

Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia – **CONVEY Indonesia**

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CONVEY Indonesia aims to build peace in Indonesia and to prevent violent extremism and radicalism through a series of research-survey, policy advocacy, and public interaction based on the potential of religious education. CONVEY Indonesia project covers on the issues of tolerance, diversity, and non-violence among youth.

## Evaluation of Economic Programs as Instrument of Deradicalization

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## Problem Statement

This study aims to evaluate the impact of economic programs, both government and non-government, on the degree of radicalism among ex-terrorist prisoners and ex-combatants in Indonesia. Using qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study is essential to evaluate and see the level of success of economic intervention programs as an instrument of deradicalization. It is expected that the relevant parties can develop more appropriate and efficient economic empowerment programs based on the results and recommendations of this study.

## Background

Terrorism remains a threat in Indonesia. Many cases of terror attacks or plots have been uncovered by the police in the last three years, and this provides strong enough evidence of such threat. Between 2015 and 2017, there are 40 cases of terror attacks and plots in Indonesia. Within that period, Densus 88 (The Indonesian Police Special Detachment 88 Anti-Terror) has arrested 427 people who were linked to terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

The government is aware that the hard approach strategy through law enforcement may not completely eradicate terrorism in Indonesia. Enforcement actions solve only the terror actions offense but not the root cause of the problem. A soft approach strategy through deradicalization and counter-radicalism programs is believed to be better able to solve the root cause of terrorism. The government believes that if the root cause is solved, terrorism in Indonesia will vanish.

Deradicalization is an intervention program aimed at people who have been exposed to extreme ideologies, such as the terrorist prisoners and ex-terrorist prisoners. The goal is to make them renounce their violent

ideology. Counter-radicalism, on the other hand, is an intervention program that aims to make the general public more immune, so they will not be easily exposed to radical ideas.

One common approach in deradicalization is through economic programs. This approach is considered important because there is an assumption that one of the root causes of terrorism is poverty or economic problems. The National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) Blue Print on Deradicalization outlines that: "The economic approach in deradicalization is one effective approach to empower ex-terrorist prisoners and their family. Economic empowerment helps former terrorist prisoners and their family to be independent and prosperous. A number of facts have indicated that poverty is one of the factors causing radicalism and terrorism to grow and develop. Through economic approach, the government can create public welfare to then reduce potential conflicts and radical acts of terrorism in the society."<sup>2</sup>

It is this belief that encourages BNPT to work with civil society organizations (CSOs) such as Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian (YPP), Police Studies Research Centre of Universitas Indonesia (PRIK UI), Indonesian Muslim Crisis Center (IMC2) and other organizations to carry out deradicalization programs through economic approach, particularly for the ex-terrorist prisoners.

### Why the Study is Important?

This study was to evaluate and see the level of success of economic intervention programs as deradicalization instrument. It uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative

1 Indonesia Strategic Policy Institute (ISPI), *Tabel Rekapitulasi Kasus Serangan dan Plot Serangan Terorisme di Indonesia* [Summary Table on Cases of Terrorist Attacks and Plots in Indonesia], Jakarta, January 2018.

2 Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT), *Blue Print Deradikalisasi* (Deradicalization Blue Print), BNPT Deputy on Prevention, Protection, and Deradicalization, Jakarta, 2013.

3 Prominent qualitative studies on deradicalization includes, e.g. Report Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Need for A Rethink*, January 2014. Another IPAC report is the *Update on Indonesian Pro-ISIS Prisoners and Deradicalisation Efforts*, December 2016.

approaches, the first of its kind. Studies on deradicalization in Indonesia were usually conducted using qualitative approach, without specifically evaluating the use of economic approach as deradicalization strategy.<sup>3</sup>

One of the objectives of this study is to produce policy recommendations which, if implemented, are expected to create more effective economic programs as deradicalization instruments.<sup>4</sup>

## Methodology

This descriptive study aims to obtain a snapshot of impacts of economic intervention programs by using an ex-post facto approach, where data on unit of analysis (respondent characteristics) is already available prior to the study.

An experimental design, where respondents are assigned into control/comparison and treatment groups, would only be possible if data for the two groups can be made available by organizations that implement the intervention programs to allow comparison of the measured variables before and after the interventions were delivered. Unfortunately, no such measurement was made by the implementers. Some organizations were unwilling to provide their initial data, such as BNPT (NCTA).

The key variables measured in this study are the economic impacts as measured by current employment and income, as well as the degree of radicalism. The population of the study respondents is the ex-terrorist prisoners and/or ex-combatants who received economic assistance, in cash or in-kind. Ex-combatant is defined as people who were involved in communal conflicts such as conflicts in Ambon, Poso, and even in Mindanao, the Philippines but had never

been implicated in terrorism. Data was collected and processed using qualitative and quantitative approaches (mixed-method).

The study's instrument to measure the respondents' degree of radicalism is a questionnaire on radicalism that was independently developed based on challenges of deradicalization in Indonesia. Other instruments that the study used in measuring impact indicators of the economic programs are the Subjective Wellbeing Scale, the Domain Life Satisfaction Scale, and the economic status measurement as adapted from the economic census.

## Findings

Respondents of the study include 38 ex-terrorist prisoners and ex-combatants who received assistance through economic programs in three areas, i.e. Jabodetabek (Greater Jakarta Area), Lamongan, and Poso with the following details: 11 ex-terrorist prisoners in Jabodetabek, 17 ex-terrorist prisoners and ex-combatants in Lamongan, and 10 ex-terrorist prisoners and ex-combatants in Poso. There were 12 organizations providing economic programs to the participants, including government institutions such as BNPT (NCTA) and Poso District Government, and CSOs such as YPP, PRIK UI, IMC2 etc. BNPT is the largest organization providing such program.

In this study, economic program means a program that provides economic assistance in two forms: immediate economic value aid and non-immediate economic value support. Immediate economic value means that aid is provided in the form of cash (hard money) referred as general item of value and goods/items referred as special item of value. Non-immediate economic value is support delivered in the form of economics training courses (both hard skills and soft skills). The two types of courses by subject are: pure economics and mixed course that combines topics on entrepreneurship and deradicalization. Data was collected between August and November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Criticism on how government policies on deradicalization were developed without sufficient underlying research is discussed in detail in *Kebebasan, Toleransi dan Terorisme: Riset dan Kebijakan Agama di Indonesia* (Liberty, Tolerance, and Terrorism: Research and Policy on Religion in Indonesia), PUSAD Paramadina, Jakarta, 2017.

### The findings are as follows:

- There are no adequate pre-assessment and post-assessment on the participants. Assessment here refers to the participants' degree of radicalism and economic capacity. The assessments are deemed inadequate because the majority of organizations that delivered the program did not conduct pre- and post-assessments. Some conducted pre-assessment without post-assessment despite the fact that this would be critical to measure the program's impact and level of success. Assessment is also important to measure risk, such as the misuse of economic support. In Poso in 2015 there was a case where the aid was misused to support the logistics of the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT). The lack of adequate assessment indicates that, as a deradicalization instrument, the economic intervention program was carried out without sufficient knowledge-base.
- There is no correlation between the quantity of purely given economics courses or purely given immediate economic value aid and the degree of radicalism. In other words, the number of trainings provided or the amount of cash/goods provided is not related to the increase and decrease in the participants' degree of radicalism.
- There is a negative correlation between the number of economics courses combined with immediate economic value aid mixed with deradicalization training material and the degree of radicalism. Nevertheless, this finding is inconclusive due to respondent bias, i.e. participants who received economic programs from BNPT and CSOs were selected, if not hand-picked, on the basis of their low degree of radicalism. This can be inferred from the fact that the 21 ex-terrorist prisoners who received the program are those who were already disengaged or have low degree of radicalism. While serving their time in prison, they were regarded as cooperative prisoners who also applied for parole (PB), a move which requires them to show allegiance to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and to become justice collaborator. The 17 ex-combatants were people who have joined the community of disengaged ex-terrorist prisoners. For example, the ex-combatants in Lamongan were activists in Lingkar Perdamaian, [a Foundation] led by Ali Fauzi.
- The decline in the participants' degree of radicalism, particularly among ex-terrorist prisoners, was a result of intensive discussions with the anti-ISIS and already-disengaged extremist group leaders while they were all in prison, for example people like Ali Imron. There is a negative correlation between the number of discussions with Ali Imron and the degree of radicalism. This can be interpreted in two ways: the more discussions they had with Ali Imron, the lower their degree of radicalism; or, the lower the degree of radicalism, the more discussions were held with Ali Imron. (Indonesia Strategic Policy Institute, Research on the Degree of Radicalism among Terrorist Prisoners in Indonesia, 2016) confirms the former, i.e. more discussions with Ali Imron can reduce the degree of radicalism. In ISPI research on 25 terrorist prisoners who were finally disengaged, they acknowledged that the process of moderation occurred after intensive discussions with Ali Imron when they were detained at the Jakarta Metropolitan Police detention. This is also reinforced by results from IPAC research in a 2014 report titled *Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Need for A Rethink* which shows that terrorist prisoners who were cooperative and disengaged while in prison basically underwent a self-disengagement process after evaluating their acts of terrorism and having discussions with influential figures who already went through moderation.
- Although all participants have reached disengagement by believing that acts of terrorism in Indonesia are not legitimate, 65.8% or 25 people still have the potential

to resort to violence under particular condition, i.e. if communal conflicts broke where Muslims become victims, such as what happened in Poso and Ambon, they are willing to re-engage in violence. From these findings it can be concluded that communal conflicts could trigger a spontaneous recovery, a phenomenon where someone suddenly returns to old behaviors that have long been renounced.

- There is no correlation between economics courses and the perceived economic benefits gained from the program. In other words, the economic courses provided do not match the economic needs of the participants. This might be because the courses were not developed based on participants' needs assessment.
- There is a positive correlation between provision of aid of immediate economic value (cash and goods/items) and the perceived economic benefits gained. Perceived economic benefits is not the objective condition of the participant's economic situation, such as increase in economic income after receiving aid with immediate economic value. Participants rated such aid as far more beneficial than economics courses.
- The majority of participants have not succeeded yet in turning their immediate economic value aid (cash and goods/items) into productive capital; only 20% or 7 people were able to do so. The seven people are those who already run business undertakings, and the cash assistance was used to increase their capital. Provision of economic support is beneficial to the participants' economic activities when the recipient has already had a business enterprise before the aid was provided.
- There is no adequate assistive-support and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). As many as 55% or 21 people claimed to have received some assistive-support and M&E but the assistive-support they referred to was simply the provision of aid of immediate economic value or some

assistance to accompany the participants to purchase goods/items that they will use as capital. Aside from that, there is no further assistive-support or M&E on the participants. Consequently, the cash received or goods purchased for capital mostly become unproductive.

## Recommendations

In conclusion: Economic programs are not yet optimal to provide economic benefits or to lower the degree of radicalism. However, this study also produced some findings that could be used as the basis for preparing recommendations to improve the economic programs so as to provide more optimized benefits, both in terms of economy and in reducing the degree of radicalism.

### The recommendations are:

- To create economic programs that can lower the degree of radicalism, it is important to mix economic intervention with deradicalization activities or ideological interventions such as providing counter narratives against the violent ideology of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). This ideological intervention aims to lower the participants' degree of radicalism. Before ideological intervention program is rolled out, it is important to understand patron-client relations among the prospective participants. Having understood this, it is important to identify who is the most influential patron among them. The patron here should be the one that has most authority and strong influence over the prospective participants. The patron should of course has been disengaged. This explains why Ali Imron has the ability to moderate many terrorist prisoners, i.e. because he is regarded as authoritative and influential patron. Ideally, this ideological intervention should be carried out before economic intervention. One of the objectives is so that the economic support is not misused for terrorism activities such as what happened in Poso in 2015 where a recipient used



the cash received to support terrorism activities. Meanwhile, the objective of the economic program is to provide incentive for participants whose behavior changes to a more positive one, marked by a decline in the degree of radicalism. In order for such positive change to be sustained, the size of the economic support should be given to correspond with their degree of radicalism. The lower the degree of radicalism, the bigger economic support would be provided. The goal is to motivate the participants to continue to lower their degree of radicalism.

- The government needs to take various measures to prevent communal conflicts, such as conflicts in Ambon and Poso that were nuanced with SARA (ethnic, religious, racial, and intergroup relations). This is because such communal conflict is a trigger to spontaneous recovery in which disengaged participants suddenly become re-engaged in violence.
- To create economic programs that brings economic benefits and lowers the radicalism maximally, three stages of program activity shall be required:
  1. pre-intervention: assessment or baseline study is conducted on the prospective participants in terms of their degree of radicalism as measured using radicalism measuring instrument, their economic situation as measured using economic instruments, as well as their entrepreneurial competence. Such competence should be measured to identify the person's capacity in undertaking an entrepreneurial business. If there is no such capacity, the person should be immediately be given directions to become workers. On the other hand, if the person is found to be competent, further assessment is needed to identify their area of interest and their capacity. The assessment results will be useful to determine what kind of intervention is appropriate for the prospective participants. This baseline

study is important not only to identify the right types of intervention but the data will also help in the M&E process of the economic intervention programs to be undertaken.

2. intervention. The program is to begin with some ideological intervention to reduce the participants' degree of radicalism. After the intervention program is concluded, another assessment should be made to determine the degree of radicalism as well as to determine the size of economic support to be provided. The result from this degree of radicalism's second measurement shall be compared with the result from the initial assessment. This is also to evaluate the impact of ideological intervention activities. Next, the entrepreneurship training program is provided, together with the immediate cash-value assistance in the form of cash and goods/items. During the entrepreneurship training, topics related to ideological interventions must remain to be provided to ensure that the training brings an impact to lower the degree of radicalism.
3. Facilitation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Mentoring or facilitation to help running the enterprise is important for participants, especially in helping them to face and find solutions to the problems on the ground. In many cases, failure in turning the cash and the goods/item into productive business capital happened because the participants faced various problems that they finally gave up. During the mentoring process, the ideological intervention activities must remain to be provided to continue to lower the participants' degree of radicalism. The mentoring and monitoring activities shall be ended with evaluation activities, which include evaluating the success of economic intervention as well as ideological intervention programs by using instruments to measure them

respectively. The final result will be compared with result from the baseline study on the participants' economic capacity and degree of radicalism.

- In the mentoring process, it is also important to establish connections between participants and local economic

institutions. This connection is not only important to facilitate monitoring and help the participants in dealing with difficulties in running their business, but will also be beneficial to help the participants in their social reintegration in the community.



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