

Local Budgets for Schooling in Indonesia

Up until 2009, central government budget allocations were the only source of funds for the operating costs of schools in Malang City. Malang City itself did not give any money for these costs. Instead, it prioritized spending on physical and entertainment developments, such as malls and sport facilities. This contradicted Regional Regulation 13 of 2009 that says that all levels of government must allocate at least 10 percent of their budget for education.

In 2009 the civil society organization Pattiro Malang conducted a needs assessment of schools. All the schools they visited said that the money from the central government did not cover their operating costs. This contradicted government's campaign on free education.

Pattiro discussed the problem with school principals, school committee members, parents of students, the Department of Education, other organizations, and academics. Pattiro then proposed that an allocation, called the BOSDA, be made from the city's budget to compensate for the shortfall in the allocation from central government.

In 2010 the central government allocated IDR 33,300 per month for each elementary student and IDR 47,900 for secondary students. Pattiro and its partners worked with experts to calculate the amount per student that was actually needed to cover costs. They calculated that IDR 52,500 was needed for each elementary student and IDR 136,200 for secondary level. When they multiplied these numbers by the total number of students and compared it with the central government allocation, the deficit was IDR 61.6 billion per year.

Pattiro also built the BOSDA Alliance, which brought together different organizations, institutions, academics, and community figures. Education is an issue that is close to the community. However, many people do not know about and understand budgets. Members of the team with budget expertise, therefore, helped others to read and analyze budgets.

The Pattiro team organized discussions with all the different role players in education. Workshops were held with government officials, religious organizations, civil society organizations, and public figures in the education field.

Most of the education role players agreed that more money was needed. However, they were not hopeful that the city government would allocate more money. The team, therefore, decided to do advocacy in the legislature. Half of the members of the legislature were newly appointed and the team hoped that they would be open to new ideas. Pattiro approached members of the legislature in their homes and offices. One chairperson and 12 members of the legislature (out of a total of 45 members) attended a workshop on the issue. Government officials made presentations at the beginning of the workshop. Their presence and their explanation of the operating costs of schools encouraged the workshop participants to take the issue seriously.

From May to October 2009 Pattiro did media advocacy on the topic. The team worked with the media to create an "open discussion" on BOSDA in which different actors could comment on the issue. The Pattiro team could not control the news that was published, and sometimes the news and opinions contradicted Pattiro's strategy. However, this challenge did not seriously affect the advocacy.

The advocacy efforts succeeded and the 2010 city budget included an amount of IDR 9,9 billion for BOSDA. The allocation for the Malang Department of Education also increased to 10 percent of the total budget. The department then allocated money for assistance to school committees and for the Malang Council for Education. The amount allocated for BOSDA was much smaller than proposed by Pattiro and the BOSDA Alliance, but it was an important step forward.