioeconomic class, with people from the upper class being able to enjoy higher quality healthcare due to the commercialisation of healthcare services. Young people also raised issues regarding the profit-oriented healthcare industry such as the price of PCR tests that enables the private sector to profit. Overall, young people believe that the government has primarily mishandled the management and mitigation of COVID-19 in Indonesia.

Two years of dealing with the pandemic have revealed that Indonesian cities are unprepared for widespread health emergencies such as the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic revealed the weak capacity of the healthcare system and the structural issues related to the inequality of access to quality

54 Greenstone and Fan. 'Indonesia's Worsening Air Quality and Its Impact on Life Expectancy', Air Quality Life Index, March 2019.

55 Suryadhi, Made Ayu Hitapretiwij, Kawuli Abudureyimu, Saori Kashima, and Takashi Yorifuji. 'Effects of Household Air Pollution from Solid Fuel Use and Environmental Tobacco Smoke on Child Health Outcomes in Indonesia', *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* / American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine 61, no. 4 (April 2019): pp. 335–39.

56 Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'

57 Roberts et al. 'Time to Act: Realizing Indonesia's Urban Potential'. Washington, D.C: World Bank, 2019

58 Jakarta's COVID-19 Response Team. 'Jakarta's COVID-19 Response Team', 18 February 2022

healthcare among residents, affordability of healthcare and stark uneven development between areas within cities. There is still a significant portion of urban residents who cannot protect themselves against health threats. Despite the government's initial attempts to impose large scale social restrictions, families living in overcrowded settlements cannot practice social distancing, good hygiene or self-isolate during COVID-19.⁵⁹

MENTAL HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Even though they face equally serious health threats as the rest of urban residents, young people are often overlooked in conversations on health due to their youth and perceived fitness. Nevertheless, young people are pushing their health priorities into the broader public discussion on health. They have been championing frequently overlooked issues to be priorities for the government's health agenda, such as mental health⁶⁰ and reproductive rights.⁶¹

According to a UNFPA report, young people in Indonesia face serious reproductive health challenges. The report describes a wide range of issues associated with reproductive rights facing young people, including adolescent pregnancy, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion; sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS; early marriage; female genital mutilation; the age of sexual consent; family planning services; and access to quality reproductive health education.⁶²

More recently, the pandemic has created uncertainty and fuelled distress and anxiety for children and young people in cities. The lack of interaction with friends and family due to physical mobility restrictions and general anxiety about their and their loved ones' health condition are mental health stressors among young people.⁶³ The government's attempt to control the spread of the virus through various restrictions on mobility has depressed economic activity which has impacted vendors or gig workers whose livelihoods depend on people's mobility.⁶⁴ This economic slowdown has also affected several people working in the informal sector who find their incomes declining while the prospect of securing formal employment is also diminishing.⁶⁵ This situation has fuelled fear and anxiety among children and young people, especially regarding their ability to financially sustain themselves and their families amid the pandemic.

59 Kusumaningrum, Santi, Clara Siagian, and Harriot Beazley. 'Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Children and Young People's Vulnerability and Wellbeing in Indonesia' *Children's Geographies*, 1–11, 2021

60 Brooks, Helen, Irmansyah Irmansyah, Herni Susanti, Bagus Utomo, Benny Prawira, Livia Iskandar, Erminia Colucci, et al. 'Evaluating the Acceptability of a Co-Produced and Co-Delivered Mental Health Public Engagement Festival: Mental Health Matters, Jakarta, Indonesia', *Research Involvement and Engagement*; London 5, no. 1 (6 September, 2019): p. 25; and Willenberg, Lisa, Nisaa Wulan, Bernie Endyarni Medise, Yoga Devaera, Aida Riyanti, Ansariadi Ansariadi, Tjhin Wiguna, et al. 'Understanding Mental Health and Its Determinants from the Perspective of Adolescents: A Qualitative Study across Diverse Social Settings in Indonesia', *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* no. 52, 1 August, 2020:

61 Budiono, Neira Ardaneshwari, Tantri Swastika, and Sandeep Nanwani. 'Exploring young people's experiences with health-related content in social media platforms: A qualitative study to inform youth-friendly services demand generation in Yogyakarta, Indonesia', UNFPA, December 2022 and Goodwin and Martam. 'Indonesian Youth in the 21st Century', UNFPA, 2014

62 Goodwin and Martam, 'Indonesian Youth in the 21st Century'

63 Angelina, Stella, Andree Kurniawan, Fransisca Handy Agung, Devina Adella Halim, Felix Wijovi, Claudia Jodhinata, Nadya Nathalia Evangelista, Cindy Monika Agatha, Sisilia Orlin, and Audrey Hamdoyo. 'Adolescents' Mental Health Status and Influential Factors amid the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic', *Clinical Epidemiology and Global Health* 12 October 2021

64 Octavia, Joanna. 'Towards a national database of workers in the informal sector'.

65 Kusumaningrum, Siagian, and Beazley, 'Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Children and Young People's Vulnerability and Wellbeing in Indonesia.'

HOUSING

The low quality of housing and living environments, especially in metropolitan cities such as Jakarta, was also highlighted by youth participants. High-density living, especially in informal settlements, lack of clean water and sound sanitation systems and the near absence of public green space were cited. These conditions, in turn, create more risks to health and safety for the residents, especially for young children.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND INADEQUATE DWELLINGS

It is difficult to estimate how many children and young people live in informal settlements in Indonesia. Some of these settlements are not administratively recognised by the government and, as a consequence, people living in informal settlements are often overlooked by routine government surveys thus rendering them even more invisible.

Furthermore, inadequate living conditions are mainly measured at the household level, predominantly by looking at the physical indicators of a dwelling (e.g., size, materials, the availability of access to clean water and sanitation in the house). This definition tends to overlook the reality that some households living in dwellings with better material may lack access or connectivity to the basic city-wide infrastructure, services and facilities such as water, sanitation and waste management.



According to the BPS, slum households are defined as individuals living in the same building without access to an improved water source and sanitation facility and with inadequate living space defined by floor area size and materials. Based on this definition, around 10 million children - about one-eighth of all Indonesian children - live in slum households.⁶⁶ From 2015 to 2019, the gap between children living in slum households in urban areas and rural areas was steadily declining, suggesting either significant improvement in rural areas or worsening conditions in urban areas, or both.

Indonesia is also lacking data and information concerning homelessness. As of August 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs estimates that 77,500 homeless and beggars live in major cities in Indonesia.⁶⁷ However, since the basis for such an estimate is unknown, the figure may be an underrepresentation.

OPEN AND GREEN SPACE

The pandemic has demonstrated the persistent vulnerability among urban residents based on their socio-spatial conditions. Children from poor communities who live in informal settlements rely more on public and communal spaces such as streets, markets, mosques and schools to play, socialise and earn money compared to their middle-class peers. With physical restrictions in place to curb transmission, children from poor urban settlements found it challenging to quarantine since they do not have “alternative access to open and safe public spaces”.⁶⁸

According to Law No. 26/2007 on Spatial Planning, the minimum green open space is 30 per cent of a city area. By that definition, there was only around 9.2 per cent of green open space in Jakarta in 2021 owned by both the provincial government and private sector. Therefore, as per the law, the Jakarta provincial government still has to provide around 198 km² of green open space.⁶⁹ Nationally, according to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, only 13 out of 174 cities in Indonesia have participated in the Green City Program which aims to provide 30 per cent or more of green open space.⁷⁰

LAND SCARCITY AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Young people raised issues around ‘land grabs’ in small to medium cities where they live such as Magelang, Tanjung Pinang and Kupang. In the past two decades, land has been sold to developers for speculative future projects, turning productive land into idle land.⁷¹ Conflict over land in cities is rampant and there are still cases of displacement, especially in informal settlements.

66 Kusumaningrum et al, ‘The situation of children and young people in cities’

67 Meiliana, Diamanty. ‘Diperkirakan Ada 77.500 Gepeng Di Kota-Kota Besar Di Indonesia. [It is estimated that there are 77,500 beggars in major cities in Indonesia]’, Kompas. 22 August 2019.

68 Kusumaningrum, Siagian, and Beazley, ‘Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Children and Young People’s Vulnerability and Wellbeing in Indonesia’, p.3

69 Berita Satu. ‘Mustahil, Pemenuhan 30% RTH di Jakarta. [Impossible, meeting 30% open green space in Jakarta]’, beritasatu.com, 15 November 2021

70 Wahdaniyat, Hery. ‘Ruang Terbuka Hijau Yang Masih Terpinggirkan di Indonesia. [Open green space is still sidelined in Indonesia]’, Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat, 20 August 2019

71 Herlambang, Suryono, Helga Leitner, Liong Ju Tjung, Eric Sheppard, and Dimitar Anguelov. ‘Jakarta’s Great Land Transformation: Hybrid neoliberalisation and informality’, Urban Studies 56, no. 4 (1 March 2019): pp. 627–48

Land speculation is also exacerbated by the clearance of informal settlements which displace poor, urban residents. According to the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute, there were 79 evictions in the capital city DKI Jakarta from January to September 2018.⁷² Additionally, between 2015-2018, LBH also documented 495 evictions of informal settlements or kampung, displacing 15,319 households in Jakarta alone.⁷³ Displacement and eviction tend to increase as infrastructure development projects such as flood mitigation and land reclamation intensify.⁷⁴

HOUSE OWNERSHIP IS A DREAM

Young people in cities are losing hope that they will be able to afford to purchase a home of their own, especially in big cities like Jakarta. For them, no amount of saving will help them own a house in the city. In 2019, only 47.12 per cent of residents in Jakarta reported owning a house or a property.⁷⁵

In many cities, the rent or mortgage for housing is unaffordable for the bulk of young people, especially those whose incomes are less than the minimum wage. Furthermore, as many of them work in the informal sector, it is challenging to apply for a mortgage as they are not considered creditworthy.⁷⁶

“*My college friends were discussing that the income we receive is not commensurate with a mortgage and we realise that we won't own a house. We will just rent, and it's okay. If we calculate further, since our salary is too small for a monthly mortgage, it's better to use our money to enjoy fun things like vacations or something like that...*”

(MB, male, young worker)

A participant in our consultation also underscored the lack of disability-friendly housing. Even with credit assistance from banks, the average monthly mortgage is still too expensive for most young people. One alternative discussed during the consultation is to get a house on the city's outskirts, but that means a long commute and increased transportation costs.

This issue is compounded by the lack of comfortable and safe public transportation in Indonesia. Cities that have tried to provide public mass transportation are still struggling with the coverage and connectivity between different modes of transportation. As a result, young people rely on their vehicles or private online transportation. This reliance on private transportation consequently increases congestion, air pollution and road accidents, further declining the quality of life in cities.

72 LBH Jakarta. 'Masih Ada: Laporan Penggusuran Paksa Di Wilayah DKI Jakarta Januari-September 2018 [Still Here: A Report on Forced Eviction in DKI Jakarta January-September 2018]', Jakarta: LEGAL AID Jakarta, 2018.

73 LBH Jakarta. 'Atas nama pembangunan: Laporan penggusuran paksa di wilayah DKI Jakarta tahun 2015 [In the name of development: Report on forced eviction in DKI Jakarta, 2015]', Jakarta, Indonesia: LEGAL AID Jakarta, February 2016.

74 Kusumaningrum et al. 'The Situation of Children and Young People in Indonesian Cities'

75 Statistik Jakarta. 'Perumahan', Unit Pengelola Statistik, 25 November 2019.

76 Abidoye, Rotimi Boluwatife, Gitta Puspitasari, Riza Sunindijo, and Michael Adabre. 'Young Adults and Homeownership in Jakarta, Indonesia', International Journal of Housing Markets and Analysis 14, no. 2 (1 January 2020): pp. 333–50.

In the consultation, a few young people have decided to leave big cities and return to their hometowns (small and medium-sized cities) where the likelihood of owning a house is higher. Even so, in cities like Magelang and Kupang they could only afford houses located far from the city centre. However, not everyone can do so due to the lack of jobs in these small and medium cities.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

“Only the wealthiest 20 per cent of households can afford housing in the formal commercial market, based on the estimated average housing cost of IDR 440 million (US\$33,000). The middle 40 per cent of households can afford the same formal housing only with a government subsidy, while such housing is inaccessible to the bottom 40 per cent of households.”⁷⁷

According to the World Bank, Indonesia needs to build around 780,000 houses per year until 2045 to accommodate the projected urban population growth. At the same time, Indonesia still needs to tackle an existing home ownership backlog of approximately 12.1 million units and improve millions of substandard homes.⁷⁸ The government has implemented several subsidy programs to manage the housing shortage since the early 2000s. Many of them are financial products that subsidise the cost of buying a house (with a mortgage), while others provide a financial incentive for developers. However, there is still a lack of access to housing for vulnerable groups in Indonesia, as beneficiaries at lower deciles tend to get less subsidy than those from upper deciles.⁷⁹

Young people feel that the government has not realised the urgency of the housing issue in cities. For many, the government is still prioritising the interests of private developers over low-income residents.

“If the state wants to be more present, they should engage in the funding. They should offer support to those who initiate and run co-op housing. I increasingly hear about such cooperative housing initiatives, where a bunch of people collaboratively raise money, buy land and build houses.”

(LP, male, young worker)

Young people in our consultation draw attention to alternative initiatives, such as cooperative housing where residents own and self-manage their housing complexes. However, while they accept that even alternative schemes such as housing co-ops are still out of reach for most young, urban residents, they feel it is still a worthy initiative that deserves the government's support.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

ENVIRONMENT

“ *There must be something to pass on from one generation to another. We must protect the environment as something that the next generation will inherit. We cannot just leave them with concrete blocks.*”

(RY, male, college student)

Environmental issues are among major concerns for young people in cities. Young people in our consultation are critical about how the past and current approach to urban development has created significant negative externalities that disproportionately impact young people and other vulnerable groups in the cities. Sustainable urban development is one of young people’s key demands to city governments. Although many cities are brandishing themselves with sustainable development rhetoric, young people demand something more than buzzwords from the government. UNICEF’s Child-Friendly City Initiative uses an award system called the INSPIRE Awards to celebrate good, innovative, and inspiring solutions or projects that aim to fulfill child rights at the local level. One of the categories for a child-friendly city is a “safe, secure and clean environment”. UNICEF defines this as every child and young person living in a safe, secure and clean environment, including protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, with access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. In addition, the environment should have a safe and child responsive urban design and be free from pollution and waste.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES: WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CITIES?

“ *More roads will likely result in more vehicles. More vehicles mean congestion and more pollution. Pollution generates bad air quality, and the list of multiplier effects goes on.*”

(DS, female, environmental organisation)

Despite coming from several cities with different levels of density and characteristics, young people in our consultations agree that massive physical development has significantly contributed to the environmental degradation of their cities. Although some of these developments are needed to boost urban economic growth, young people question the current approach, the non-monetary costs of these developments and the disproportionate burden that will eventually fall on marginalised urban residents. They are doubtful that all these major physical infrastructure developments have considered the social and environmental aspects, including the long-term ecological and social consequences.

Furthermore, extensive roadbuilding is put forward as an example that will eventually lead to more vehicles and congestion and consequently increased air pollution. Jakarta is ranked ninth for the world’s most polluted cities based on PM2.5 concentrations.⁸⁰ According to the report, industrial and transportation emissions are significant contributors to air pollution in the Jakarta metropolitan area. Notably in Jakarta, the result of the Air Quality Index has been consistently unhealthy for sensitive groups.

80 | IQ Air. '2020 World Air Quality Report: Region and City PM2.5 Ranking', IQ Air, 2020.

A study on climate risk by UNICEF in 2021 indicates that children and youth groups are more vulnerable than adults when they are exposed to climate risks such as extreme weather.⁸¹ Children and young people will be disproportionately affected due to persistent and long-term exposure as the world continues to become a more dangerous place to live. Consequently, they face health risk issues such as worsened asthma, cardiac arrest and other pulmonary infections.⁸² To mitigate this, if they have the resources, children and young people will choose to use private or semi-private vehicles (e.g., online taxis), further contributing to the vicious cycle of air pollution. Moreover, since many cities fail to provide adequate public transportation, services and infrastructure, children and young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds who have few resources to protect themselves will suffer the most.

THE INADEQUACY OF URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Young people also highlighted environmental issues resulting from poor urban management. The availability, accessibility and affordability of clean water are issues highlighted during our consultations. In Jakarta, most households are not connected to centralised piped water, while groundwater is often contaminated.⁸³ Consequently, most urban residents rely on multiple water sources for drinking, cooking, cleaning and other utilities.⁸⁴ A significant source of water is commercial water, either bottled or sold in jerrycans, which adds to the household financial burden and contributes a significant amount of waste.

Waste is another persistent problem in cities. Even in major cities, there is an absence of city-wide waste collection and management systems. The existing waste collection services, for instance, often do not extend to households living in informal settlements, prompting the residents to burn or dump garbage into the river and therefore exacerbating water and air pollution. However, young people are also aware that burning and dumping waste is not limited to informal settlements as commercial units and more affluent neighbourhoods also participate in such practices.

At the same time, residents living in informal settlements, such as on the riverbank, are often blamed for frequent flooding even though flooding is the consequence of many interrelated socio-spatial, political, economic and environmental issues.⁸⁵ While some young people in our consultations link periodic floods to global climate change (e.g., extreme heavy rainfall), others associate it with the lack of ground surface in an increasingly concrete city. Moreover, the government's approach to tackle the flooding issue still relies on infrastructure enhancement rather than allocating more green space for water absorption. At the same time, it has been widely reported that Jakarta has been dealing with land subsidence, further increasing Jakarta's susceptibility to flooding.⁸⁶ The subsidence, however, is closely linked to the massive use of groundwater, especially by big industries, hotels, malls and offices.

81 UNICEF. *The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the children's climate risk index*, New York, USA: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2021

82 Schraufnagel, Dean E. 'The Health Effects of Ultrafine Particles', *Experimental & Molecular Medicine* 52, no. 3 (March 2020): pp. 311–17

83 Delinom et al. 'Out of sight, out of mind, and unpredictable'

84 Kooy et al. 'Inclusive Development of Urban Water Services in Jakarta'

85 Dovey, Kim, Brian Cook, and Amanda Achmadi. 'Contested Riverscapes in Jakarta: Flooding, Forced Eviction and Urban Image', *Space and Polity* 23, no. 3 (2 September 2019): pp. 265–82.

86 Abidin, Hasanuddin Z., Heri Andreas, Irwan Gumilar, Yoichi Fukuda, Yusuf E. Pohan, and T. Deguchi. 'Land Subsidence of Jakarta (Indonesia) and its Relationship with Urban Development', *Natural Hazards* 59, no. 3 (11 June 2011): p. 1753.

GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS FOCUSING ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

“Environmentally friendly development is only a jargon. Nevertheless, I don't want to judge the government as they might have other priorities, namely, to boost economic development. I think the economic aspect is still the top priority in this country.”

(VG, male, urban monitoring organisation)

Young people understand the difficulty and complexity of balancing economic growth and environmental protection when managing environmental issues. However, they contend that the current government's approach still predominantly favours investment and economic development, even if it means sacrificing the environment. This impacts the wellbeing of today's children and young people as well as the next generation.

Young people pointed to the recent policy on the Job Creation Act (*Undang-Undang Cipta Kerja No. 11 tahun 2020*, also known as Omnibus Law of 2020) that prioritises economic investment and industrialisation over environmental sustainability. The Omnibus Law, among others, is criticised for its disregard of global standards of environmental protection (e.g., The Paris Agreement to combat climate change) while, at the same time, the Law relaxes some of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements for physical projects.⁸⁷

For young people, there are alternatives to this kind of zero-sum approach. There are ways to ensure economic growth without sacrificing the environment and the long-term wellbeing of the younger and next generation. Young people want the government to invest in the green economy and create more green jobs. Furthermore, the social and environmental costs of urban development have to be seriously considered.

THE ROLE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE: ADVOCATING AND INNOVATING

Young people realise the urgency of dealing with environmental issues. Rather than waiting for the government to act, they exercise their agency and start to do something. They are at the forefront of collective efforts to deal with environmental issues locally and globally.

To date, there are a lot of activities that advocate for a wide range of environmental issues including climate change, waste management and recycling, community clean-up, sustainable urban farming, sustainable fashion and many more. The global youth climate movement has quickly adapted to the COVID-19 crisis calling for action to limit the spread of the virus and moving climate strike activism online as part of the Asia Climate Strike.⁸⁸ The *Jeda Untuk Iklim*, which Indonesian young environmental activists initiated, continually conducts online and offline training and campaigns. They also organised a series of marches in Jakarta to demand the government put climate justice on the national agenda.⁸⁹

87 Yayasan Madani Berkelanjutan. 'Omnibus Law on Job Creation: Injuring climate commitment, accelerating forest loss, perpetuating disasters', Madani Berkelanjutan, October 2020.

88 Global Climate Strike. 'Jeda Untuk Iklim: Lakukan Aksi November 2022', JEDA UNTUK IKLIM, November 27, 2020

89 Ibid.

These initiatives, however, tend to be small in scope and occur at the very bottom of the environmental management transition. Young people realise that small individual changes will hardly generate a radical shift in environmental management. Furthermore, the government's appetite to involve young people in conversations about the future of the urban environment and climate change in general seems to be low. A recent U-Report poll by UNICEF Indonesia shows that 76 per cent of girls who participated in the survey said that they were never consulted by the government for policies or programs related to their environment.⁹⁰ Without the government taking the lead, it is difficult for youth initiatives to make a systemic impact.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

EVERYDAY FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

Young people are not only eager to be involved in public decision-making, but they have also offered their participation in numerous ways. Young people contribute to many development aspects including initiatives to clean-up their environment; volunteering for social projects; educating society on various issues such as gender equality, gender-based violence, sexuality education, child marriage prevention and human rights; and even urban development planning.

Some of their contributions do not stop at raising voices or giving recommendations but also at solving multiple, complex issues in their communities in creative ways. Young people also tend to be extremely sensitive to their surroundings and willing to take initiative and active roles. For instance, a participant in our consultation, together with her college peers, volunteered to provide additional tutoring for children in a fishing community.



90 UNICEF. 'Jajak Pendapat Tentang Perempuan Dan Aksi Iklim. [Opinion polls on women and climate action]', U-Report Indonesia, 2022.

“Our university is close to the shore where many children from the fishing community have low motivation for education. We go there to teach them everything we can and hope the children will grow awareness about (the importance of) education.”

(ZD, female, university student)

Nevertheless, an official report by the government still underscores the lack of young people’s participation and leadership, although it notes that young people’s involvement in social activities is relatively high.⁹¹ Despite this high engagement in social activities, young people realise that most youth-initiated activism tends to be small in scope and focus on individuals and their behaviour. Although these initiatives are important, more significant improvements could only be made through structural and systemic changes and, for this, it is the government that has to move.

THE LONG ROAD TO GETTING HEARD

“Young people need to be involved. Not just by displaying young faces in the government’s ranks but also in the making of the government’s policies. It seems like young people are put in the front window just to show that the older generation cares and has listened to our voices.”

(RY, male, university student)

Despite their efforts to participate, young people face many obstacles in getting the government to listen and act on the issues they raise. For the young people in our consultation, the government still predominantly sees them as only ‘beneficiaries’ of policies and programs. They consider the government unresponsive to young people’s suggestions and recommendations. Sometimes, bureaucracy complicates young people’s initiatives and impedes their plan of action, for instance, due to the absence of official approval.

Young people are rarely involved in public deliberation such as *musyawarah perencanaan pembangunan* (*musrenbang* or public participation in planning and budgeting). Even if they want to participate, they are not well-informed about these opportunities. Furthermore, young people consider *musrenbang* as conventional, unattractive, and exclusive.

“*Musrenbang* is still conventional. It is not interesting for young people. The government needs to involve all sections of the community, but I know it’s too ideal and probably hard to implement.”

(KP, female, youth-led organisation)

91 BAPPENAS. ‘Indeks Pembangunan Pemuda Indonesia 2019. [Youth Development Index Indonesia 2019], Jakarta, Indonesia: BAPPENAS, KEMENKOPMK, KEMENPORA, 2020.

When they are invited to participate in public affairs, it is usually tokenistic and they are not actively involved in decision-making, which is reserved for adult leaders. *Musrenbang* has been criticised as exclusive and frequently disregarding the participation and voices of women and poor people.⁹²

Young people in our consultation raised issues with how the government engages with them, for instance, by taking advantage of their free labour or boxing them into organising ceremonial events like festivals or celebrations. The government and adult leaders rarely involve them in meaningful discussions and making public decisions. The government-authorised participatory platform such as *Forum Anak* (Child Forum) is a welcomed initiative, but it has been criticised for its tendency to be dominated by adult interests and preferences.⁹³

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Laksana contends that democratic education must start with transparency in government and a healthy public debate about social issues.⁹⁴ Both are key tenets of democracy. While Indonesia has come a long way in strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring freedom of expression, there are indications that democratic progress has stalled.⁹⁵ According to Freedom House, Indonesia scored 59 out of 100 in regard to global freedom in 2022 and 48 out of 100 for internet freedom, a steady decline from 2017 when Indonesia's scores for global freedom and internet freedom were 65 and 53 out of 100 respectively.⁹⁶

Young people shared the same concerns, especially regarding increasing incidents of policing against dissenting opinions, including some academics, and the restriction of civic expression, including of academic freedom⁹⁷. Recent cases of young activists being put on trial and the deaths of student protesters were cited.⁹⁸ For youth participants, these incidents have created a climate of fear to raise their voices and voice their aspirations.⁹⁹ This climate of fear is also evident in the general population. According to a survey by Lembaga Survei Indonesia in 2019, 43 per cent of respondents do not feel safe in expressing their political opinions publicly.¹⁰⁰

92 Purba, Rasita Ekawati. 'Public Participation in Development Planning: A Case Study of Indonesian Musrenbang', *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review* 5, no. 12, 16 August 2011.

93 Arifiani, Sandra Dewi. 'Bumping into the 'Glass Ceiling' of Child Participation in Development: Child Forums in Indonesia', Edited by Kirsten Cheney, 2015.

94 Laksana, Ben K. C. 'Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar Pendidikan Demokratis (1): Terbuka akan Kelemahan. [Basic principles of democratic education (1): being transparent about shortcomings]', *IndoPROGRESS*, 14 October 2020

95 Power, Tom. 'Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn', *New Mandala*, 9 October 2018. <www.newmandala.org/jokowis-authoritarian-turn/>; Aspinall, Edward, and Marcus Mietzner., 'Indonesia's Democratic Paradox', *New Mandala*, 7 December 2019. <www.newmandala.org/indonesias-democratic-paradox/>; Diprose, Rachael, Dave McRae, and Vedi R. Hadiz. 'Two Decades of Reformasi in Indonesia: Its Illiberal Turn', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49, no. 5 (20 October 2019): pp. 691–712; Aspinall, Edward, Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton. 'Elites, Masses, and Democratic Decline in Indonesia', *Democratization* 27, no. 4, 18 May 2020: pp. 505–26; and Arifin, Saru. 'Illiberal Tendencies in Indonesian Legislation: The Case of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation', *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 9, no. 3, 2 September 2021: pp. 386–403

96 Freedom House. 'Indonesia: Freedom in the World 2017 Country Report' and Freedom House. 'Indonesia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report'

97 Freedom House, 'Indonesia: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report,' 2021. <<https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-world/2021>>

98 Walden, Max, Bahauddin Raja Baso, Willy Kurniawan, Indonesian Presidential Secretariat, and Laily Rachev. 'Students Dead, Activists Arrested Amid Protests to Stop Legal Changes in Indonesia', *ABC News*. 1 October 2019.

99 See also Primandari, Fadhilah. 'Progress in Democratic Culture Is Being Stifled in Indonesia', *New Mandala*, 15 March, 2020

100 CNN Indonesia. 'LSI Sebut Ketakutan Publik Berekspresi Naik di Era Jokowi'. 2019. <www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191104065811-20-445307/lsi-sebut-ketakutan-publik-berekspresi-naik-di-era-jokowi>

Young people, especially college students, say they also experienced the same trend in higher education. There is a growing pushback from university management against political activism and organization. Instead of supporting students to participate in civic engagement, universities increasingly push students to participate in academic competitions or entrepreneurial activities. It is difficult for students to get resources and support from the university for community activities. In our consultations, young people shared that some universities responded negatively to students' criticism against the commercialisation of education. Students' voices were dismissed, and they were regarded as lacking in understanding of campus administration and bureaucracy. Due to their activism, some students on scholarships were threatened with their financial support being revoked.

PUBLIC RALLIES AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Public rallies and demonstrations have become the dominant medium for young people to be heard.¹⁰¹ A series of mass demonstrations were held in October 2020 to protest the upcoming enactment of the recent controversial Omnibus Law and in 2019 to rally against the new bill on the criminal code.¹⁰² Other issues that were raised by youth through various platforms (including social media) were the push to legalise the Elimination of Sexual Harassment Law (RUU TPKS).¹⁰³ Some of these young demonstrators subsequently faced repression.¹⁰⁴

However, young people in our consultation are fully aware that public demonstrations often incite criticism from some parts of society for their disruptive effect on everyday lives. The growing expansion of social media and its users offers a new platform for political expression and, in some cases, citizen's pressure mounted through social media successfully challenged government's decisions. However, the recent cases of censorship, restriction of internet access and legal litigation against online protesters under the banner of defamation reveal the downside of social media, creating fear among users.¹⁰⁵ An online survey in 2019 by Indonesia Youth IGF, SAFEnet, and PAMFLET Generasi reported that more than half of the respondents aged 15-24 years of age shared that they did not feel safe in expressing their opinion on social media.¹⁰⁶ Being aware of this dilemma, young people in our consultation contend that public rallies are often their last option for voicing their aspirations and pressuring the government.

101 Warburton, Eve. 'Indonesia's pro-Democracy Protests Cut across Deep Political Cleavages', New Mandala, 2 October 2019.

102 Primandari, Fadhilah. 'Progress in Democratic Culture Is Being Stifled in Indonesia', New Mandala, 15 March, 2020; and Nowak, Nurman. 'Youth, Politics, and Social Engagement in Contemporary Indonesia', Jakarta, Indonesia: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021

103 Parahita, Gilang Desti. 'The Rise of Indonesian Feminist Activism on Social Media', Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia 4, no. 2 (2019): pp.104–15

104 Aspinall, Edward, and Marcus Mietzner., 'Indonesia's Democratic Paradox', New Mandala, 7 December 2019; and Primandari, Fadhilah. 'Progress in Democratic Culture Is Being Stifled in Indonesia', New Mandala, 15 March, 2020

105 Idris, Ika Karlina. 'Aksi Demo 22 Mei: Pembatasan Akses Media Sosial Lukai Hak Rakyat Untuk Berekspres dan Mendapat Informasi [22 May Demonstration: Access restriction to social media denied civilian rights to expression and to acquire information]', The Conversation, 24 May 2019. <:<http://theconversation.com/aksi-demo-22-mei-pembatasan-akses-media-sosial-lukai-hak-rakyat-untuk-berekspres-dan-mendapat-informasi-117602>>; and Freedom House. 'Indonesia: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report'; and Primandari, Fadhilah. 'Progress in Democratic Culture Is Being Stifled in Indonesia', New Mandala, 15 March, 2020

106 Youth IGF Indonesia, SAFEnet, PAMFLET. 'Siaran Pers: 62,3% Warganet* Tidak Yakin Kebebasan Berekspres di Dunia Maya Sudah Dilindungi dengan Baik di Indonesia. [Press Release: 62.3% netizens doubt their freedom of expression in online media is well-guaranteed in Indonesia.]', October 2019.

SMART CITIES AND DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

The advancement of digital technology and the steady increase of internet connectivity and accessibility have produced many initiatives that enable citizen participation. As part of the Smart City Programs, Jakarta's government launched several digital platforms such as JAKI and Qlue to facilitate citizens to lodge complaints about public services and the processes of various administrative permits or applications. A report in 2016 estimated that 84.2 per cent of the users of Jakarta's digital platforms (i.e., Qlue, Waze, and @petajkt) were young people aged 18-25 years old.¹⁰⁷ Citizens generally appreciate these platforms since they enable them to communicate their concerns expediently without investing time and effort to meet the officials directly and physically.¹⁰⁸ Young people in our consultation, however, note that formal digital platforms such as JAKI or Qlue are not as effective as making issues viral via social media platforms such as Twitter.

“*Government's platforms are too cumbersome. Social media is easier to access. Young people don't like complicated things like you have to download the app first. Also, the government will not respond before the issue goes viral. Just like the police. Social media is truly a double-edged sword.*”

(MH, male, university student)

Although generally welcomed, digital platforms such as Qlue, JAKI and LAPOR are limited in their capacities to facilitate more substantial participation in the city's decision-making process. While young people can now lodge their complaints about public services directly, they are still largely excluded from the process of making policy and programmatic decisions. Their participation is limited to being the 'consumers' instead of the 'architects' of public policy/programs and lack the ability to decide what kind of public policy needs to be implemented and how.¹⁰⁹

Digital participation, while holding the potential to be more inclusive, also faces challenges from the multidimensional digital divide. Aside from unequal access to the internet and gadgets (first-level digital divide), young people also have differentiated skills/literacy in navigating the online platforms (second-degree digital divide) with young people coming from high socioeconomic status are more likely to maximise the benefit of technology than their peers from low socioeconomic backgrounds (third-degree digital divide).¹¹⁰

107 Putri, D. A., M. CH Karlina, and J. Tanaya. 'From Smart City to Open City: Lessons from Jakarta SmartCity', Jakarta, Indonesia: Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance, Indonesia., 2016.

108 Ibid.

109 Abebe, Tatek, and Kjörholt Anne Trine. 'Young People: Participation and sustainable development in an urbanizing world', Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), 2012; and MacNeil, Carole, Judith Mulwa, and Lisa Reudenbach. 'Youth and the City: Lessons from 13 innovative projects funded by the City Alliance Catalytic Fund and UN-HABITAT Youth Fund', Cities Alliance, UN-HABITAT, November 2016.

110 Andres Lombana-Bermudez, Andres, Sandra Cortesi, Christian Fieseler, Urs Gasser, Alexa Hasse, Gemma Newlands, and Sarah Wu. 'Youth and the Digital Economy: Exploring Youth Practices, Motivations, Skills, Pathways, and Value Creation', Massachusetts, US: The Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, June 2020.

Digital platforms should be seen as a part of the repertoire, not the only avenues, for public participation. At the same time, efforts to experiment and expand digital platforms to encourage more youth engagement at the policy level should also be continued. Digital mediums should also be accompanied by face-to-face and direct involvement of young people in public decision-making and shaping their built environment, especially at the neighbourhood or school level.¹¹¹ The process to create more and better platforms to facilitate young people's participation should be done with close consultation and collaboration with young people from different backgrounds to ensure the platforms respect their preferences, cultures, and needs.¹¹²

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF CITIES

“*The government is not designed to be innovative but rather to be more static as bureaucratization takes its course.... The government should make a new governance mechanism by collaborating with civil society, including youth, to understand the real dynamics in society.*”

(SA, male, entrepreneur)

Young people understand that they have the right to participate in public affairs and that their voices and contributions are important. One of the aspects of city governance where young people's voices are relatively absent is in the city's-built environment. Young people are rarely involved in deciding what types of infrastructure or facilities should be built. They are also seldom informed about the development plans for their neighbourhood or school zones that directly affect their everyday lives.

Around the world, city planners and governments have experimented with innovative ways to solicit the aspirations of young people and actively involve them in city planning. For instance, city-wide programs such as 'Build-Up London' and 'Growing Up Boulder' aim to include children and young people in creating a city where they can move around independently, safely and comfortably.¹¹³ The program involves children and young people from the conceptualisation and designing stage to implementation, including enlisting their participation in building the facilities they design with planners and architects.¹¹⁴ Other initiatives involve children and young people through crowd mapping activities to understand their mobility in order to influence the ways roads, public transportation and public spaces are created and placed.¹¹⁵ It is pertinent to note that these participatory programs work alongside schools, community-based organisations and youth-led organisations, suggesting the importance of ensuring a supportive environment for young people to organise themselves and their communities.

111 United Nations. 'World Youth Report: Youth social entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda', New York, USA: United Nations: Department of Socio and Economic Affairs, 2020.

112 Percy-Smith, Barry, and Karen Malone. 'Making Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings Relevant to the Everyday Lives of Young People', PLA Notes, no. 4 (2001): pp. 18–22

113 Mayor of London. 'Making London Child-Friendly: Designing places and streets for children and young people', London, UK: Mayor of London; Shtebunae, 'How Can We Include Young People in the Design and Planning of Our Cities?' Youth City Futures, 21 February 2020; and Build UP, U. K. 'Build Up UK', Build Up, March 14, 2016. www.buildup.org.uk/stories/

114 Ibid.

115 Hennig, Sabine. 'Child- and Youth-Friendly Cities: How does and can crowd mapping support their development?' *Articulo*, 1 October 2019; and Percy-Smith, Barry, and Karen Malone. 'Making Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings Relevant to the Everyday Lives of Young People'

The process of engaging youth in urban development requires long and challenging institutional change and systematic efforts.¹¹⁶ UNICEF recommends four features to ensure meaningful youth participation. First is 'voice', where young people are given the complete and right information to inform their perspectives and for them to be able to articulate their opinion and thinking.¹¹⁷ Secondly, regardless of the mediums and the technicalities, young people should be given respectful, safe, and inclusive spaces to express their opinions. At the same time, government's officials, leaders and adults alike need to seriously listen to and trust young people's perspectives and thoughts.¹¹⁸ Finally, and most importantly, that their views and voices should count significantly toward decision-making.¹¹⁹



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116 Sorensen, Andre. 'Taking Path Dependence Seriously: An historical institutionalist research agenda in planning history.' *Planning Perspectives: PP 30*, no. 1 (2 January 2015): pp. 17–38; and UNICEF. 'Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on adolescent participation and civic engagement', UNICEF, 2020.

117 UNICEF. 'Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on adolescent participation and civic engagement', UNICEF, 2020.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

FINAL TAKEAWAYS

Cities have long been considered the site of progress and development. They have signalled better opportunities, hence a better life, especially for young people. However, as in many G20 countries, cities in Indonesia have yet to deliver on these promises. The urban young still confront multidimensional challenges in various aspects of their lives and are left behind with very few devices available to tackle them.

Despite the considerably more robust economic growth in the urban areas compared to rural ones, young people in our consultations voiced concerns about lack of access to quality education and healthcare, unaffordable housing, scarcity of decent employment, environmental degradation, weakening democratic institutions and lack of safe and meaningful civic engagement.

Albeit not exhaustive, these concerns were corroborated in the literature and existing evidence. What is more interesting is that those concerns have characterised the living experiences in cities for so long. While there have been some improvements, the fact that they remain prevalent means that not enough is being done to tackle these problems.

Unless we listen closely to young people and recognise their unique lived experiences, especially those who are poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged, and marginalized living in slums and informal settlements, injustices in cities will always be hidden behind development facades.

As the number of people living in cities increases in the coming decades, it is time for national and city governments to improve the urban environment, especially for children and young people who are too often overlooked in city planning and budgeting.

A more comprehensive understanding of young people's culture, preferences, strengths, vulnerabilities, needs, and aspirations is an important first step.

We cannot help but notice a gap in knowledge about young people's lives and needs in the city. There is a dearth of research and studies that rigorously analyse youth employment, working conditions, the health status of young people, young people's prospects for housing security and youth political engagement. Periodic censuses and surveys are not always sufficient to provide disaggregated data on young people and largely ignore variables that matter to them. More investment in research, especially studies that actively involve young people and integrate youth issues into routine government surveys is needed.

This paper demonstrates that young people are adequately informed in identifying the structural issues underpinning contemporary urban challenges.

They also articulate their interests and needs. Moreover, they are eager to be involved and many are active in solutions-oriented movements. We can learn from them.

The multifaceted issues that this paper discusses can only be tackled by engaging young people.

The city governments in Indonesia and beyond can become the pioneers in facilitating more meaningful youth participation. City governments can extend access and diversify engagement platforms to include young people from many walks of life in their decision-making processes, starting from their most immediate environment, such as their neighbourhoods and schools. Civic engagement and active citizenry are not threats to cities' stability. On the contrary, they are the bedrock of a healthy democracy, a requirement for sustainable socioeconomic growth.

Take these insights from Indonesia to make cities in the world a safe and sustainable place for all.



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