

HOW THE COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IMPACTS POOR WOMEN IN ACEH PROVINCE, INDONESIA

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine how the commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goals impacts poor women in Aceh Province, Indonesia. It starts with a brief introduction on the poverty condition in Aceh Province and Indonesia as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Then, go on to look at the nature of SDGs as a new global agenda to see what challenge it has in the implementation and what is offered by SDGs in relation to poor women issue. This followed by an assessment on what have been done by the national government (Republic of Indonesia) and local government (Aceh Province) in response to this agenda. Finally, a conclusion and some recommendations will be drawn as a closing part of this paper.

Introduction

A long armed conflict that took place from 1976 to 2005 in Aceh Province, Indonesia and after that huge natural disaster of earth quake and tsunami in December 2004 have destroyed Aceh, both morally and materially, and took thousands of people lives. Consequently, it leads to the high poverty rate in Aceh. In these situations, women badly affected.¹ One of which, is Fatima, a 70 years old woman who lives in a small wooden house in a village in Aceh Province. She has been living in poverty for so many years. At this age, still she has to work to feed her family as a helper in her neighbors' house or in a paddy field. Her small wooden house is far from habitable standard, but nothing she can do to fix it. This is one of portrait of poor women in Aceh Province, Indonesia.²

According to latest data published by Indonesia Statistic Bureau, despite of its abundant natural resources and enormous financial resources, to date Aceh is still one of provinces that has the highest poverty rate in Indonesia with the percentage of poor people of 17,11%, which is above national rate (11,13%). In Indonesia, there are about 28.59 million poor people in 2015 and about 16.94% of these poor people are female-headed household.

¹Evaluasi Situasi Perempuan Tahun 2006, (2007, March 8). Retrieved from

http://www.conflictrecovery.org/bin/evaluasi_dan_rekomendasi_GWGfinal.pdf

²Nenek Fatimah, Potret Buram Kemiskinan di Aceh. (2015, September 26). Retrieved from

<http://regional.kompas.com/read/2015/09/26/23580821/Nenek.Fatimah.Potret.Buram.Kemiskinan.di.Aceh>.

So what is Poverty? Poverty is often defined in either relative or absolute terms. Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. While relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context.³ This paper uses the definition of poverty that is described by the World Bank, as follows:

“Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity.”⁴

Poverty and Women are increasingly seen as an important part of the international development agenda. One of the reasons is because many of the world's poorest people are women.⁵ The other reason might be increasing evidence shows that the decrease in the number of poor women will bring multiple effects in improving the welfare of children who are the future generation. In addition to that, a number of studies conducted by ILO show that the welfare of woman is in fact has positive correlation with growth and poverty reduction efforts.⁶

In Indonesia in general and Aceh particularly, women are the most vulnerable especially women with low education and literacy who live in remote areas for the reason that even though the Government has prioritized the development of a national system based on social protection as a central of its poverty reduction efforts and there are no administrative restrictions on women to get social protection and receive benefits from poverty reduction programs, there are vague barriers which put off women from getting these opportunities. The 2007–2009 Access and Equity Survey found significant issues with program targeting and that female headed households were generally too poor to afford the transportation and court fee costs required to gain legal recognition of their head of household status.⁷

³Poverty. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/poverty/>

⁴Poverty. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty#cite_note-15.

⁵Gender and Poverty Reduction. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty.html

⁶ Kasimin, Suyanti. *Indikator Sosial Ekonomi Wilayah dan Ketahanan Pangan Rumah Tangga Perempuan Miskin di Aceh*. Agrisep Vol (16) No. 1 2015, P1

⁷Improving Women's Access to Government Social Protection Programs. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mampu.or.id/en/program/improving-womens-access-government-social-protection-programs>

At global level exactly on 25 September 2015, Indonesia with 192 other members of the United Nation (UN) adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets as the new global development agenda for the next 15 years. As a successor to MDGs, SDGs aiming to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity and peace as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Here, poverty alleviation is recognized in all its shapes and aspects as the greatest global challenge and an essential necessity for sustainable development.⁸ Taking into account those facts, this paper examines how the commitment to achieve SDGs impacts poor women in Aceh Province, Indonesia.

The Challenge of Sustainable Development as Global Commitment at local level

Having a status as a new global agenda, the SDGs emphasizes that all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. It assures that no one will be left behind as enshrined in the preamble of General assembly resolution 70/1.

The fact that this new agenda promotes inclusiveness and participatory principles donot obscurethereality thatSDGs isnot a binding treaty,butonly a voluntary agreement. This might bring about disadvantages to the success achievement of its targets, as states may feel more tempted to hold back on their commitments. But at the same time it canbe also an opportunity as states may be willing to adopt an agenda that is more ambitious in scope and vision when this agenda requires on them no legally binding obligations.In addition to that, having more players could also lead to a condition where the government abdicates its responsibility to other stakeholders. Unclear explanation on what the obligation is and who the duty bearer is are also another disadvantage that might have significant effect to the implementation process.

On the other hand, making commitment is not the same as realizing it. When it comes to delivering on goals and targets, governance and institution matter. That is to say that both the way in which rules, norms and actions are decided and pit into practice, and the individuals and organizations involved, are important.Focus on local leadership is critical, empower the local action that enables delivery.The impact of poverty is felt by individuals, households and communities in different local context: the solutions to these problems

⁸General Assembly Resolution 70/1, *transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

must similarly come from these most-affected people.⁹ Next, in order to find out how the commitment to the SDGs impacts poor women, this paper will analyze the nature of SDGs itself.

So, then how SDGs address issue of poverty in particular poor women? As SDGs has 17 goals and 169 targets, the paper will only focus on analyzing the goal that most relevant to poverty and women which are goal number 1 No Poverty and number 5 Gender Equality. The SDGs puts poverty reduction as its primary goal (1) and under this goal there are 5 sub-missions that are targeted to be achieved by 2030. Within this goal poverty is seen as a complex issue that not only related to economic aspect of life. It has a wider definition compare to its predecessor (MDGs). It recognizes poverty in all its shape and dimension everywhere as confirmed in target 1.1 "By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day" and 1.2 "By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions". Word "everywhere" shows that SDGs requires poverty reduction efforts to reach poor people where ever they live, either in the city or in rural areas.

No poverty goal also focus on: the implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all; Ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services; Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters; Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation; Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions. The last target in particular shows the complex relationship between gender and poverty, meaning that SDGs recognizes gender dimension to poverty. In designing poverty reduction strategy, it is important that it is built in response to the condition of the most

⁹ Toulmin, Camilla. (24 November 2015). *Driving change by supporting action at the local level*. Retrieved from www.iied.org/driving-change-supporting-action-local-level

affected group. So, therefore it can be said that this goal support the idea that women have specific needs that different from men and it is necessary that poverty eradication policies and action recognize specific needs of women to achieve better results.

The Goal 5 of SDGs advocates Gender equality, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This goal covers broad areas of gender issues, as follows: ending discrimination; ending violence against women, including trafficking and sexual (and other types) of exploitation; ending child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation; the recognition and respect for unpaid care and domestic work in policy and action as well as in public and private sphere; promoting women full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in all aspect of life; promote equal rights to all resources; enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. This shows that gender equality is prominent within SDGs.

In the end, the combination of goal 1 and 5 has placed issue poverty and women as the main focuses in this new agenda, which may bring positive and significant impact on poor women. Next this paper will elaborate what has been done by the government both at national and local level in relation to its commitment to SDGs.

Local context

In the case of Indonesia, the targets that are set under SDGs are not alien at all; these goals do not need to be forced into the national development agenda. Instead, SDGs fully comply with-and in some cases-strengthening the national agenda that already exists, i.e. Nawa Cita (Priority agenda of the current President of Indonesia) and RPJMN (National Mid-term Development Plan), which means that the SDGs can be easily integrated into the national development agenda.

In addition, the Indonesian government has committed to work on a presidential decree (PERPRES) that integrates sustainable development targets to its national development strategies. This regulation will encourage each ministry to work together to realize the 17 goals that are also listed in the Nawa Cita. In addition, on December 17, 2015 president of Indonesia also declared to establish a joint committee (joint working group) to implement

the Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Development Goals / SDGs). It is mentioned that the government main focus is to poverty eradication via improving basic services, education, health, sanitation, etc.

Similar to the national level, that gives SDGs full support, a strong commitment and support to SDGs was shown by the mayor of Banda Aceh City, the capital city of Aceh Province, which was made public in Global Mayor Forum in New York. In this forum mayors from some 40 cities around the world pledged to support the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals, 24 September 2015. These leaders agreed to develop an “integrated and holistic sustainable development strategy” before 2020, to ensure that the SDGs are achieved within their jurisdictions. “To achieve these ends, we call upon national governments and the UN to strongly advocate for the localization of The 2030 Agenda, including crafting relevant sets of global and national monitoring indicators that respond to local and sub-national circumstances,” the declaration states. “We encourage countries to establish environments that unlock the development potential of local and regional governments, and local stakeholders, by creating an enabling institutional framework at all levels and localizing resources.”¹⁰

While one of city governments in Aceh Province has shown its strong commitment, there is no signal at the provincial level. To date, the government of Aceh province has not shown any support in a form of policy or action that compliment the commitment on SDGs. In this case the regulation from the central government is one of effective way to push the government of Aceh province to take serious efforts in response to SDGs, so that the living condition of poor women in Aceh province will likely to impact.

On follow up action to the commitment in general, there is still lack of improvement. The central government already mentioned follow up plans and steps but not yet shows evidence in a more binding document, while at local level, Banda Aceh City, which has mentioned its full commitment to meeting SDGs also has not yet demonstrated progress in the implementation.

Look back at MDGs experiences, active participation at local level is crucial in the achievement of the targets. It is claimed that one of the reasons Indonesia failed to

¹⁰ Greg Scruggs (2015, September 25). Retrieved from <http://citiscopes.org/habitatIII/news/2015/09/new-york-global-mayors-gather-commit-sdgs#sthash.xKUo9JQ6.dpuf>

achieve some of MDGs targets is because there was lack of participation and capacity at local level.¹¹

Conclusion

The SDGs is a set of ambitious goals that agreed by high level leaders. It is as a new global agenda SDGs that provides a broader and comprehensive gender equality targets. It covers issues of high priority for women; it recognizes gender dimension of poverty; it ensure that women benefit equally from all intervention, which may encourage and push local government of Aceh province to place poor women in its development priority and help produces more effective policies and program in dealing with poor women.

However, even though the SDGs has so many good things to offer, the defining factor to the achievement of all targets lies on the hand of local stakeholders, in particular local government. In other words, the impact itself depends largely to the local efforts, and in this case the government of Aceh Province. The commitments, particularly at high level, to the SDGs alone will not impact the lives of poor women in Aceh. Without political will from Aceh Government and full efforts from the inside as well as support from other relevant stakeholders, it is difficult to make changes and the commitment that has been made internationally will not bring any impact at local level.

Recommendation

To give significant impact to poor women in Aceh Province, Indonesia in relation to the commitment to SDGs, the governor of Aceh Province and other government top officials should first show their political will in achieving SDGs and committed to implement these goals in Aceh province territory. After that, the government of Aceh Province should mainstream SDGs into its development strategy by set up local goals that in line with SDGs and based on the existing condition, needs, and priority of Aceh province.

¹¹ Hoelman, Mickael B. et al. (2015, Nov). *Panduan SDGs untuk pemerintah daerah (Kota dan Kabupaten) dan Pemangku Kepentingan daerah* p.9. Infid. Retrieved from http://infid.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Buku_PANDUAN-SDGs.pdf

In order to get more impact domestically, the central government should immediately make an agenda to socialize the commitment to SDGs, make adjustment in policies and then impose regulation that pushes local government (the government of Aceh province) to take action and show active and meaningful participation in improving the living condition of poor women in Aceh, as a part of commitment to SDGs.

In order to achieve optimal results in general, the first important step the government should do is focus on improving data quality, as lack of reliable and disaggregated data leads to ineffectiveness. Data is essential to assess the needs and to set targets appropriate policies and help to measure the performance of local government.

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