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Document

## Mainstreaming *Pesantren* and *Madrasah*

Jajat Burhanudin

Fuad Jabali

PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, assisted by PUSKADIA-BUMA UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, has conducted a three year project (2004-2007) of mainstreaming *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* in Indonesia. The project initiative and execution were the result of cooperation between UIN Jakarta and the Royal Danish Embassy

The project was intended to introduce contemporary, democratic civic values (democracy, civil society, religious pluralism, human rights, and gender equality) into *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* and to their leaders, and to initiate participatory and accountable management within these schools. The program was designed to eventually create an atmosphere in which the worldviews of Islamic educational institutions could change and adapt to the diversity and complexity of the modern world.

The driving force behind this project was PPIM's concern with poverty and the rise of religious fundamentalism in Indonesia. In PPIM's view there is a clear link between poverty and the rise of religious fundamentalism in the country. In its opinion, poor families have no option but to send their children to low-quality educational institutions, and by so doing provide them with insufficient knowledge and tools to improve their situation after leaving school. The educational institutions meant here are *pesantrens* and *madrasahs*. As religious institutions surrounded and supported by socially and economically disadvantaged communities, with the limited sources and facilities they have, these schools are incapable to provide prop-

er education, especially in terms of modern sciences. Having had only insufficient education, poor children are unable to compete with other students in order to obtain a better standard of higher education and to get better jobs. Because of this and due to the poor religious instruction youngsters are able to get, religious fundamentalism is only one step away. The links between various *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* and particular fundamentalist religious groups are, therefore, not entirely un-anticipated.

This program departed from the basic assumption that, up to the present, *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* have been largely excluded from development both in the material sense and in the sense of improved levels of discourse. The outcome of the project was expected to be that *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* would fully relate to present-day reality and to adopt civic values (democracy, civil society, religious pluralism, human rights, and gender equality) so that, over time, their worldviews and educational behavior would change in accordance with the diversity and complexity of the modern world. A second expectation was that *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* would implement participatory and accountable management systems within their institutions.

The program was developed in order to realize the long term goals mentioned above. The various activities included in this program were specifically directed to realize the following intermediary objectives:

1. The improvement of the management of *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* and the enhancement of administrative skills for the sustainable development of these institutions.
2. The enrichment of knowledge among *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* in line with the contemporary and progressive understanding of Islamic texts; the improvement of available literature and library facilities; and to expose the communities connected to *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* to current debates on democracy, gender equality, and religious pluralism.
3. The establishment of educational and intellectual networks between *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* and external educational and intellectual institutions.
4. The improvement of pedagogical and curriculum-development skills in order to enhance the quality and the relevance of religious education.

5. The active involvement of community stake holders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the *pesantren* and *madrasah* program.

In order to achieve these objectives, *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* needed to be introduced to ways to reinforce values and means specifically geared to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to change. The project therefore provided in-Service Training for key persons within *madrasah* and *pesantren* institutions (teachers, students, headmasters, *kyais*, and other stake holders). They were exposed to notions about a variety of issues including tolerance and multiculturalism, as well as to novel participatory approaches to teaching-learning methods, networking, and fundraising, and community development. By doing so, it was expected that both institutions would gain experience of, and would implement values commensurate with democracy and civil society while at the same time they were to install effective and efficient systems of management.

### Target Groups

The target groups of this program were those considered to occupy strategic positions in *pesantrens* and *madrasahs*: *kyais* (including young *kyais* and senior *santris*), community leaders connected to *pesantrens*, *madrasah* principals, teachers of religion, and student activists. The majority of *pesantren* and *madrasah* students are female and this meant that the involvement of the wives of the *kyais*—known as *nyai*—was significant. The same was true for the involvement of female teachers within these institutions. It is also important to note that the *madrasahs* targeted were those from middle-school level up, or so-called *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA). This was based on the consideration that the individuals engaged in education at this level are more likely to introduce what they had learned to the next level (higher education). By choosing these target groups, it was expected that a continuation of new insights and knowledge would be introduced into the broader community.

The project selected 15 traditional (*khalaf*) *pesantrens*, and 15 modern (*salaf*) *pesantrens* to participate in the trainings. There were a total of 1080 participants: 180 *kyais/nyais* from *khalaf pesantrens*; 180 *kyais/nyais* from *salaf pesantrens*; 180 *madrasah* principals; 180 *madrasah* teachers (teaching religion subjects); 180 *madrasah* student ac-

tivists; and 180 community leaders linked to *salaf pesantrens*. These activities took place in the provinces of Banten, West Java; Central Java and Yogyakarta; East Java; West Nusa Tenggara; and South Sumatra.

### Training Materials

The overall objective of the curriculum was to socialize and internalize civic values within the *pesantren* and *madrasah* systems in order to generate change. The subject matters were mainly concerned with ways to create mainstream *pesantrens* and *madrasahs*. Training curriculum was developed in such a way that it met the needs of each of the five strategic groups involved.

The curriculum developed for the training contained three main subjects: Islam, Civic Values, and Institutional Development. The package on Islam included: Contextualizing Islam; Revisiting the boundaries of 'Islamic sciences'; Interdisciplinary Islam: New Readings into Islamic Sources and Traditions; Social Construction of Islam; and Progressive Islam. The 'Civic Values' package included: Democracy; Human Rights; Religious Pluralism; Multiculturalism; and Gender Equality. The Institutional Development package included: Curriculum Development; *Pesantren* and *Madrasah* Management; Networking; and Fund Raising.

Every target group was given a module package emphasizing in which the components were divided in a different way depended on each target group. For *kyais/nyais* from *salaf* and *khalaf pesantrens*, the training program focused on civic values (40%), progressive Islamic thought (40%), managerial skills (10%), and networking (10%); for *madrasah* principals the training program focused on civic values (10%), progressive Islamic thought (10%), managerial skills (40%), and networking (40%); for *madrasah* teachers the training program focused on civic values (30%), progressive Islamic thought (30%), managerial skills (30%), and networking (10%); while for *madrasah* students the training program focused on civic values (25%), progressive Islamic thought (25%), managerial skills (40%), and networking (10%).

### Project's Impacts and Contributions

The project focused on strategic figures within *pesantrens* and *madrasahs*, and the project's contributions to the development of

these institutions can be identified by changes at two levels: (1) the comprehension level; changes in the way the strategic figures within *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* understand progressive Islam and civic values; and (2) the practical level; changes in the way strategic figures within *pesantrens* and *madrasahs* translate progressive Islam and civic values into their teaching practices, *pesantren* and *madrasah* management, fund raising, networking, and curriculum development.

Changes in either one of these levels affect the other. The Project tried to address the issues at both levels in the expectation that the *madrasah* and *pesantren* communities would be able to identify the challenges at both levels too. The Project also encouraged them to always put themselves in a broader context and to adopt a wider perspective. The ability of this project to effect changes at the comprehension level proved to be crucial. Changes at the practical level depended to a large extent on the changes that could be effected at the comprehension level. It follows, therefore, that the discussion will be directed to the analysis of the project's impacts at this level.

The Islamic learning institutions were expected to be able to relate to contemporary issues including strengthening democracy, religious pluralism, human rights, and gender equality in Indonesian Islam. Therefore, the impact of the training program was measured by looking at changes in the degree the training participants (the core stake holders of the *madrasahs* and the *pesantrens*) supported the principles on the issues mentioned. For this, pre- and post-training opinion polls were held.

Tolerance was the first issue explored. The degree of [socio-religious] tolerance was measured by formulating a number of questions and statements. In this way the nature and the way *pesantren* and *madrasah* leaders [*kyais/nyais*, *ustazs*, and *santris*] as well as Muslim community leaders perceived others with different religions, ethnic backgrounds, and political affiliation was explored. In so doing, the degree Muslim leaders support the idea of tolerance could be measured: To what extent do Muslim leaders support ideas of, for instance, coexistence with non-Muslims and the rights of minority religious groups to exist in Indonesia.

The result of these polls revealed that Indonesian Muslim leaders widely agreed with statements of tolerance. The majority of respondents (96%) agreed to the issue of coexistence with Muslim groups of a different affiliation. Much support was also given to the

matter of non-Muslims becoming neighbors, to which 88% of the respondents said they had no objections and only 12% did. Almost the same percentage of support was found in responses to the question about the rights of minority groups; 87% of the respondents agreed to the statement that religious groups like the Ahmadiyah have the right to exist in Indonesia. Much less support (a mere 15%) was given for the issue that non-Muslims could hold highly strategic positions in public life such as that of president of Indonesia.

Likewise, less support was given to issues having a strong theological bearing. For instance, the question of the religious status of the Ahmadiyah—whether it may be considered Islamic or not, and therefore whether or not its followers are Muslims—59% of the respondents agreed that it could no longer be considered Islamic, while 41% recognized that Ahmadiyah can be considered a form of Islam. The same could be seen in the respondents' responses to the statement that all religions are the same, in the sense that they all teach their followers about the truth. This statement was supported by only 33% of the respondents. The majority (67%) disagreed.

Yet, it should be emphasized that the high level of support to the idea to label Ahmadiyah members as non-Muslims does not run parallel with support for the violent actions perpetrated by radical Muslims against Ahmadiyah members last year in Indonesia. Only 11% of the respondents agreed with the statement that violent actions against Ahmadiyah members could be tolerated, the majority (89%) disagreed. This anti-violence attitude with respect to Ahmadiyah members is related to the fact that the majority of the Muslims surveyed are concerned with the promotion of peace and harmony. This attitude was expressed in the responses to the question about the Bali Bombing by Amrozi and Imam Samudra; an overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) were opposed to such violent *jihad*.

The next issue was democracy and human rights. Again we found wide support for the notion that the values of democracy and human rights are congruous with Islamic teaching. As can be seen in the chart below, 83% of the respondents supported democracy while 73% were in favor of human rights. They recognized that democracy originates from, and was first developed in the West, but they agree that it does not exclusively belong to the West. This wide support for democracy is an indication that Muslim culture is suitable for the development and consolidation of democracy.



This high support for democracy is not surprising. It is related to the open character of the Indonesian Muslims towards foreign [Western] culture. When asked about the relation between Muslims and the West, the majority of respondents appear to have positive attitudes toward the West. For instance, 62% of the respondents agreed that Muslims should cooperate with the West, and 69% supported the fact that students go to the West to study, which is becoming an increasing trend among Indonesian Muslims. This positive attitude to the West is also illustrated by the high aspirations of the *pesantren* community; 74% of them said that *pesantrens* should include Western knowledge into the curriculum.

Another aspect paid attention to was the gender issue, especially concerning the status of women in the public domain. Here, we found that the responses varied depending on the nature of the questions. The more a question dealt with strategic positions of women, the less the support was. However, support increased when the statement was about positions less strategic to determine public life. As a result, those who agreed with the idea that women can become president was only 39%, much lower than those who support women to become police officers (71%) or members of parliament (81%).

It is important to emphasize that the above picture of the degree of tolerance, democracy, and gender equality is to be attributed to the trainings the respondents received. It appeared that Muslim support to tolerance and democracy increased after people had finished the trainings. The post-training test results were always higher than the pre-training test results. The percentage of those who agreed that minority groups such as the Ahmadiyah have the right to exist in this country increased from 80% to 87%. The same holds true for other statements about tolerance, non-Muslims as neighbors (from 84% to 88%), and agreeing to coexist with different Muslim groups (from 94% to 96%).

The increased tolerance could also be viewed from the respondents' responses to the statement that all religions are the same, meaning that they all teach the truth to their respective followers. The percentage of those in support of the statement increased from 23% to 33%. Support for the statement that non-Muslims are allowed to become the president of this country increased from 6% to 15%.

Apart from the issue of tolerance, opinion polls' results also indicated an increasing trend in Muslims' appreciation of democracy.

Support for the statement that democracy is compatible with Islam grew from 76% to 83%, while those against it decreased from 24% to 17%.

The enhanced support for democracy parallels the attitude people have toward the West in general. The Muslims surveyed appear to be more positive in their attitude toward the West, which can be glanced from the increasing support for, among others, the following statements: Muslims should support other Muslims studying in Western countries (from 60% to 70%), actions against the West—mass rallies, sweepings, and boycotting Western products—should be countered (from 48% to 62%), and secular [Western] knowledge should be included into the *pesantren* curriculum (from 68% to 74%).

The last question concerned the group of respondents most supportive of the ideas provided in the trainings. As can be seen in the charts below, all respondent groups (*kyais* [*pesantren* leaders], principals, religious teachers, and students [*santris*]) responded positively to the ideas taught about tolerance during the trainings. Moreover, especially the teachers and students appeared to be consistently most ready to accept those contemporary ideas that were provided during the trainings. These two groups not only consistently awarded the highest degree of support to the questions of the polls, but they also demonstrated the highest increase of support in the post-training tests.

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