

Fact Sheet : Children's Participation and Citizenship Education Among Adolescents

Sri Yuliani

Department of Public Administration of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret
sriyuliani63@staff.uns.ac.id

Rahesli Humsona

Department of Sociology of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret
rahesli64@gmail.com



Universitas Sebelas Maret



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BACKGROUND

The world population dominated by youngsters becomes the key factor to economic growth, life quality improvement, and social welfare and justice. The number of world population up to 2017 was 7.6 billions, 42 percents of which are children and youngsters. Nearly 40% of world population consists of children and youngsters living in developing countries. About 87% of children living in developing countries have limited access to resource, education, training, job opportunity, and business opportunity (*World Population Prospects 2017; Youth Participation in Development A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers*).

As a part of nearly a half of world population, child and youth's voice and aspiration should be heard and accommodated obligatorily in development planning. World Bank's Report entitled "The Way Forward: Inclusive Youth Policy and Institutions, Breaking the Barriers To Youth Inclusion" concluded that engaging youths in decision making and public activity related to child problem can support the growth of young generations who have capacity to contribute directly to realizing a stable and sustainable economic and political condition.

In the context of democratic political order, child is a part of citizens who has specific need and interest different from those of adult's. For that reason, children's participation in development program planning and implementation is a must for democratic government

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- Children's participation in public policy is **the process of engaging children in decision making affecting their life**, including in any attempt the children take to initiate and to organize policy issues related to children's interest (Checkoway et al, 2005; Brady, 2007).
- In Indonesia, children's participation in development planning is mandated by the Child Protection Act and is **one indicator of a child-friendly city**.
- One of children's participation policies is the establishment of medium to listen and to convey aspirations, opinions and expectations of children as a form of children's participation in the development process, thereafter called **Children's Forum**.
- Children's participation in public decision making forum can improve the children's awareness as citizen with public rights and obligations to be fulfilled (Checkoway et al, 2005). Thus, Children's Forum plays a strategic role in citizen education for adolescents.
- Children's participation in development program planning and implementation is **a must for democratic government**. However, child's voice is heard inadequately in public decision making with an assumption that child has not had sufficient capacity to be engaged in activities in political domain (Roche, 1999).
- Survey conducted by UN IANYD found that majority of 13,000 respondents from 186 countries stated that limited opportunity constrains the youth from participating effectively in public decision process (Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making, UNDP - 2018).

THE ROLE OF SURAKARTA CHILDREN'S FORUM IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AMONG ADOLESCENTS

- Citizenship is political and social rights and obligation the citizens should comply with to make democratic order running well. Citizenship consisting of three elements (Marshall in Roche, 1999; Bellamy, 2008 ; Villa-Torres et al, 2015) :
 - **Civil element** pertains to law enforcement and personal freedom including **the freedom of expression**.
 - **Political element** is related to the right to **participate in political process or vote**.
 - **Social element** of citizenship associated with **economic welfare issue, right to social heritage and right to living in dignity** according to humane life standard.
- Youth's participation in development can support the youth's social development through improving knowledge, skill, social value, and civil competency. Such the competencies help reinforce the youth's role as citizen and civil society, and furthermore can grow democratic citizenship (Checkoway et al, 2005).
- Children's Forum is a communication forum organized by children and built by government used to be children's participation media. Surakarta Children's Forum (*Forum Anak Surakarta* or FAS) is Children's Forum at city level established in 2006 whose member consists of 12-18 year old children representing all of Children's Forums in 51 *kelurahan* and 5 *kecamatan* (sub-district) existing in Surakarta. FAS plays a strategic role in citizenship education viewed from citizenship basic elements (Yuliani & Humsona, 2018):
 - *Firstly*, **civil and political function** through its participation in Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan (Musrenbang). FAS as city-level children's forum plays a strategic role as it accommodates the aspiration of all children's forums from *kelurahan* to sub district level to be delivered in City-Level Development Planning Discussion (*Musrenbangkot*). FAS can be said as serving as advocator voicing the children's aspiration, need and interest before the policy maker
 - *Secondly*, **social function as peer educator** in making the public aware of children rights and facilitating the children and peer encountering children's problems such as children abuse, drug abuse hazard, early marriage, adolescent reproduction health, and etc.



THE CONSTRAINTS

- Many factors affect the strategic role of Forum Anak Surakarta in citizenship education (Yuliani & Humsona, 2018):
 - *Firstly*, constraint in Civil and Political function. Forum Anak Surakarta has capacity to be engaged actively in Musrenbang as they have adequate knowledge on their rights and have abilities of communicating and expressing their opinion in public forum. Constraint originates more from **Surakarta City Government's commitment to actually engaging FAS to be active participants in Musrenbang**. So far, FAS participation is still limited to fulfilling the legal formal precondition requiring the presence of FAS as one of sectoral communities in Musrenbang.
 - *Secondly*, constraint in Social function. FAS has capacity to play peer educator's role to socialize children issues and problems. As millennial generation, they utilize social media smartly to broadcast FAS activity and to campaign for the fulfillment of children's right. The constraints as peer educator come from the unbalance between Children's Forum human resource number and the number of children that should receive peer training and builders of Children's Forum have **not understood yet the technique of facilitating children to be capable of serving as peer educator**

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- Children's Forum plays a strategic role in citizenship education through their engagement in Musrenbang and as peer educator.
 - The participation in Musrenbang becomes an effective medium of making the adolescents aware of their civil and political rights.
 - The function of **peer educator** requires adolescents to interact with peer children and with other stakeholders. This function sharpens the ability of communicating and establishing relation with many stakeholders, thereby **impacting on adolescents' social capacity development**.
- The effectiveness of Children's Forum as citizenship education media is not only affected by children's capacity; **determinant factor is State Civil Apparatus's awareness of children's right and protection**.
- This research recommends the need for integrating the perspective on children's right to entire policy process of local development or **mainstreaming children's right**. This strategy can be realized when supported with the presence of **State Civil Apparatus aware of children's rights and children-responsive budgeting system**.

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