

# NEW Indonesia Highlight & Work



# PROFILE NEW INDONESIA

The Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW Indonesia), also known as Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia (JPPI), is a national education coalition network in Indonesia comprised of civil society organizations. Our focus is on strengthening access to and equitable quality of education that is inclusive and gender-responsive for all, with particular attention given to marginalized groups. To strengthen and advance education, we also develop advocacy and empowerment networks at all levels: national, regional, and global. At the national level, we are a member of the Mitra Pendidikan Indonesia (MPI), or Local Education Group (LEG). The MPI/LEG is a collaborative forum dedicated to improving the quality of education in Indonesia, with members from government, international institutions, philanthropic organizations, and civil society organizations. At the regional and global levels, JPPI/NEW Indonesia is a member of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).



# 2025 CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON SDG 4



**INDONESIA**

## **COUNTRY CONTEXT**

Indonesia, with a population exceeding 280 million, is not exempt from the impacts of global trends and domestic challenges such as commodity price fluctuations, geopolitical tensions, and the effects of climate change and natural disasters. Recently, a slowing economic development has led to an increase in layoffs (PHK) and shrinking job opportunities, consequently raising unemployment figures. Socially, disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as among different socio-economic groups, remain critical issues. Indonesia's youth demography presents significant potential, yet it demands substantial investment in education and skill development to foster a productive workforce.

Regarding SDG 4 (Quality Education), Indonesia has made some progress but continues to face serious challenges. The Open Unemployment Rate for Technical and Vocational High School (SMK) graduates consistently remains the highest compared to other educational levels (BPS, 2025). This is often linked to a mismatch between the curriculum and labor market demands. Furthermore, issues of equitable access to education persist in Indonesia. Disparities are evident in uneven infrastructure quality (damaged facilities, lack of clean water access in remote areas), unequal access to digital technology, and inconsistent teaching quality due to a shortage of qualified teachers in various regions. Economic burdens (transportation costs, stationery) also continue to be a barrier for impoverished families.

The issue of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in educational settings is also a serious concern. Komnas Perempuan reports an increase in GBV cases in the education sector, with higher education institutions being the most frequent sites of reported incidents. This is mirrored by the monitoring efforts of civil society coalitions grouped under the Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia (JPPI) or Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW Indonesia). GBV cases continue to rise annually, with sexual violence being the most prevalent type, disproportionately affecting women. This underscores the urgency of strengthening policies and mechanisms for handling these cases within educational institutions.

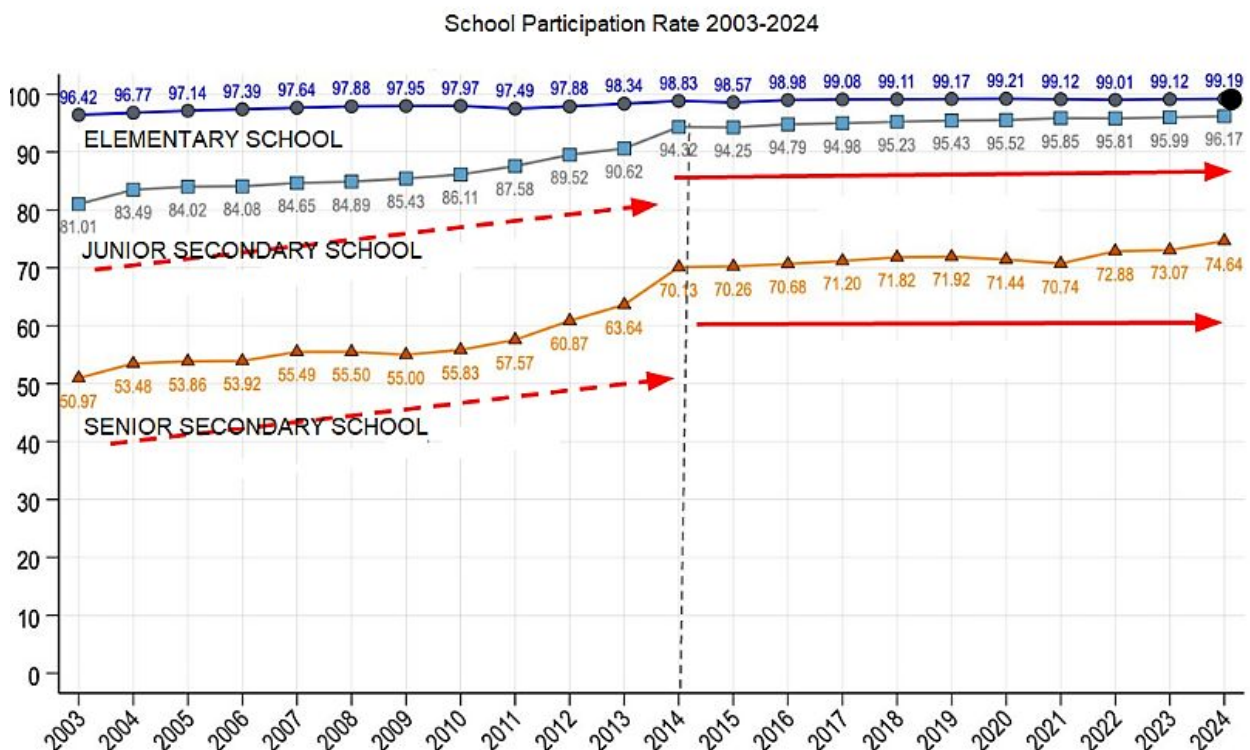
## **PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SDG 4**

### **1. Stagnation and Inequality in School Participation**

Indonesia has made significant efforts in improving access to education, yet over the past decade, there has been a worrying pattern of stagnant participation rates. Susenas data from 2003-2024 indicates that during the 2014-2024 period, the School Participation Rate (APS) in Indonesia experienced significant stagnation. The movement of these participation figures was insignificant, with a slowdown across all age groups, particularly for the 13-15 and 16-18 year-old cohorts. The 16-18 year-old group shows the lowest and most alarming participation achievement. Despite an initial increase at the beginning of the period, their participation rate has also stagnated and remains below 80% until 2024. This indicates a special attention is needed to ensure this age group stays on track with their education.



Beyond the stagnation in participation, another challenge is the high disparity in participation across provinces, especially for older age groups. Data on the School Participation Rate (APS) for 16-18 year-olds by province in 2024 clearly demonstrates striking disparities across Indonesia. The province with the highest APS is DI Yogyakarta, reaching 90.36%, indicating an excellent participation level there. However, in contrast, the province with the lowest APS stands at 47.65%, meaning nearly half of adolescents in that region are no longer attending school. This gap is further highlighted by the average of the top five regions with the highest APS, which reached 85.46%, while the average of the bottom five regions was only 47.65%, showing a difference of almost 40% in access to upper secondary education. Even the capital city, Jakarta, only ranks ninth with an APS of 79.95%, falling below provinces like Southwest Papua (80.38%) and Papua (81.14%).

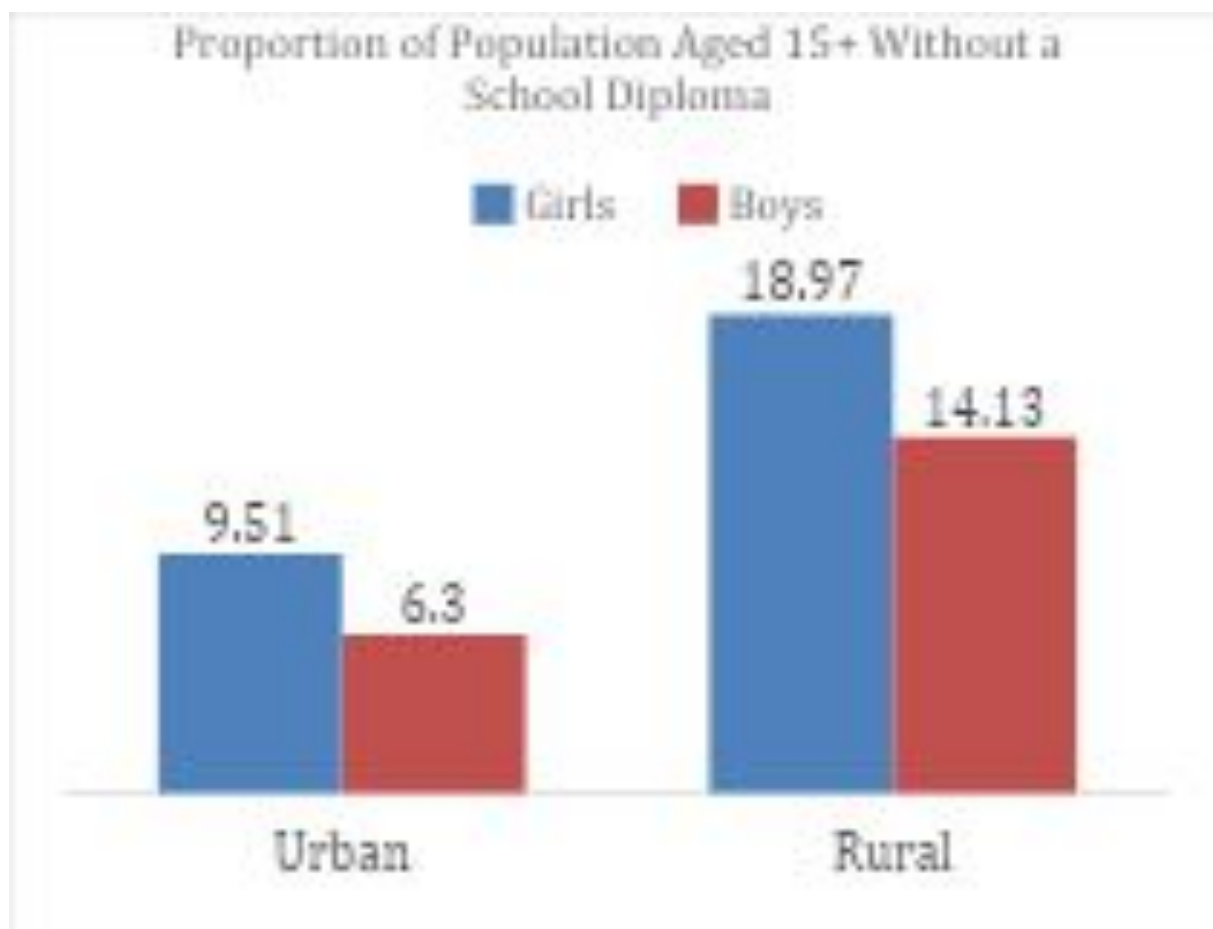


## **2. Gender Inequality in Education**

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2024 noted that a higher percentage of women aged 15 and above do not possess school diplomas compared to men. BPS explained that this situation applies to both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the percentage of women in this age group without diplomas is 9.51%. Meanwhile, in rural areas, the number is higher, reaching 18.97%. The percentage of men aged 15 and above in urban areas without diplomas is 6.30%. As for men living in rural areas without diplomas, it is 14.13%.

This fact is linked to the persistently high rates of child marriage in Indonesia. Based on UNICEF data 2023, Indonesia ranks 4th globally with an estimated 25.53 million child girls married. This figure also positions Indonesia as the ASEAN country with the largest number of child marriage cases. According to BPS data over the past decade, underage marriages continue to occur. Annually, approximately 10.5 percent of child marriages take place in Indonesia. Provinces with the highest rates of child marriage last year were West Nusa Tenggara at 17.32 percent, followed by South Sumatra at 11.41 percent, and West Kalimantan at 11.29 percent.

The government endeavors to enforce protection for underage girls to prevent them from falling into early marriage. Unfortunately, the amendment to the Marriage Law in 2019, which raised the minimum age for marriage to 19 years for both men and women, has not significantly reduced child marriages. The national average of child marriage cases still reached 8.64 percent throughout the 2020-2023 period. Furthermore, following the enactment of the Marriage Law amendment in 2019, the number of marriage dispensations for children surged by 173 percent in 2020. Marriage dispensations granted by Religious Courts amounted to 23,145 cases in 2019, then rose to 63,382 cases the following year. The high rate of dispensations continued until 2022.

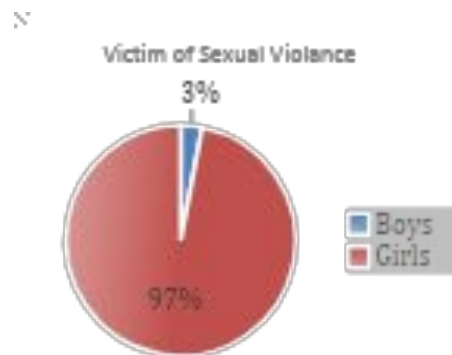
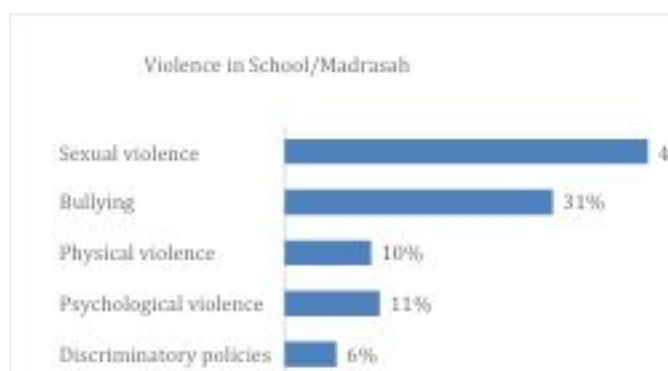


### 3. High Rates of GBV in Education

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in educational settings is a serious issue that continues to threaten the integrity of educational institutions and impede the fulfillment of the right to education, especially for child girls. Komnas Perempuan's annual reports consistently show an increase in GBV cases reported in the education sector over the past five years. This data indicates that the issue is not merely sporadic incidents but a phenomenon requiring serious attention and comprehensive handling.

NEW Indonesia's 2024 monitoring results indicate that sexual violence is the most dominant type of violence in educational institutions, accounting for 42% of all cases, followed by bullying (31%), psychological violence (11%), physical violence (10%), and discriminatory policies (6%). The gender disparity in experiences of sexual violence is striking: 97% of sexual violence victims are female, while only 3% are male. This alarming figure sharply demonstrates that child girls and women in educational settings are highly vulnerable to sexual violence.

This vulnerability, exacerbated by a lack of safety and institutional support, can be a primary factor driving child girls to drop out of school or become unwilling to pursue further education. An unsafe environment due to sexual violence, or even psychological and discriminatory violence, creates a strong disincentive for students, particularly girls, to remain in the education system. The high prevalence of violence in educational institutions, especially sexual violence targeting women, directly correlates with the problem of gender inequality in education. When educational institutions fail to ensure safety and inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable groups, the right to education is jeopardized, and efforts to achieve an inclusive and equitable SDG 4 become increasingly challenging.





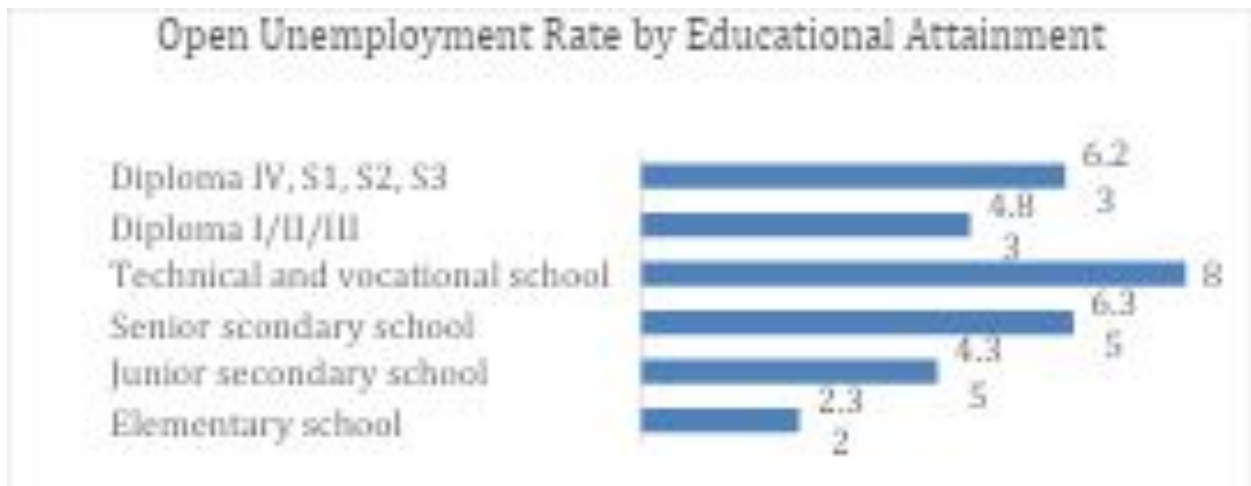
## 4. TVET Issues and Open Unemployment

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in February 2025, the open unemployment rate (TPT) for SMK graduates reached 8%, higher than other educational levels. In comparison, the TPT for elementary school (SD) graduates and below was 2.32%, junior high school (SMP) graduates 4.35%, senior high school (SMA) 6.35%, Diploma I/II/III graduates 4.83%, and university graduates (Diploma IV, S1, S2, S3) 6.23%. This phenomenon is not new. Sakernas data from February 2024 showed the TPT for SMK graduates at 8.62%, and in February 2023, it reached 9.60%. This indicates that SMK graduates consistently contribute the highest number of unemployed individuals in Indonesia. Yet, SMKs are designed to prepare their students for immediate employment upon graduation. This contradictory reality raises a big question: why do SMK graduates struggle to be absorbed into the workforce?

The dominant portion of unemployment among SMK graduates could be attributed to a failure in "connection" or linkage between industry and education in general. Furthermore, there is a factor of failure in creating job opportunities that align with the general labor conditions in Indonesia. National vocational policies still need improvement. The linkage between vocational education and training and its respective industries needs to be enhanced.

As of February 2024, the number of female workers in Indonesia is still significantly lower than the number of male workers. This indicates a gender gap in economic participation and opportunities. Out of the total workforce, 66.48% are male workers, while the remaining 33.52% are female workers. There is a significant disparity between men and women in terms of economic participation, even though their population numbers are almost equal.

This data shows a male-to-female worker ratio of almost 2:1, meaning for every two male workers, there is only one female worker. The low number of women indicates their underrepresentation in the workforce.



## **CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE SDG 4 IMPLEMENTATION, FOLLOW-UP, AND MONITORING**

Indonesia has demonstrated significant breakthroughs in accommodating civil society participation within the SDG framework. Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 serves as the legal basis that explicitly regulates SDG implementation in Indonesia and recognizes the vital role of CSOs in this process. Civil society participation is conducted within a multi-stakeholder framework, where SDG implementation is carried out collectively by government ministries/agencies alongside philanthropic institutions, business actors, academics, and CSOs.

One prominent mechanism for participation is independent monitoring by CSOs. Civil society monitors SDG implementation every six months, while evaluation is conducted annually, using a voluntary self-assessment model. The government provides monitoring and evaluation forms, which are then completed by CSOs and reported to the SDG Working Group Secretariat. A concrete example of this initiative is the "People's Scorecard" (PSC) for SDGs Indonesia, compiled independently by CSOs (INFID, 2024). The PSC report indicates that the majority of civil society respondents (66.7%) rate SDG achievement in Indonesia as merely "mediocre," and even 19.5% consider its implementation "poor," underscoring the importance of this independent monitoring role.

The civil society coalition in education, affiliated with NEW Indonesia, has adopted various strategies that have proven effective in its engagement in education policy and decision-making processes. Some of the strategies implemented include: evidence-based advocacy. The coalition endeavors to strengthen its capacity in producing relevant documentation and analysis through credible research, data collection, and evidence building to inform education sector policy dialogue. This includes efforts to ensure that the 12-year compulsory and inclusive free education policy, supported by adequate education financing and a gender-responsive approach, is truly implemented for marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the coalition also undertakes public awareness and mobilization. Media campaigns and public mobilization are key strategies to raise public awareness and participation in education policy advocacy. The objective is to encourage the government to be transparent and accountable in implementing the SDGs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the contextual analysis and progress toward achieving SDG 4 in Indonesia, we propose the following concrete recommendations to accelerate progress and ensure the principle of "leaving no one behind" is fully realized by 2030:

1. Strengthening safe, inclusive, and gender-based violence-free learning environments. The government must immediately and comprehensively implement and rigorously enforce ministerial regulations related to the prevention and handling of sexual violence in educational settings. This includes strengthening gender-responsive reporting and case management mechanisms, and ensuring the availability of psychosocial support for victims. Furthermore, systematic efforts are needed to curb bullying and eliminate all forms of discriminatory policies still found in educational institutions.
2. Comprehensive revitalization of vocational education and enhanced industry linkages. To address the high unemployment rate among SMK graduates and the skills gap, the government needs to significantly revitalize vocational curricula to ensure they are truly relevant to industry needs. This must be accompanied by facilitating structured and quality internship programs, as well as incentives for industries to absorb SMK graduates. Policies supporting the creation of new job opportunities, particularly for women and vocational graduates, must also be intensified.
3. Priority interventions for increasing school participation in upper secondary levels and underdeveloped regions. To overcome the stagnation and disparities in school participation, especially for the 13-18 year-old age group and in provinces with low APS, the government must design focused intervention programs. This includes expanding inclusive scholarship programs, equitable improvement of educational infrastructure, and massive campaigns and effective preventive policies to curb child marriage rates, which are a primary cause of school dropout, particularly for child girls.

4. Increased and gender-responsive education funding allocation for access and gbv prevention and response. The government needs to significantly increase the allocation of education budgets, focusing on equitable and sustainable financing for vulnerable groups to eliminate economic barriers to educational access. Additionally, specific budget allocations must be designated for programs related to the prevention and handling of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) across all educational levels, including psychosocial and legal support for victims, as well as training for educators and educational staff.
5. Strengthening the role and accountability mechanisms of civil society in sdg 4 implementation. The government needs to reinforce the multi-stakeholder collaboration framework by providing more substantial and transparent avenues for civil society participation in every stage of SDG 4 implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Mechanisms such as the "People's Scorecard" initiated by CSOs must be recognized and their findings diligently addressed by the government to foster accountability and ensure that SDG 4 implementation is truly inclusive and leaves no one behind.





In a powerful theatrical performance held in the Constitutional Court's courtyard, the New Indonesia championed the right to education for all.

*(photo: NEW Indonesia archives)*

# **From Constitutional Court Ruling to Free Schools**

## **The Civil Society's Struggle for Equitable Education**

Before the change we catalyzed, Indonesia's education landscape, despite constitutional guarantees, was marred by a deeply entrenched and often discriminatory system of school access. Based on 2024 education data, approximately 4 million children in Indonesia are out of school, with the majority dropping out due to economic reasons, primarily the prohibitive costs of education.

Public schools, highly coveted for their quality and tuition-free nature, operated on a competitive admission basis, creating a significant problem: many children, even those qualified, were left without a place. This scarcity of public school seats directly impacted marginalized communities, particularly children from impoverished backgrounds and those with disabilities. When these children failed to secure a spot in public institutions, their only recourse was often private schools. However, the associated costs—annual, semester, and monthly fees—were an unbearable financial burden for low-income families, transforming education from a fundamental right into an unattainable luxury.

The guarantee of free education is already stipulated in the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas). Unfortunately, this article has only been interpreted by the government as applying to public schools. However, from civil society's perspective, the article on free schooling is not limited to public schools but applies to all Indonesian children, whether they attend public or private institutions. Moreover, we faced the reality that the capacity of public schools is very minimal, automatically making the involvement of private schools in this free mechanism a state obligation to fulfill basic education services for all.

The reality was stark, children who failed public school selection were highly vulnerable to dropping out. Furthermore, children who forced themselves to attend school despite financial hardship often dropped out midway. Even if they managed to graduate, it was not uncommon for their diplomas to be withheld by schools due to unpaid fees or other outstanding costs.

It was for these reasons that our coalition filed a petition for interpretation with the Constitutional Court, arguing that this free education should apply to both public and private schools. Ultimately, our petition was granted, and the government is now obligated to implement free education in both public and private institutions. This grim reality presented both a profound challenge to our mission of equitable education and a clear opportunity to advocate for systemic change, leveraging public awareness and legal pathways to expose and rectify these injustices.

Our coalition's journey to drive equitable education was underpinned by meticulously planned, multi-faceted strategies. At its core, we sought to dismantle existing discriminatory practices in student admissions and ensure that the right to free education, enshrined in law, was truly accessible to all Indonesian children.

### **Strategic Planning for Change**

Our planning for change was initiated by the stark reality on the ground: the gap between the constitutional guarantee of free education and its discriminatory implementation. We recognized that the government's interpretation, limiting free education to public schools, was a major barrier, especially given the limited capacity of public institutions. This presented a clear opportunity to challenge the status quo legally and advocate for a broader, more inclusive interpretation. The key steps in our strategic planning began with a major decision to file a petition with the Constitutional Court for a re-interpretation of Article 34, Paragraph (2) of the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas).

We challenged this article's consistency with Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, aiming to ensure free education applied to both public and private schools. This high-level legal approach sought to secure a definitive, binding mandate. However, we also understood that a legal victory alone wouldn't guarantee on-the-ground implementation. Therefore, we concurrently designed a community-led monitoring initiative for new student admissions, focusing specifically on how marginalized groups like children with disabilities and the poor were affected by competitive admissions, illegal levies, and tuition costs. Recognizing the need for widespread, accurate data collection, a crucial step was to train our coalition members spread across various provinces, with comprehensive training sessions equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively monitor admission processes and document violations.

### **Key Stakeholders and Collaborations**

Our success heavily relied on strategic collaboration and targeting key stakeholders. The Constitutional Court was our primary target for securing a definitive legal interpretation of free education, as it is the highest arbiter of constitutional law. Local Governments and Regional Education Offices were crucial implementers; we directly targeted them with evidence from our monitoring, urging them to enforce bans on illegal levies and to utilize regional education budgets (dana pendidikan daerah) to subsidize private school fees for the poor.

comprehensively support the implementation of free education in both public and private institutions. Local communities, parents, and disability organizations were not just beneficiaries but active participants in our strategy; by empowering them as monitors, we fostered strong ownership and generated authentic, on-the-ground evidence. We also strategically engaged the media and public opinion to amplify the Constitutional Court's decision and highlight systemic discrimination in education access, with generating viral news and headlines being key to building widespread public pressure.

### **Key Factors Resulting in Change**

Several factors were instrumental in driving the changes we achieved. Generating and using evidence was perhaps the most critical factor, where detailed findings and reports generated through community monitoring provided irrefutable proof of illegal charges and discriminatory practices. This concrete data made our arguments highly compelling and difficult for authorities to ignore. Creating ownership and alliances was also paramount; by actively involving coalition members and local communities in the monitoring process, we built a strong sense of ownership and shared purpose. This broad alliance provided the collective strength and reach necessary to exert pressure across multiple regions. Targeting the right people at the right time through our multi-level approach—the Constitutional Court for a legal precedent, local governments for immediate implementation, and the DPR for legislative reform—allowed us to maximize impact.



We adapted our focus as opportunities arose, such as when the viral news firmly placed education costs on the national agenda. Lastly, leveraging legal mandates from the favorable Constitutional Court ruling provided a powerful legal backing, strengthening our position in advocating for implementation at all levels of government and shifting the debate from "if" education should be free to "how" it can be made free for all. These interwoven strategies, from legal challenges to grassroots monitoring and strategic communication, collectively created an environment where systemic change in education access became not just a possibility, but a tangible reality.. Our persistent advocacy for the Constitutional Court's ruling on free schooling gained unprecedented public awareness, going viral and dominating national headlines. This exposure revealed the systemic discrimination in education, showing how limited public school capacity and high private school costs forced millions of children, especially from impoverished backgrounds, out of school or led to withheld diplomas due to unpaid fees. This public outcry, combined with our evidence-backed advocacy, put immense pressure on policymakers.

At the national level, the most significant outcome was the direct legislative response from the House of Representatives (DPR). Recognizing the critical issue, and directly influenced by our sustained pressure and the public discourse we ignited, they included a crucial article about tuition-free schooling in the ongoing revision of the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas). This marks a monumental step towards solidifying equitable education access for all children in national law.

At the local level, our community-led monitoring and subsequent advocacy led to immediate, tangible changes. Armed with our detailed findings, many Regional Education Offices (Dinas Pendidikan Daerah) took decisive action. They not only reiterated and strengthened bans on illegal fees and gratuities during new student admissions but also increased oversight. Furthermore, our advocacy boosted affirmative action policies, ensuring local governments more effectively implement quota policies for children from impoverished backgrounds and those with disabilities, prioritizing their admission. Crucially, despite national budget constraints, our discussions with the Ministry of Education and local advocacy spurred several local governments to begin using their regional education budgets to subsidize private schooling for poor children.

For our target groups—impoverished children and those with disabilities—these interventions mean a fundamental shift. They now have a stronger legal basis for free education, easing the fear of dropping out due to cost. Reduced illegal fees make public school entry fairer, and local private school subsidies offer financially viable alternatives. Reinforced affirmative action policies provide clearer educational pathways. Our actions have begun dismantling financial and discriminatory barriers, creating a more accessible, equitable, and accountable education system for all Indonesian children.

Firstly, we learned the immense power of a multi-pronged approach that marries high-level legal advocacy with granular, community-led social accountability. A landmark legal victory, like the Constitutional Court's ruling, provides the critical mandate, but it is insufficient without a robust mechanism for local implementation and oversight. Others should recognize that securing policy change at the national level is often only the first step; investing equally in community mobilization and systematic monitoring at the grassroots is essential

to bridge the gap between policy and practice. This ensures that the intended beneficiaries, especially marginalized groups, truly experience the change.

Secondly, the experience underscored the transformative power of evidence-based advocacy driven by those directly affected. Our success in curbing illegal levies and strengthening affirmative action was directly attributable to the real-time, verified data collected by our provincial coalition members and local communities. This concrete evidence, rather than anecdotal reports, compelled local authorities to act. Therefore, organizations should prioritize training local actors in data collection and documentation and establish clear, efficient channels for reporting. The data doesn't just inform advocacy; it becomes the irrefutable proof that drives accountability and reform.

Finally, we gained a vital understanding of the importance of adaptive and multi-level engagement. When the national budget cycle delayed full implementation of the Constitutional Court's ruling, our ability to pivot and advocate for local governments to utilize regional funds proved critical. This demonstrated that while national policy shifts are foundational, driving change requires agility to identify and leverage opportunities at all levels of governance, from national ministries to local education offices. Others should build flexibility into their strategies, being prepared to engage with diverse stakeholders across various governmental tiers and adapting their approach based on real-world constraints and emerging opportunities.

