

IGJ's Note - Indonesia in the Vortex of Covid19

Stories from across the Country: “Collective Action of Indonesian Social Movements in Respond to Covid19”

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The Covid-19 pandemic brings a heartbreaking story for the people of Indonesia. The sad story added to the Government's tardiness in anticipating and overcoming disasters in 2020. Government policy by making and implementing Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in order to accelerate the Management Handling of Covid19 on March 31, 2020. This policy has had many impacts, especially contributing to the delay in tackling Covid-19.

A dilemma arises from this policy, ranging from a long-term reduction in economic activity which led many companies to adopt a policy of reducing workers, decreasing public purchasing power as a result of limiting social activities, distance education which left technical and non-technical problems. Health services that are disrupted due to the paranoid spread of Covid19 have resulted in difficulties in meeting food needs and other additional needs.

The slow participation of the Government in accommodating the arising problems has made many people lose confidence in the government's capacity to assist them in dealing with the current situation. The State Institution is the only social institution that has the resources to respond to current conditions, it turns out that it only provides BLT (aid in cash transfers) solutions sourced from State Budget (APBN) and Village Budget (APBDes). The people's patience to trust the Government as executing the leadership of the State to the point of losing trust, the people began to organize themselves in various solidarity activities that originated from the people's own resources. A collective action of social movements has emerged in several regions of Indonesia to respond to the pandemic situation in order to strengthen solidarity among communities .

The story was conveyed in the discussion of the Voices from across the Country which was held by Indonesia For Global Justice (IGJ) with the People's Struggle Union (KPR), mid 24 April 2020 to 20 May 2020 with 8 series of discussions, having the participation of speakers from 17 Provinces in Indonesia who told stories about the emergence of social movement models responding to the tardiness of the State. Various models have emerged, ranging from solidarity as a quick response by raising funds for the fulfillment of personal protective equipment (masks, hand sanitizers, etc.) to meeting food needs on a massive scale. Moreover, an organized movement with the strengthening of cooperatives to help

members and the surrounding community, develop agricultural land to establish a Public Kitchen.

West Sumatra: Independent and Liberated Cooperative Movement¹

The Young Lecturer Council Community at Andalas University prior to the pandemic pioneered a cooperative movement. During the pandemic they strengthened their capacity as part of a collective solidarity movement to help the people. This movement assesses that there are several jobs that have experienced a quite drastic decline in income through a survey conducted by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Andalas University, namely small traders of MSMEs, casual daily workers, employees with irregular salaries, drivers, motorcycle taxis and domestic workers. From the 1007 respondents interviewed, only 36% had regular income, 12% experienced an increase in income and 52% experienced a decrease in income. Respondents who complained about a decrease in income of around 70%. They experienced an increase in spending, between 10 and 25% from the previous days.

Independent and Liberated Cooperation (KMDM) has seen the slow pace of the government in providing social protection to the people, taking a thesis that the economic movement with the cooperative model has become concrete evidence of the need for strengthening the people in the economic field. The movement which has been pioneered has turned out to be relevant when Covid19 became a global pandemic, including, as a response to the global economy of capitalism which continues to erode resources in Indonesia.

This movement acknowledges the symptoms of a multi-dimensional crisis due to the pandemic. KMDM builds or creates a market, which they call the Wednesday Peasants Market or PRT. This market focuses on distributing food products from the community around the campus with target consumers or regular customers from the lecturers at Andalas University. The impact is also significant, this movement has proven to help the community around the campus, to survive the pandemic and other poverty problems, since it can accommodate products from farmers around the campus.

This cooperative movement maximizes communication and information technology. The process of procuring goods that runs to collect food ordered by consumers through the *WhatsApp* application. For consumers who want to order goods, practically any food ingredients they want to buy, they can order via their cell phone. Practically without the participation of the government, community groups around the campus have been able to help each other without class boundaries between peasants and lecturers around the Andalas University campus. This model has the potential to spread and strengthen solidarity even beyond the territory of around the campus.

¹Delivered by Virtous Setyaka in the IGJ webinar: the series discussion of the Voices from across the Country of West Sumatra and Riau Islands "Questioning Government policies regarding multidimensional crises & Omnibus Law in the midst of the Covid19 Pandemic" on May 13, 2020.

Semarang: “The People Help the People Movement”

Located in the city of Semarang, dozens of people's organizations spearheaded the People's Assistance Coalition (KOBAR) as a response to the Government's tardiness. Especially after seeing that the Government does not have valid navigation to deal with Covid19. This movement accommodates around 64 organizations spread across 35 Regencies/Cities in Central Java Province. Legal Aid in Semarang which became the Joint Secretariat several times issued 8 (eight) long reports and 2 (two) short reports. KOBAR sees this objective situation as having the potential for a food crisis, if the government only works in slow conditions.

Start by distributing pamphlets on the importance of anticipating the food crisis. The pamphlets were distributed throughout Central Java and nationwide networks. Seeing symptoms of a national crisis and encouraging people to independently implement efforts to navigate Covid19, since it seems that the Government does not have a navigator in handling Covid19.

Coalitions work in alternatively, starting with alternative people organizing to alternative political education. The system works with people from each representative to report daily regarding the conditions in their area continually on a daily basis. Then 3 days later, summarize all the notes that were compiled in one primary report. This coalition eventually formed a peasant union group for the city of Semarang. The Peasants Union is the people's initiative to anticipate the food crisis.

The decision to farm triggered a movement that in less than 1 month had provided 7 donated land for planting with an area of 700 to 1500 m² and dozens of volunteers who had joined the farm. This movement has fostered cross-class solidarity, with many willing to make donations ranging from donations of seeds, donations of Agricultural Capital and even providing foods for breaking the fast (*iftar*) at that time.

Jogja Food Solidarity (SPJ)

The Mobile People's Alliance (ARB) in Yogyakarta collectively encourages the volunteer movement for Jogja Food Solidarity (SPJ). This movement has produced around 12 kitchens around the city of Jogjakarta. In response to the current state of the outbreak, this movement sees the impact of the Large-Scale Social Restrictions policy which results in food shortages for the people, especially for those with low income and students who have migrated to study and cannot leave their residential areas.

Various communities and individuals who came from various backgrounds such as artists, students and so on made this movement which later joined by a lot of people. With the existence of Covid19 the Government looks indifferent, peasants still have hope because the harvest season is around 3-4 months. However, seeing that the policies enacted have not navigated the need for food during the pandemic period, the people are highly threatened.

Raising solidarity realizes that the donation will not always occur for a long period of time, hence Jogja Food Solidarity started thinking about cultivating some land to support the public kitchen. The kitchen has started to cultivate some land, in the future some land to be planted with vegetables, cassava and many more. This was inspired by the solidarity of the Kulon Progo Peasants Association (PPLP), the coastal land peasants organization that donates vegetables voluntarily every Thursday. Therefore, the vegetables from the PPLP may provide ingredients for 12 public kitchens.

This solidarity shows loyalty in humanity. In the midst of facing the eviction of the iron sand mine, they still provide food security for the small people in the city of Jogja.

Collective Movement of the People Movement in North Sumatera

In the city of Medan, the people's organizations such as KPR-FPBI, Legal Aid in Medan, with SAHDAR, AJI Sumut formed a joint post to receive Covid19 case reports. Employing the complaint post they tried to reach out to vulnerable groups who were affected by the policies during the Large-Scale Social Restrictions. This is an effort to help those who are in trouble and don't know where to go for help. Several workers came to complain to the complaint post at the Legal Aid. Their various problems arose, such as being laid-off by the company, but the settlement and layoffs were also unclear, including the right to wages, Mandatory Religious Holiday Allowance (THR) and others. Apart from workers' complaints, there are also survey results related to economic resilience, which basically targets workers, peasants, fishermen, as well as women from the respondents who are accepted, on average, those affected are the main breadwinners of around 72%, with age ranging from 20 to 40 years. Then for the number of dependents between 2 to 5 children.

At several points in the city of Medan, a Movement has begun to emerge over people's distrust of government programs. Especially for meeting the food needs of the people in several points of Medan, the people automatically built public kitchens. The post tries to exceed its capacity by starting to gather potential to meet the basic needs of each region. For this reason, they start to map areas that have economic potential, especially for the fulfillment of public kitchens, so that they can be built by the people themselves.

This is a response to the Government's tardiness, seemingly neglecting to protect its people. In the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of a crisis situation the Government has not shown its good intention to answer the problems experienced by the people. Moreover, it is hoped that this movement will begin to build an understanding of the importance of the people in recognizing their own strengths, by mapping their economic potential, hence they can be linked from one region to another. When another region needs one product but another region has it, the people can form its own supply chain and do not wait for the government to answer the problems experienced by the people.

“Let's Plant” Movement

Moluccas:

The people of Moluccas with the occurrence of Covid19 face serious challenges which will certainly be faced with the condition of the region separated by the sea. When people are not connected between islands, there will be a shortage of supply for the needs of the Substitute. However, the local wisdom of the Moluccas people, especially the city of Ambon, made them then have to return to local food and start planting.

This condition is seen by the Humanum community for the emergence of solidarity, with that which then campaigns and organizes using the tagline *Mari Bakabong*. In the Moluccas language, *bakabong* means gardening. This campaign is to encourage independent gardening movements. The results of planting are advised not to be sold. A campaign to start planning to fulfill daily needs to anticipate the challenges of food scarcity of the people in the future.

Padang and Palembang:

Legal Aid in Padang also monitors and encourages efforts to cultivate independently. Starting by encouraging each member to socialize the importance of planting for household needs to the people. This movement is intended for the people to create a planting platform to anticipate the food crisis. Several other plants, such as vegetables and many more.

Whereas, Legal Aid in Palembang conduct almost the same movement to organize independent planting activities in order to prepare for food security, this movement was prepared for a state of food security both during the Covid19 and post-Covid19 periods. The movement's further efforts to encourage strengthening of communication with network friends and the people.

Community Responds Quickly to Covid19, Raising Public Awareness

East Nusa Tenggara Timur:

In East Nusa Tenggara, there has been an independent movement by building a post. The post was built by people's groups to raise assistance and distribute aid such as masks for village communities, and motorcycle taxi drivers who do not have masks. In addition, other posts are conducted to anticipate the spread of the virus by creating a gate to restrict the movement of people from the village to outside and from outside to enter the village, including the preparation of water for washing hands at the village door.

The people did not wait for the government, and made initiations because they saw that this virus was deadly enough that the people were serious enough to anticipate it. Furthermore, even the community has even independently limited it to rituals of worship in their homes, such as the celebration of Easter.

South Sulawesi:

In South Sulawesi, various activities are implemented, by BPD KPR, which is one of the communities that encourages solidarity in Makassar, South Sulawesi. To help their fellow

citizens, they design solidarity such as the first, namely collecting gallons of water, to be given to residents to wash their hands. Second, conducting an education about the rights of the urban poor people who are scattered in several points, especially the right to social protection, hence it becomes the basis for understanding their social rights from the Government. Since the aid from the government, which is expected to be able to support the necessities of life, does not come, and many people do not know the information regarding the right to aid.

Closing

Of all the stories regarding the previous “the people help the people”, many have survived up to this moment, mainly because it is proven that the Government is still stuttering to deal with Covid19. Hundreds of thousands of people have been exposed to this virus and it is causing a lot of trouble. Meanwhile, the Government is still making policies with an economic paradigm. The global economic downturn is seen as an opportunity to boost economic activity, while many people are still neglected and even lost their lives because of unclear efforts to overcome Covid19. People are still restless and continue to improve their solidarity model. Hence, this is the capital for the people to anticipate piracy of access to resources from the people's power. What determines tomorrow is the people who determine their own sovereignty.

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