

Indonesian Government Policies Addressing Economic and Educational Challenges Caused by the Pandemic: Commitment to the SDGs Agenda and Human Development

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, the coronavirus pandemic has dominated the headlines. While we have seen a gradual decline in new cases compared with the earlier transmission in several countries, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet. Some countries have declared their intention to start treating COVID-19 like other endemic diseases. Other countries, however, have reported an increase in new confirmed cases, including China and Singapore. In Indonesia, the first COVID-19 case was officially confirmed on 2 March 2020. President Joko Widodo announced that two patients from Depok West Java province had tested positive for COVID-19. On 10 March 2020, the president declared a national emergency and established the COVID-19 Handling Task Force. Subsequently, the transmission cases increased and spread to many provinces in Indonesia. To handle the virus transmission, the government took strenuous actions. A country-wide lockdown, known as the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), was deployed, especially in the state capital, which was the highest-risk place for COVID-19 infection in the nation. Soon after, the central government raised the emergency situation status to national disaster. Interactions were restricted and public gathering spaces such as non-essential workplaces, schools and universities were closed.

To balance COVID-19 prevention and business recovery, PSBB was replaced by public activity restrictions, known as PPKM, at the onset of 2021. The PPKM policy was in effect for the regions with high incidence of transmission cases. COVID-19 cases reached a peak in July 2021, with the number of transmissions increasing to more than 3 million. Since then, the virus spread has been brought under

effective control and the number of transmission cases has declined gradually. At present, the Indonesian government is preparing to go through a transition from a pandemic to a COVID-19 endemic. Before implementing the transition, the government is encouraging the community to obey the health protocol while at the same time relaxing social distancing measures. Indonesia is among the world's top five countries in terms of the highest number of vaccinated citizens, with more than 280 million doses of vaccine administered.¹ This high vaccination coverage offers hope for Indonesians and the global community that the pandemic could begin fading soon. Yet, the pandemic has posed serious challenges for the government, particularly in the social and economic sectors. Now, the question is how the Indonesian government will deal with the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in its economy and educational sector. This paper tries to explore the answer by reviewing the policies taken by the government and their impacts.

POST-PANDEMIC ISSUES

COVID-19 is actually a healthcare problem. However, its massive and harmful transmission has led to serious crises in many sectors. First, like in other countries, it has caused severe disruptions in the economic segments. It has in fact caused a contraction in the growth of the national economy. In its report, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) indicated that in 2020, the Indonesian economy experienced a growth contraction of 2.07 per cent (c-to-c) compared to that in 2019.² Indonesia's economy grew 5.17 per cent in 2018 and then the growth rate slowed to 5.02 per cent in 2019. The pandemic reduced Indonesia's economic growth to minus 2.07 per cent in 2020.

Most micro and small-to-medium enterprises (MSMEs) were hit hard by the pandemic. A survey by the Indonesian Bank showed that 77.95 per cent of Indonesia's MSMEs faced difficulties in performing their operations.³ MSMEs were confronted with two main challenges: a decrease in sales due to social distancing restrictions and an increase in the cost of business operations. As MSMEs play a key role in national economies and employ millions of people, disruptions in this sector

1. setkab.go.id. (<https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-among-worlds-top-5-countries-with-highest-vaccination-coverage/>). Accessed 10 June 2022.

2. bps.go.id. (<https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/02/05/1811/ekonomi-indonesia-2020-turun-sebesar-2-07-persen--c-to-c-.html>). Accessed 10 June 2022.

3. liputan6.com. (<https://www.liputan6.com/bisnis/read/4876398/7795-persen-umkm-terdampak-pandemi-covid-19-selama-2021>). Accessed 10 June 2022.

will potentially exacerbate the socio-economic crisis. The rise of unemployment is the direct impact of these disturbances. Data from BPS showed that the unemployment number was up by 2.67 million to 9.67 million in August 2021.⁴ This was greatly contributed to by the increased number of people on employment termination as a result of many businesses stopping their operations during the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic has caused about 15.6 per cent of workers to experience layoffs, 13.8 per cent of whom received no compensation at all.⁵ This percentage is much higher if we include the number of workers on temporary layoffs with pay cuts. Some companies are turning to salary reductions instead of permanent work termination to avoid paying termination compensation. Thus, temporary layoff is worse than permanent employment termination.

A number of issues in the abovementioned economic sectors have led to various social problems – the second post-pandemic challenge to deal with. The major one is the increase in the poverty rate. After a significant decline in the poverty rate to 9.22 per cent in September 2019,⁶ Indonesia's poverty rate was up by 10.14 per cent or 27.54 million in March 2021.⁷ A large number of impoverished people will create various crises and contribute to the presence of much greater problems, one of which is inequality. Inequality is closely related to poverty because inequality is a factor of the persistence of poverty. That is, while many people were unable to perform their business activities due to PSBB and PPMK, other groups of people took advantage of the situation. For example, while the conventional business world experienced a significant economic setback during the pandemic, the e-commerce industry became the forefront of the retail sector.

Education is another social dimension affected by the pandemic. The preamble of the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia states explicitly that the lifelong education of the people is one of the major goals of the state. Article 31 of the Constitution further states that every citizen shall be entitled to receive education and has the obligation to undertake basic education, and that the government shall provide the funding. Thus, despite the pandemic and social distancing measures, the

4. bps.go.id. (<https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2020/11/05/1673/agustus-2020--tingkat-pengangguran-terbuka--tpt--sebesar-7-07-persen.html>). Accessed 10 June 2022.

5. Chairani, Ikfina. 2020. Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Using Gender Perspective in Indonesia. *Jurnal Kependudukan Indonesia* 39.

6. beritasatu.com. (<https://www.beritasatu.com/archive/802831/pandemi-covid19-picu-angka-kemiskinan-naik-di-atas-10>). Accessed 12 June 2022.

7. Syamsuri, Sa'adah, Yaumi, and Roslan, Isma Aulia. 2022. Reducing Public Poverty through Optimization of Zakat Funding as an Effort to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam* 792.

government has to fulfil its citizens' right to education by making good policies and taking measured actions and innovations. Despite the challenges, the commitment of the Indonesian government to educating its citizens for lifelong growth remains high. To ensure the continuity of education during the pandemic, the government has therefore changed its policy in education and prescribed learning to be conducted remotely. However, this distance learning mode is still not optimal in its implementation.

PRIORITISING HEALTH, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

As portrayed in the abovementioned situation, the Indonesian government now faces tough challenges to recover from the lasting post-pandemic effects. The national strategic programmes, such as infrastructure development, that aimed to strengthen Indonesia's economy are not seemingly going as planned. The main reason is because the government has to allocate extra spending for the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The additional budget includes healthcare spending for the treatment of COVID-19 patients and medical devices, social assistance (such as subsidies, stimulus packages, and direct cash assistance for economically disadvantaged individuals), and spending for fulfilling the nation's education agenda.

How much budget has the government spent on COVID-19 management? According to Hartanto, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, government expenditure on COVID-19 management until 2022 has reached 1,895.5 trillion rupiah.⁸ This massive spending has caused serious impacts on fund allocation for other sectors of development as large amounts of planned expenditures at the various ministries and institutions were diverted for COVID-19 management, in line with the Presidential Regulation Number 54 Year 2020, which changed the posture of the state budget to be more accommodating toward the needs for handling COVID-19.⁹ In fact, the total budget cuts at the various ministries and institutions stood at 50 trillion rupiah in 2020.¹⁰ Interestingly, while other ministries and institutions ex-

8. ekonomi.bisnis.com. (<https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20220606/9/1540281/airlangga-total-anggaran-penanganan-covid-19-ri-rp18955-triliun>). Accessed 12 June 2022.

9. kemenkeu.go.id. (<https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/en/publications/news/presidential-regulation-no722020-changes-the-posture-of-the-state-budget-to-be-more-accommodating-with-the-needs-for-handling-covid-19>). Accessed 12 June 2022.

10. cnbcindonesia.com. (<https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20200507104943-4-156902/sri-mulyani-bakal-pangkas-lagi-anggaran-k-l-sebesar-rp-50-t>). Accessed 12 June 2022.

perienced budget cuts as a consequence of the presidential regulation, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health received significant increases in their budgets (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Budget Cuts and Fund Reallocation in 2020.

No	Ministry and Institution	Budget Change	
		Before	After
1	Ministry of Agriculture	IDR 21 trillion	IDR 17 trillion
2	Ministry of Transportation	IDR 43 trillion	IDR 36 trillion
3	Ministry of Defense	IDR 131 trillion	IDR 121 trillion
4	Ministry of Public Works and Housing	IDR 120 trillion	IDR 95 trillion
5	Ministry of Research and Technology	IDR 42 trillion	IDR 2 trillion
6	Ministry of Social Affairs	IDR 62 trillion	IDR 60 trillion
7	The Attorney General	IDR 7 trillion	IDR 6 trillion
8	The Supreme Court	IDR 10.5 trillion	IDR 10.1 trillion
9	Indonesian National Police	IDR 104 trillion	IDR 96 trillion
10	The Constitutional Court	IDR 246 billion	IDR 221 billion
11	Ministry of Education*	IDR 36 trillion	IDR 70 trillion
12	Ministry of Health*	IDR 57 trillion	IDR 76 trillion

Source: Tabulated from news.detik.com.¹¹

The extra budget given to the Ministry of Health can be understood as the government's effort to accommodate the increasing budgetary requirements for combating the pandemic. Accelerating the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic is the top priority since economic development cannot be achieved if the state is still experiencing high rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths. The significant increase in educational spending indicates that the government highly acknowledges the key role of education in national development. Through allocating increased budgets for healthcare and education expenditures, the government has shown its commitment to achieving the sustainable development goals, increasing human resources capacity in particular.

Subsequent to changing the posture of the state budget, President Jokowi signed the Presidential Regulation Number 23 Year 2020 concerning the implemen-

11. detik.com. (<https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4967314/alihkan-untuk-atasi-corona-jokowi-pangkas-anggaran-kemenristek-rp-40-triliun>). Accessed 11 June 2022.

tation of the National Economic Recovery (PEN) programme.¹² This policy prescribes that the management of COVID-19 should be seen from a wider aspect because the pandemic is not only a health-related problem, but also an economic problem. The PEN programme aims to protect, preserve, and elevate the capacity of business actors in running their economic activities. It is hoped that this economic recovery package will both accelerate economic recovery by helping the business sectors, including the MSMEs, and save human lives. The Ministry of Finance has allocated 607.65 trillion rupiah for the PEN programme, covering the priority sectors as follows:

Table 2: PEN Budget and Priority Sectors.

No	Priority Sector	Spending
1	Health Programme	IDR 87.55 trillion
2	Social Protection	IDR 203.9 trillion
3	Business Incentives	IDR 120.61 trillion
4	Support for MSMEs	IDR 123.46 trillion
5	Corporate Financing	IDR 53.57 trillion
6	Local Government and Cross-Sectoral Cooperation among Ministries/Institutions	IDR 106.11 trillion

Source: Ministry of Finance.¹³

COMMITTED TO SDGS AGENDA AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

A growth decline in all sectors caused by the pandemic could put at risk the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda in Indonesia. Fortunately, several priority efforts taken by the government are among the major agenda items of the SDGs. The PEN programme, which includes a healthcare programme, social protection, and support for MSMEs, is one of the examples. Ensuring that every child in Indonesia continues to receive quality education while learning from home is another of the government's efforts that are in line with the 2030 SDGs agenda.

12. setkab.go.id. (<https://setkab.go.id/en/govt-issues-pp-23-2020-for-national-economic-recovery-programs/>). Accessed 1 June 2022.

13. pen.kemenkeu.go.id. (<https://pen.kemenkeu.go.id/in/post/mengapa-program-pen>). Accessed 29 May 2022.

In his remarks in the UN Economic and Social Council annual meeting forum, President Joko Widodo stated Indonesia's high commitment to achieving the 2030 SDGs agenda, despite the serious challenges faced by Indonesia in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse impacts. He further proposed four steps the world community could take to accomplish the 2030 SDGs agenda.¹⁴ First, the global community must work together to enable the world's quick recovery from the health crisis through fair and equitable vaccination programmes. Second, enhanced focus and assistance should be given to vulnerable groups due to the slowdown in economic activities, through social security and protection. Third, the world economy must recover together without compromising the healthcare aspects. Finally, the world community should strengthen global partnerships and the principle of "no one left behind" must be realised in a concrete manner. The four steps proposed by the president also signify the attempts his administration has taken to fulfil the agenda of development during the COVID-19 malady.

In terms of SDGs accomplishment, Indonesia ranked 97 out of 165 participating countries, with a score of 66.3 in 2021. This is still far below the other regional countries' achievements, with Thailand ranking 43, Vietnam ranking 51, Malaysia ranking 65, and Singapore ranking 76.¹⁵ Indonesia's ranking and score indicate that the country needs to put more effort into improving its SDGs achievements. In the three years to come, elevating its SDGs score and ranking would be a tough challenge for Indonesia due to the impact of economic and social disruptions caused by the pandemic. However, the spirit of development promoted by the president matches the 2030 SDGs agenda, as seen in his 2020-2024 national medium-term development plan, in which he set five priorities of national development, including human resource development, infrastructure development, regulation simplification, bureaucracy simplification, and economic transformation.¹⁶

President Joko Widodo's decision to prioritise human development is in harmony with his administration's vision of "the realisation of an advanced Indonesia that is sovereign, independent and embraces a personality based on mutual coopera-

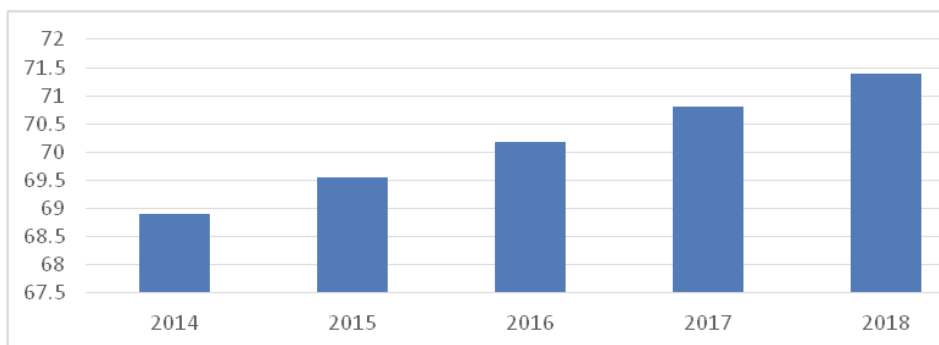
14. [youtube.com/c/SekretariatPresiden](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA14Tn7DkA). 2021. President Joko Widodo's Speech at the UN Economic and Social Council Meeting, 13 July 2021. (https://youtu.be/_HA14Tn7DkA).

15. Cambridge University Press. 2021. The Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Report. (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2021/2021-sustainable-development-report.pdf>).

16. Sekretariat Kabinet RI, Deputy Bidang Perekonomian. Narasi Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional 2020-2024.

tion.” Under his presidency, human resources development has shown an upward trend as indicated by Indonesia’s human development index (HDI), as seen below.

Figure 1: Indonesia’s Human Development Index between 2014-2018.



Source: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018.¹⁷

In line with the above HDI increase, according to the latest UNDP report, Indonesia for the first time broke into the high category group in terms of human development.¹⁸ HDI considers three dimensions of human development: health (assessed by life expectancy at birth), education (measured by the mean number of years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and standard of living (measured by per capita income).¹⁹

The increase in Indonesia’s HDI is a significant achievement for the Indonesian government. It could indicate that the government has performed well in social and economic development, which affects how long and how well people can live. Importantly, HDI has now become one of the considerations for the Indonesian government in budgeting its development expenditures. Geographically, Indonesia is an archipelagic state, consisting of thousands of islands divided into several provinces, each of which has its own potency, natural resources, and diverse problems. A widely applicable indicator, like HDI, is needed so that the approach to development is more effective for all regions now and in the future. Scrutinised closely, it

17. Badan Pusat Statistik. 2018. Indeks Pembangunan Manusia 2018. (<https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2019/08/27/34432798c6ae95c6751bfbba/indeks-pembangunan-manusia-2018.html>).

18. undp.org. (<https://www.undp.org/indonesia/press-releases/latest-undp-report-indonesia-retains-standing-high-human-development-category>). Accessed 2 June 2022.

19. hdr.undp.org. (<https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>). Accessed 13 June 2022.

can be seen that several of President Joko Widodo's instructions, i.e., the PEN programme and focus on HDI increase, coincide perfectly with the priorities of SDGs accomplishment in Indonesia, as written in the roadmap of SDGs Indonesia toward 2030, which focuses, among others, on infrastructure development, health, education, social protection, food security, good and clean governance, and order.

THE POLICY IMPACTS

Theoretically, the president's policies appear to be accurate and effective. However, how his major policies affect Indonesia's social and economic sectors is more important. We may not yet be able to look at the thorough impacts of the policies in the second quarter of 2022, for example, the impact of the PEN programme in boosting MSMEs operations. Yet, initial signs such as small changes could be present and are worth assessing as part of our participation in overseeing the implementation of the policies to help drive the achievement of the 2030 SDGs agenda and Indonesia's vision 2045. It is necessary for the government to convince the public that the large amounts of funds allocated for the PEN programme and for COVID-19 management have been spent in an effective and appropriate manner. In terms of COVID-19 management, the government has been able to suppress the transmission cases, and the vaccination rate has reached more than 280 million doses. Nevertheless, the question is how the government has responded to the hard hits caused by the pandemic on other basic dimensions of our lives. To answer this question, let us examine the various aspects as follows.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF BUDGET ABSORPTION

As of June 2022, the budget absorption of the PEN programme has reached 95.13 trillion rupiah, which is 20.9 per cent of the total spending allocated. Table 3 below shows the detailed spendings on the programme.

Table 3: PEN Programme Spendings as of June 2022.

No	Sector	Allocation	Spending
1	Health Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax incentives for vaccines/medical devices COVID-19 management through village funds 	IDR 24.46 trillion (20%)
2	Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PKH programme Food Card Pre-Employment Card Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance Cooking Oil Direct Cash Assistance Cash Assistance for Street Food Vendors, Stalls, Fishermen 	IDR 55.85 trillion (36.1%)
3	Economic Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Food Interest Subsidy and Expenditure for Guarantee Fees (IJP) for MSMEs 	IDR 14.83 trillion (8.3%)

Source: covid19.go.id.²⁰

In the opinion of Misbakhun, a member of house commission XI, this absorption rate is considered still too low because the second quarter of 2022 ends soon and yet the programme has just absorbed one-fifth of the total budget. He has thus called for an evaluation of this matter.²¹ From the efficiency side, academicians and economists have voiced the concern that the large amounts of funding for COVID-19 management will present inefficiency and corruption risks. This concern later proved to be valid; social assistance funds for people affected by COVID-19 were embezzled by the Minister of Social Affairs, the person who was supposed to be the leading figure in the management of social problems posed by the pandemic. Upsettingly, the embezzled funds reached 20 billion rupiah. Corruption risks

20. covid19.go.id. (<https://covid19.go.id/artikel/2022/06/15/realisasi-program-pen-capai-9513-triliun>). Accessed 13 June 2022.

21. dpr.go.id. (<https://www.dpr.go.id/berita/detail/id/39403/t/Perlu+Dievaluasi%2C+Realisasi+Penyerapan+Anggaran+PEN+Baru+Seperlima+per+Kuartal+II+2022>). Accessed 13 June 2022.

in emergency funding could possibly occur downstream as well. Local authorities who hold no sense of responsibility toward national crises may be prone to embezzling the COVID-19 relief funds. Thus, the above case revealed by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) could just be the tip of the iceberg in the sea. A former senior KPK investigator, Novel Baswedan, estimates that corruption in the funding of COVID-19 management could reach 100 trillion rupiah.²² Low absorption and corruption risks in almost all lines pose a serious threat to our social and economic recovery plan. Without systematic supervision and transparency, and good intentions, large amounts of budget are not enough to drive our socio-economic recovery.

Another issue that causes scepticism among the public concerning the positive impact of COVID-19 management on the social and economic sectors is the numerous reports of improper targeting of social assistance distribution in the community. Several community groups that were not entitled to receive the assistance were categorised to be entitled and thus received the social assistance. This inaccuracy was mainly caused by the validity of social assistance recipient data.²³ Valid and up-to-date recipient data is key to the proper distribution of social assistance to the community. Disgracefully, unscrupulous officials at the lower levels that distribute the assistance often manipulate social assistance recipient data. There has been anecdotal evidence that statistical data in Indonesia can be very dynamic when it comes to social assistance programmes; that is, the number of people living under poverty can spike significantly when there is a social assistance programme. Mistargeting in the distribution of social assistance to the community was also caused by a lack of infrastructure. For example, to help parents to provide sufficient internet quota for their children's online learning, the Ministry of Education disbursed internet quota assistance. Unfortunately, this assistance became ineffective and was mistargeted when received by students who had no mobile devices or internet access.

22. cnbcindonesia.com. (<https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20210519081108-4-246534/korupsi-bansos-covid-triliunan-orang-miskin-dapat-berapa>). Accessed 16 June 2022.

23. CSIS. 2020. Optimizing the Distribution of the Social Assistance Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic. CSIS Commentaries. (https://www.csis.or.id/download/281-post-2020-06-10-DMRU_081_EN_Hirawan.pdf).

ECONOMIC GROWTH

By and large, social assistance and stimulus programmes distributed to most vulnerable community groups and MSMEs have appeared to bring about positive impacts. BPS announced that Indonesia's economy expanded by 5.01 per cent in the first quarter of 2022.²⁴ The growth percentage was influenced by the increase in gross domestic product based on constant prices, compared to the same period last year. Meanwhile, MSMEs have started to recover after being hit hard by the pandemic. MSMEs at the local level have also intensified their business operations. The increase in activities in this sector was affirmed by the growth of credit for MSMEs, which expanded by 14.98 per cent in the first quarter of 2022.²⁵

In the employment sector, Indonesia recorded a significant increase in the rate of employment since the pandemic outbreak in the beginning of 2020.²⁶ There have been 4.45 million people who have returned to work since February 2022. Agriculture was the greatest source of employment nationwide, with 1.86 million people employed in this sector. The industry was reported to be employing 840,000 people. In contrast, the trade sector provided 640,000 jobs in the same period. We all hope that this remarkable economic achievement will continue to show consistent growth over the next few years so that national economic recovery can be achieved faster and Indonesia can grow stronger in all aspects of socio-economic life.

EDUCATION SECTOR

The pandemic has made education the anchor to the Indonesian government's policy and development agenda. As a matter of fact, the government has increased the spending on education. In 2021, the Ministry of Research and Technology was merged with the Ministry of Education and Culture to form the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT). Tapping on a young figure and a digital technology entrepreneur, Nadiem Makarim, to lead the newly merged

24. setkab.go.id. (<https://setkab.go.id/ekonomi-indonesia-tumbuh-501-persen-di-kuartal-i-2022/>). Accessed 14 June 2022.

25. liputan6.com. (<https://www.liputan6.com/bisnis/read/4964483/bank-indonesia-catat-kredit-umkm-tumbuh-1498-persen-di-kuartal-i-2022>). Accessed 15 June 2022.

26. Badan Pusat Statistik. 2022. Labour Force Situation in Indonesia February 2022. The 2022 National Labour Force Survey. (<https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2022/06/07/c81631f750ee1ece2c3eb276/keadaan-angkatan-kerja-di-indonesia-februari-2022.html>).

ministry, President Joko Widodo showed his strong intention to ensure that quality education is provided to all during the pandemic through technology-based distance learning. To support the president's educational policy, more programmes were designed, including the issuance of the Emergency Curriculum, the Guru Penggerak (Teacher Professional Development) programme, the *Laman Guru Berbagi* (Platform for Teachers to Share) programme, the Learning from Home on TVRI (State-Owned Television Station) programme, and the Internet Quota Subsidy for Teachers and Students programme.

Several key questions need to be raised regarding these educational programmes. Can the programmes prevent students from dropping out of school during the pandemic? Can the programmes prevent learning loss due to school closures? Can the programmes ensure equality of education services for all? The following data can be used to illustrate that the design of educational programmes and provision of learning resources during the pandemic have not been able to provide maximal quality education services:

1. Student dropout rate is still rising. According to the General Secretary of MoE-CRT, the elementary school dropout rate in 2022 was 10 times higher than that in 2019. This was caused by several factors, among which were parent dissatisfaction with learning from home, economic issues, and children's involvement in workplaces.²⁷
2. Inequality in education services and learning loss risks due to inadequate infrastructure is widening. Remote learning was one of the policies taken by the government to safeguard education during the pandemic. This mode of learning relies heavily on the availability of the internet and learning devices. Unfortunately, when the pandemic hit, 8,522 schools were not powered by electricity and 42,159 schools were not equipped with internet connectivity.²⁸ We have no exact number yet but we believe hundreds of thousands of students at these schools were likely at risk of not receiving good education services or of even not having any access to education at all. Thus, this situation risks exacerbating existing inequalities in learning engagement and aca-

27. [kompas.com. \(https://www.kompas.com/wiken/read/2022/01/16/200036281/putus-sekolah-akibat-pandemi-covid-19-naik-10-kali-lipat-ini-kata?page=all\)](https://www.kompas.com/wiken/read/2022/01/16/200036281/putus-sekolah-akibat-pandemi-covid-19-naik-10-kali-lipat-ini-kata?page=all). Accessed 15 June 2022.

28. [cnnindonesia.com. \(https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200726170636-20-529097/kemdikbud-sebut-8522-sekolah-belum-teraliri-listrik\)](https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200726170636-20-529097/kemdikbud-sebut-8522-sekolah-belum-teraliri-listrik). Accessed 13 June 2022.

ademic performance between rich and poor students and between developed and underdeveloped areas.

3. The essence of the educational policy is not entirely conveyed to the relevant stakeholders, teachers in particular. The survey by MoECRT²⁹ revealed that most teachers (87 per cent) reported sending only test questions and assignments to students and using no technology in explaining their lessons during the distance teaching they carried out. The survey also found that most students reported facing difficulties in understanding the contents of learning taught by online teaching because they struggled to maintain their focus and concentration.
4. Many teachers are not digitally literate.³⁰ Teachers were not prepared to teach online because they were deprived of adequate technological skills. They did not receive sufficient training that enable them to become competent in and receptive in information and communications technology (ICT) so that they can teach online effectively.
5. Hundreds of private schools are at risk of permanent closure. Low-cost private schools were hit hard by the pandemic and were facing significant financial difficulties because their major source of income was tuition fees from students. When the pandemic broke out, the enrolment rate abruptly declined, mainly because the schools operated without internet (or adequate internet) connectivity and were thus unable to provide online learning.
6. The MoECRT still does not have an ideal concept about online learning. This can be seen from the absence of specific curriculum designs and guidelines, lack of adequate education infrastructure, and inadequate training for teachers in the use of technologies for online teaching. This is understandable because the pandemic erupted in an abrupt manner and no country was fully prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this crisis can provide the momentum for the MoECRT to further enhance its online learning model. This emergency effort could be the answer to the needs of future educational design. Unpredictable threats such as natural disasters, pandemics and wars

29. news.detik.com. (<https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5108510/survei-kemdikbud-siswa-sulit-pahami-pelajaran-saat-belajar-jarak-jauh/1>). Accessed 13 June 2022.

30. cfds.fisipol.ugm.ac.id. (<https://cfds.fisipol.ugm.ac.id/2017/08/22/indonesia-is-not-digitally-literate-enough/>). Accessed 16 June 2022.

that may occur in the future will likely require a learning model with Internet of Things-based technology.

FUTURE AGENDA

The policies taken by the government of Indonesia have been on the right track. Nevertheless, consistency, supervision for effectiveness and efficiency, and sustainability of programmes must be maintained. The agenda of development in Indonesia is not yet on a sustainable path as a regime change in the country could bring about alterations in direction and priorities of development. Even a change of minister can lead to changes in policies in the ministry.

Looking over the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia in light of the accomplishment of the SDGs agenda, we note a number of important points as follows:

1. Strong commitment to the 2030 SDGs agenda should help Indonesia drive a sustainable long-term development plan. Changes in previous regimes have led to interruptions in the state's development vision due to differences in the interests and ideology of the governing party. As a global agenda, the SDGs are not legally binding but are subject to whether the president-elect and the governing party will take ownership and establish the national frameworks for the accomplishment of the SDGs. It is necessary for political parties to start introducing their cadres to the SDGs agenda, including the role and contribution of Indonesia in achieving the goals. This induction is important for the cadres of political parties so that when they take leadership of the country in the future, they will already be better prepared for their responsibilities and roles.
2. In two years, Indonesia will embark on the 2024 presidential elections. There will likely be some vulnerable situations that we must pay attention to. One of these is related to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Political parties need to gain enough popularity in order to win the election and this requires large amounts of money. As of the second quarter of 2022, the government has spent just 20 per cent of its COVID-19 relief funding, leaving a huge amount of funds still unspent. The public must ensure that the remaining funds are used to directly address the negative effects caused by the pandemic in a timely manner. We must safeguard the unspent funds from misallocations and corruptions – for example, being used unlawfully for financing election and legislative candidate campaigns. If this happens, the agenda for

managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health, economic and education sectors will remain unfinished.

3. Interventions in economic sectors have brought about positive impacts, and economic activities have slowly returned to normal. This situation must be supported by a simplification of the bureaucracy involved in business permits and funding, and the price stability of agricultural, fishery, and livestock products.
4. In terms of education, while the government has taken serious actions to support learning from home, the pandemic still presents major problems for education in Indonesia. There still exist inequalities in educational services, whereby a large number of students still do not have easy access to quality education and its services. This is a serious issue that the government has to resolve in the near future. On top of that, the pandemic could be used by the MoECRT as a source of momentum to seriously reorganise the basic framework of national education and align it accurately with the needs and challenges of the future.

CONCLUSION

This paper reviews the efforts taken by the Indonesian government in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on social and economic life. The pandemic has hit the country hard, causing a contraction in the growth of the national economy, an increase in the poverty rate, and massive school closures. To recover from the lasting post-pandemic effects, serious attempts prioritising health, education, and economic recovery have been taken. The government has allocated more spending for the health, economic, and education sectors to work towards the sustainable development goals and to increase human resources capacity in particular, which is in line with the 2030 SDGs agenda. While the policies taken by the government have been on the right track, its agenda of development is not yet on a sustainable path. Strong commitment to the 2030 SDGs agenda should help Indonesia drive a sustainable long-term development plan. Intervention in the health and economic sectors has brought about positive impacts. However, the pandemic still presents major problems to education, including inequalities in educational services, absence of specific curriculum designs and guidelines, and inadequate training for teachers in the use of technologies for online teaching.

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