Bridging the Gap and Shattering Norms

How Childcare Assistance Can Empower Indonesian Women in the Informal Economy

The Gender Equity Initiative

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Widianingsih

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Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

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We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

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The Gender Equity Initiative hosts talented University of Melbourne Master's student interns who lead projects across a range of gender equity issues. The interns produce reports covering pressing and timely topics in this area.

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ECED Early Childhood Education and Development

MSME Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

Executive Summary

Indonesian women are frequently underprivileged in both social and economic situations. Social norms that lay primary duty for childcare on women, pressuring them to prioritise family care above career growth (Cameron et al., 2023). In addition, most Indonesian women are currently employed in the informal sector, but they lack the opportunity to reach their full potential since they must balance work and childcare (Gallaway & Bernasek, 2002). Worries about children and who will look after them while the mother works have led many women to quit their formal employment and work in the informal economy, or even not work at all (Cameron, 2023). Therefore, this report aims to recommend a more inclusive and supportive childcare assistance programme to help women in the informal economy and those looking for a job enhance their potential, and then they can contribute to Indonesia's economic and social system.

Key Findings

1. Women account for more than 65 percent of the informal economy (Indonesian Statistics Agency, 2019). However, the informal economy is frequently associated with poorer productivity and earnings (World Bank, 2020). As a result, women's economic positions become less rewarding.
2. Women frequently postpone their jobs after marrying and having children because of pressure from society, which still perceives women as wives and mothers (World Bank, 2020). Moreover, a patriarchal system exists in Indonesian culture, with approximately 43 percent of males think that women should stay at home (Cameron et al., 2023).
3. According to the World Bank, the research from low- and middle-income countries show compelling evidence that improving access to childcare can improve women' labour market results (Halim et al., 2021).
4. Chile and Colombia demonstrate impressive results in providing childcare and education for low-income households through a holistic plan that includes healthcare, education, and social assistance.
5. According to a World Bank simulation, if the Indonesian government increases childcare investment to 0.5 percent of GDP, female labour force participation will climb to 58.3 percent in 2030, which is consistent with Indonesia's commitment to the G20 (World Bank, 2023).

Recommendations

1. Expanding the Accessibility and Availability of Affordable Childcare Programmes: The "every village must own at least one ECED centre" plan should be expanded with enhancements such as a consistent monitoring and evaluation system and more binding standards. Further, in the programs, fees are waived through tiered subsidies based on income level, making it more accessible for women in the informal sector with fluctuating wages.
2. Designing Community-based and Flexible Childcare Programmes: Community-based care systems are childcare services operated by local communities in their own homes, each of which may accommodate around 10-15 children. While customising childcare services with

flexible enrolling and scheduling choices is an initiative aimed to fulfil the needs of women in the informal sector, as well as those who want or are seeking for work.

3. Establishing Sustainable Partnerships with Shared Responsibility: Collaborative arrangements or long-term partnerships would focus on programme quality and impact. Three elements must be launched as part of a collaborative arrangement: quality standards, training and assistance programmes, as well as monitoring and evaluation methods.

By adopting these recommendations, Indonesia may create a more welcoming atmosphere for women in the informal economy. This will enable them to engage more completely in the labour market, resulting in increased financial stability and national progress.

1. Introduction

Women in Indonesia have faced a difficult situation with low and stagnant labour force participation for more than two decades, and most of them work in the informal sector (ILO, n.d.; Indonesian Statistics Agency, 2019). The government has made several initiatives to expand opportunities for women, including access to education and the implementation of gender equality regulations in the workplace (World Bank, 2023), but it appears that these efforts have not been successful in increasing women's labour force participation.

Meanwhile, social norms continue to pose barriers for women, with society viewing women as responsible for household affairs as well as patriarchal culture being dominant (Badruddin et al., 2019; World Bank, 2020). As a result, many women who had previously worked in the formal sector opted to leave their jobs or work in more flexible informal sector. In addition, age-related changes in women's employment in Indonesia indicate that approximately 40 percent of women who were previously employed in paid jobs are no longer employed following marriage and childbirth (World Bank, 2023). Further, the research shows that increasing access to childcare can enhance women's labour market outcomes (Halim et al., 2021).

Women's burden of being responsible for household chores, particularly taking care of children, makes it harder for them to focus on their jobs, resulting in low labour force participation. For this reason, increasing access to childcare support may be a way to increasing the productivity of women who work in the informal sector and those who are or will be seeking employment. The research question addressed in this study is: what approaches and factors should the government consider in delivering targeted childcare assistance for women in the informal economy?

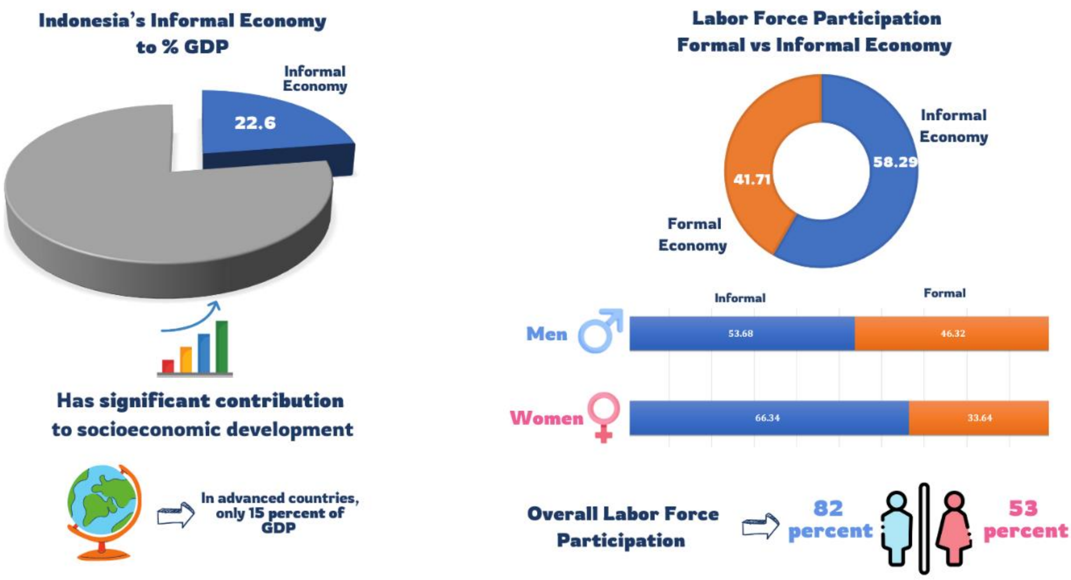
This report will analyse secondary data sources, including government reports, Indonesian Statistics Agency reports, World Bank data sets, ILO data sets, and academic journals. First, it will examine the complexity of the informal sector, the challenges of social norms that often place an unfair burden on women as well as the lack of regulations and social protection mechanisms. Second, it will assess the performance of childcare assistance programs implemented in other countries and draw insights from their approaches. Finally, based on this analysis, it will propose policy recommendations adapted to the specific context of Indonesia.

2. The Challenges of Informal Economy, Labour Force, and Social Norms

The informal economy is defined as "all economic activities conducted by workers and economic units that fall outside the scope of regulations" (Ablaza et al., 2023). In addition, the informal economy is often classified into two categories: self-employment and paid employment. Self-employment includes employers, own account operators, and unpaid family workers, whereas paid employment includes employees of informal businesses, other informal pay workers, and industrial homeworkers (Cuevas et al., 2009).

In Indonesia, the informal economy constitutes a substantial contributor to the country's GDP, amounting to approximately 22.6 percent or $811 billion (World Economics, 2024). Moreover, approximately 58 percent of Indonesia's labour force works in the informal sector. This enormous informal sector in Indonesia contributes extensively to socioeconomic development through earning income, increasing service availability, and boosting local economies (World Bank, 2020). However, informal workers often receive few benefits and do not have access to the same social protection mechanisms as those in formal employment (Cuevas et al., 2009). Thus, workers in the informal sector are subject to issues such as non-compliance with workers' rights, instability, discrimination, and exploitation.

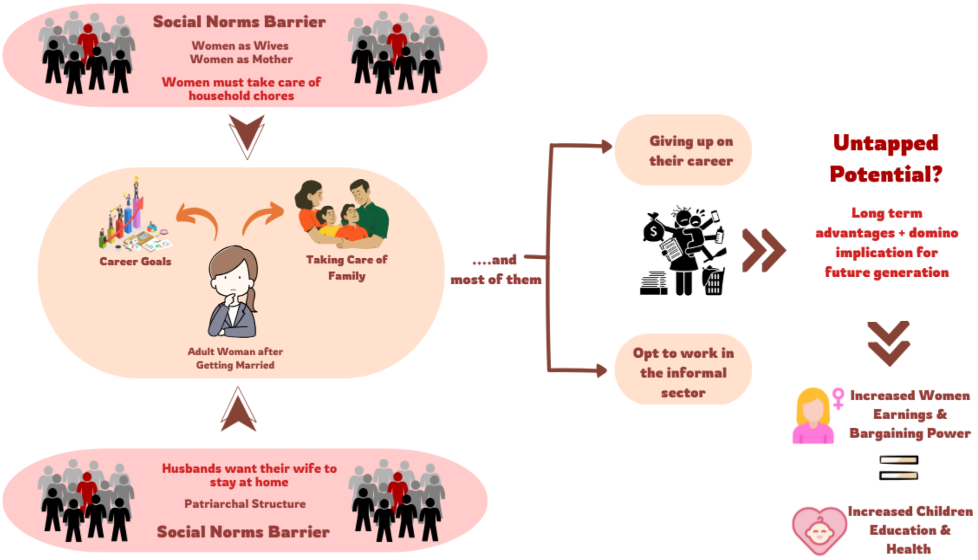
Figure 1. Indonesia's Informal Economy and Labor Force Participation



Furthermore, women dominate the informal economy, accounting for more than 65 percent (Indonesian Statistics Agency, 2019). Despite most women are employed in industries with low productivity and engage in informal employment, their primary motivation is to fulfil their immediate financial needs rather than to pursue their career ambitions (Pulse Lab Jakarta, 2022; World Bank, 2020). Also, compared to men, who make up 82 percent of the labour force, Indonesia's female labour force participation rate has been stable and low at 53 percent for more than two decades (ILO, n.d.).

On the other hand, traditional gender norms have a significant impact on gender inequality and low female labour force participation in Indonesia (Cameron, 2023). The pressure that women endure from a society that perceives them as wives and mothers leads to many women leavings their employment after marrying and having children (World Bank, 2020). These social norms place the duty of household management, particularly childcare, on women (World Bank, 2020). Then, working mothers have a problem deciding who will care for their children while they are at work (Gallaway & Bernasek, 2002). In addition, the patriarchal structure persists in Indonesian society due to the stigmatisation of men as primary earners and decision makers in family (Badruddin et al., 2019). According to surveys, around 43 percent of males believe that women should remain at home (Cameron et al., 2023). Because women are obligated to obey their husbands, they are expected to prioritise their husbands' wishes, which may include the decision to stop working. Therefore, because of societal pressure and a lack of support from their spouses, many women choose to work in the informal sector since it is more flexible, or even not work at all.

Figure 2. Social Norms vs Women



Women may have an immense amount of untapped potential that can be explored. Then, increasing women's engagement in the labour market not only enhances women's financial well-being but also empowers them on a broader scale (Cameron, 2023). With increased women's empowerment, they can make better decisions for themselves and their families and have greater control over their lives (World Bank, 2020). In addition, the World Bank report indicated that gains in women's earnings and power of bargaining often result in increased expenditure and outcomes for children's education and health (Morton et al., 2014). It can give children as future generation to achieve their full potential and eliminates the cycle of poverty. Thus, assisting women to be more productive and focused on their job, particularly those working in the informal sector, can enhance labour market participation while also providing long-term benefits and domino effects for future generations.

3. Current Supporting Policies and Programmes

3.1 The Existing Legislation and Social Protection System, Is It Enough to Protect?

Even though working women are under societal pressure to care for their family, gender equality in Indonesia has improved and grown throughout time. According to the UNDP report

(2022), Indonesia's Gender Development Index (GDI) is 0.940, which is higher than the average for other developing nations (0.929) (UNDP, n.d.). However, Indonesia continues to lag behind its Southeast Asian counterparts in terms of economic participation, particularly regarding the percentage of earned income contributed by women and their involvement in the labour force (Cameron, 2023). An analysis of earnings in Indonesia reveals a substantial gender gap, with women estimated to earn only 54 percent of their male counterparts (Cameron, 2023). To promote gender equality in economic participation, the government has implemented a range of initiatives through legislation and social protection system.

In terms of legislation, gender mainstreaming is one of the government's strategic priorities in the 2020-2024 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for integrating gender perspectives into development, beginning with policy formulation, planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (Cabinet Secretariat, 2020). Moreover, the government has created the Job Creation Law Number 6 of 2023, with the goal of establishing as many as possible job opportunities for Indonesians to achieve their right to a decent life. However, the Job Creation Law still excludes protection for informal sector workers and efforts to strengthen maternity rights have made no headway (National Commission on Women, 2020).

Figure 3. Social Assistance and Social Insurance

In terms of social protection system, the government provides social assistance and social insurance. Social assistance is a programme that provides employment aid to low-income or underprivileged individuals, most of whom work in the informal economy (Ministry for Human Development and Culture, 2024). Social assistance programmes focus on financial support and skill development (Ministry of Finance, n.d.). However, not all workers in the informal sector are eligible for social assistance because it aims to alleviate extreme poverty (Ministry for Human Development and Culture, 2024). Meanwhile, social insurance provides security for workers in both the formal and informal sectors through contribution fees (Ministry of Finance, n.d.). Besides, social insurance is an employment-based social security programme that covers the basic needs of each participant and/or their family members (BPJS of

Employment, n.d.). For social insurance, formal sector workers gain the most because they pay premiums through their employer and are eligible for all social insurance programmes (BPJS of Employment, n.d.). While workers in the informal sector must register individually and are only eligible for three of the five services: old age security, death security, and employment injury security (BPJS of Employment, n.d.). As a result, many workers in the informal sector are in the "missing middle," unable to access current social protection systems (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023).

To summarise, Indonesia's attempts to attain gender equality, while impressive, leave substantial gaps. While the informal sector and women continue to face inadequate protection, existing legislation and social protection systems still focus on job creation, financial assistance, skill development, and future needs. Then, women working in the informal economy would face double disadvantages. Indeed, social norms frequently place the primary duty for caring for children on women, and they are under pressure not to neglect their duties to care for the household even when working. Also, research indicate that family responsibilities influence career choices, with 40 percent of women leaving paid employment following marriage and motherhood (World Bank, 2023). Thus, government support for childcare can be a strategy to alleviate the burden suffered by working women while also reducing women's employment options to quit.

3.2 Formal vs. Informal Economy

Workers face major differences between formal and informal employment. While formal sectors provide a regulated environment with rules and social security, the informal sector is a more flexible but less secure option (Cuevas et al., 2009). This difference has implications for the benefits and security received by workers in each sector.

Figure 4. Fornal vs Informal Economy

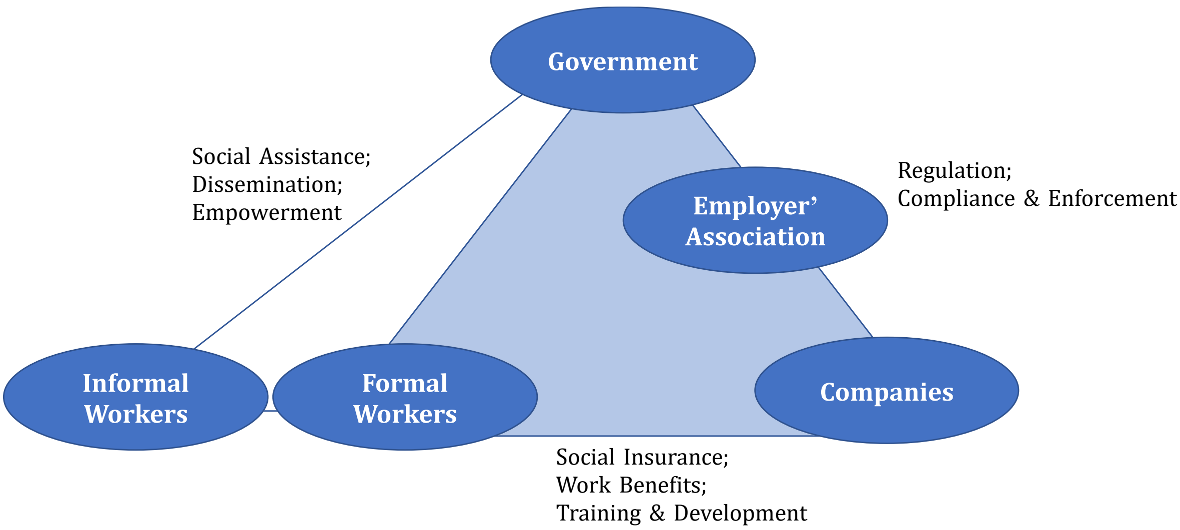


Figure 4. shows that formal workers have links with companies and government. Formal enterprises are founded inside a legal framework governed by the government, and they are required to comply with government rules, including providing facilities and programmes that promote gender equality (APINDO, 2021). Then, companies provide formal workers with a variety of facilities and programmes such as social insurance, employment benefits, and training and development opportunities (APINDO, 2021). In addition, the government could offer direct protection to formal workers through help service, dissemination, and empowerment (Ministry of Manpower, 2024). If companies violate the law, workers can file a direct complaint to the government, and the government can act and impose sanctions on companies that fail to comply (Ministry of Manpower, 2024). Moreover, formal companies have an association, such as the Indonesian Employers' Association (APINDO). This association serves as a liaison between the government and companies. In this context, APINDO has launched the "Equality and Inclusivity Guide in the Workplace" as a guideline for companies to promote an equal and inclusive work environment (APINDO, 2021).

On the other hand, the informal sector, which mostly comprises of street vendors, MSMEs, domestic workers, and freelance professionals, often lacks a defined legal framework (Cuevas et al., 2009), making it difficult for the government to oversee the implementation of gender equality in the workplace. According to the figure above, informal workers only interact with the government through social assistance, dissemination, and empowerment, implying that individuals working in the informal economy rely on government support programmes (Cuevas et al., 2009).

3.3 Labour Force, Informal Economy, and Women: What Should the Government Do?

The factors that influence women's employment in Indonesia are complicated; even after controlling for early marriage, expanding access to education, and promoting gender equality in the workplace, labour force participation has remained low and unaffected for more than two decades (ILO, n.d.; World Bank, 2023). Therefore, societal reforms are required to prevent women from leaving the workforce owing to caregiving and household duties (ILO, 2023a). Besides, women dominate the informal sector, which is frequently seen as a low-productivity and low-income employment (Pulse Lab Jakarta, 2022; World Bank, 2020). It is because women do not focus on expanding their businesses and talents and must divide their time to care for their families. If women are given the chance and flexibility to focus on job and business development, the informal economy will thrive and prosper.

For example, a story published on the ILO website about Siti Riyanti, a working mother in the informal sector, and her experience with childcare support helped her focus on work and got a better job (ILO, 2023b). She is a working mother who must support her family while also caring for her sons. To keep her job and perform well at work, she seeks day care for her second child, as her mother-in-law can only care for her first son. She understood how tough it was to locate good-quality and affordable childcare. She felt better after receiving suitable day care since it helped her son improve his learning problems. Besides, she could concentrate on her profession and finally get a new position with a higher salary.

The World Bank asserts that twenty-two studies from low-income and middle-income nations provide persuasive evidence that enhancing labour market outcomes of mothers can be achieved by increasing access to childcare (Halim et al., 2021). Efforts to boost women's labour market participation should certainly strive to reduce women's excessive care burden, but the existing childcare conditions in the country do not make this possible (ILO & ADB, 2023). Currently, childcare services remain centralised in metropolitan areas, dominated by private sector, and subject to varying standards (Katadata, 2021). However, Indonesia is a vast archipelagic country with around 81 million children and 54 percent live in rural areas (O'Kane & Lubis, 2016), so that childcare services are distributed unequally. Besides that, according to the research, children from the highest income quintile are 1.5 times more likely than those from the lowest income quintile to attend pre-primary education, with over half of the lowest income quintile's children did not receive any kind of pre-school education (World Bank, 2023). Then, this demonstrates that childcare services remain limited and inaccessible to informal sector workers since most of them have low and unstable income.

In addition, Indonesia allocates only an estimated 0.04 percent of its GDP, despite the OECD's recommendation that the government should invest approximately 1 percent of GDP towards ECED (World Bank, 2023). While this investment not only has an impact on women but also has potential for the future, the study reveals that boosting preschool enrolment to 50 percent of all children may result in future economic gains of between $14 billion and $34 billion (World Bank, 2023). Moreover, a World Bank simulation suggests that if the Indonesian government raises childcare expenditure to 0.5 percent of GDP, female labour force participation would rise to 58.3 percent in 2030, which is in line with Indonesia's commitment to the G20 (World Bank, 2023).

Furthermore, the government, through the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, is working with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to develop "Indonesia's Roadmap and National Action Plan on Care Economy," which will address key strategic issues concerning childcare services (ILO, 2023b). This roadmap aims to address the challenges faced by working women due to social norms and childcare pressures. However, Indonesia has enormous geography and variety, which will make the ECED reform process challenging and relatively slow, particularly in terms of the practical execution of centrally set standards, legislation, and policies (O'Kane & Lubis, 2016). Moreover, many stakeholders are involved in the ECED policy. At the state level, the ministry of education oversees regular ECED institutions, while the ministry of religion oversees Islamic ECED institutions (World Bank, 2020). In provincial and local government, each governor and mayor are in charge of their respective territories. Besides that, religious organisations, NGOs, and community-based organisations all have a role in institutional care (O'Kane & Lubis, 2016). Therefore, the government must ensure that this ECED reform can run smoothly and pay attention to the needs of women in the informal sector.

4. Benchmarking: Lessons from Chile and Colombia

ECED have an essential role in supporting child development and empowering families. In addition, ensuring access to inexpensive and high-quality childcare is important for working families, particularly those with low incomes and in the informal sector. This section compares childcare initiatives in Colombia and Chile that provide childcare and education for underprivileged families. It then examines historical context, objectives, as well as programme design and effectiveness.

4.1 Chile: Chile Crece Contigo "Chile Grows with You"

Chile is one of the world's most unequal countries, with a large poverty gap (BCG Foundation, 2016), but then it has made significant improvement since the introduction of the "Chile Crece Contigo: Chile Grows with You" programme in 2007 under President Michelle Bachelet (BCG Foundation, 2016; Peralta, 2011). It provides holistic child development support to underprivileged households, which comprises health, education, social, and community services (BCG Foundation, 2016). In 2009, the government published Law 20.379 to institutionalise "Chile Grows with You" as a public policy, ensuring its sustained implementation and effectiveness (BCG Foundation, 2016).

4.2 Colombia: De Cero a Siempre "From Zero to Forever"

Since the 1980s, Colombia has seen considerable transformations in its early childhood care and education programmes (UNESCO, 2006). Then, in the mid-1990s, the government started to regulate a home-based care system by educating and certifying carers (Rauls & Simon, 2020). Finally, in 2011, they launched the De Cero a Siempre "From Zero to Forever" strategy, which provides a framework for harmonising its governance and legislation (OECD, 2022). In addition, the strategy includes ambitious goals for ensuring children's basic right to free healthcare and education in their early childhood years through good quality, socially equitable, and comprehensive programmes (OECD, 2022).

4.3 Comparative Analysis: Programme Design and Effectiveness

Table 1. Comparative Analysis

		Chile	Colombia
Programme Design	Eligibility	▪ The programme aims to support **60% of the country's most vulnerable households** (Peralta, 2011).	▪ The main objective of providing childcare **to vulnerable households**, those in the lower two or three wealth categories (out of six) (World Bank, 2013).

		Chile	Colombia
	Service Offered and Delivery	▪ They **have an official curriculum as a guideline**, but teachers can customise it to meet the requirements of children, families, and communities (Peralta, 2011). ▪ The two main programme providers are the National Board of Nursery Schools **(JUNJI)** and **Integra Foundation** (Peralta, 2011). ▪ **JUNJI** offers the following programmes: (Peralta, 2011) o **Nursery School Program:** for infants aged 0 to 4 include those with special needs, located in urban and semi urban areas, open 11 months a year full time. o Alternative programmes: - **Family Nursery School**: Open part-time, run by a nursery school technician with assistance from the children's family. - **Labour Nursery School:** For children whose mothers work and organised to accommodate their needs, including working overtime. - **Seasonal Nursery School:** For children whose mothers have temporary or seasonal employment. - **Intercultural Nursery School:** Children aged 2 to 5 from indigenous communities. - **The Infant Service Improvement Programme (PMI)** is for children in	▪ Despite Colombia advocates for an integrated strategy to early childhood education and care, its **educational aspect is underdeveloped** (OECD, 2022). ▪ They have an **Inter-sectoral Commission** for the Comprehensive Care of Early Childhood (CIPI) which include the Ministry of National Education (MEN), the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, and the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) (OECD, 2022). ▪ The following programmes are: (OECD, 2022) o **Centre-based:** Early Childhood Development Centres (CDIs) is managed by ICBF and community organisation. It is designated to provide intersectoral services for children under 6. o **Family-based**: For children and families living in remote regions or with limited access to institutional care settings. The programme comprises both home educational sessions and group educational meetings. o **Community-based:** The programme is managed by women's community in their homes, who receive

		Chile	Colombia
		socially disadvantaged situations. ▪ The **Integra Foundation** offers: (Peralta, 2011) o **Nursery School**: for children aged 3 months to 4 years, open full time and offer comprehensive care. o **Nursery School on Wheels**: a travelling school that goes around the rural parts of the nation.	ICBF training and assistance while caring for up to 15 local children. It provides the most extensive coverage for children under 6.
	Cost and Funding	▪ The funding is mainly provided by the State (83 percent) and it costs around 0.8 percent of GDP (OECD, 2022; Peralta, 2011).	They spent around 0.5 percent of GDP, and over half of the spending on ECED came from private sources (54 percent) (OECD, 2022).
Programme Effectiveness	Utilisation Rate	▪ Early childhood education was not always totally inclusive in Chile, but now about 96 percent of five-year-old attend preschool (Rauls & Simon, 2020). ▪ More than 60 percent of families with the lowest socioeconomic level have had access to free childcare programmes and services (The Borgen Project, 2020). ▪ It went from 700 to more than 4,000 public kindergartens between 2006 and 2009, while attendance in free daycares rose about fivefold (Rauls & Simon, 2020).	▪ The system significantly broadened childcare coverage; the community-based service serves over 1.7 million children (Rauls & Simon, 2020). ▪ Although participation in childcare services is improving, it remains much lower than in other OECD nations and many Latin American countries. In 2013, only 48 percent of children aged 3 and 75 percent of children aged 4 were enrolled in early childhood programmes (OECD, 2022).
	Impact on Women's Labour Force Participation	▪ This programme has an influence on female-headed households, providing women extra time to pursue education and jobs (The Borgen Project, 2020). ▪ Over a decade, the proportion of female workers increased	▪ Currently, about 80,000 women work in the public childcare service programme. Childcare providers, particularly community-based services, are simply required to have a high school diploma and

		Chile	Colombia
		from 38 percent to 52 percent; the expansion of early education did not instantly result in more mothers joining the labour force; women's professional gains arrived later (Rauls & Simon, 2020).	complete a 40-hour training course before starting a facility (Rauls & Simon, 2020). ▪ The service's more flexible hours raised the possibility of women working outside the house by 25 percent (Rauls & Simon, 2020).

4.4 Key Takeaways: Can Indonesia Pursue a Similar Strategy?

1) Early intervention is needed: Both Chile and Colombia prioritise early intervention due to its influence on a child's development. Indonesia can explore similar models that give assistance from pregnancy onward.
2) The comprehensive strategy can be beneficial: Both nations' programmes include a variety of healthcare, education, and social assistance. This comprehensive approach might also help Indonesian children.
3) Community-based care can be an effective tool: Colombia community-based programme proves the efficacy of home-based childcare managed by women's community. Indonesia may consider tailoring this concept to its needs.
4) Customising childcare programmes based on parents' needs could be an option: Chile has alternative programs targeted at specific needs including seasonal workers, indigenous communities, and those with extended work hours. Then, adapting the program to Indonesia's specific needs may have a significant impact.
5) Balancing both costs and quality is a challenge: both nations struggle to get adequate financing for quality service delivery. Indonesia should create a long-term finance strategy for its early childhood care and education programmes.

5. Policy Recommendations

Social norms give pressure on women to prioritise caring for their families, particularly their children, above their own interests. This leads to low labour force participation and significant engagement by women in the informal sector, which is widely viewed as having low productivity and social protection (ILO, n.d.; World Bank, 2020). To minimise the burden that women bear in caring for children, the government must provide childcare programmes, thereby it can enhance productivity in the informal sector and promote labour force participation. Therefore, the following policy recommendations seek to promote more inclusive and supportive childcare programmes for women in the informal economy and those who looking for a job.

1: Expanding the accessibility and availability of affordable childcare assistance programmes.

Childcare services are mostly provided by private firms in major cities, often charging high prices without any standardisation (IBCWE, 2023). These high expenses make it difficult for women in the informal economy to obtain childcare services because their wages are low and fluctuate. In addition, Indonesia is an archipelagic country with various socioeconomic conditions, and more than half of Indonesia's children reside in rural areas. As a result, childcare services are unevenly distributed and mostly concentrated in large cities.

Furthermore, a variety of benefits, such as increased employment opportunities for women, improved family well-being, enhanced child development and productivity, and economic growth, can be achieved through policies and programmes that support working parents and work to increase families' access to high-quality, affordable childcare (World Bank, 2023). In terms of global commitment, family-friendly policies are enshrined in UN human rights conventions and international labour standards, one of which states that countries must take necessary actions to guarantee that children of working parents have access to services and childcare facilities (Moussié et al., 2023). Thus, overcoming geographical barriers and financial constraints is critical for increasing the accessibility and availability of affordable childcare support programmes.

- With the ability to boost the ECED budget, the government can broaden access by constructing new childcare facilities. Previously, the Indonesian government mandated that every village has at least one ECED centre, but current service is unequal, poorly regulated, and reliant on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups (World Bank, 2023). Furthermore, Chile proved efficacy in raising the number of public childcare facilities fivefold in three years, which can gradually reach 96 percent of children attending pre-school from what was previously very minimal (Rauls & Simon, 2020). Hence, "every village must own at least one ECED centre" programme needs to be continued with improvements, including a standardised monitoring and evaluation system and more binding regulations.
- Subsidised fees with tiered subsidies determined by income level to make it more affordable for women in the informal economy with fluctuating incomes. With this sort of funding arrangement, childcare programmes may benefit all groups based on their financial capabilities. The government may provide free services, as Chile and Colombia do, but there are concerns regarding sustainability and the need to invest funds to improve the quality of childcare services.

2: Designing community-based and flexible childcare programmes.

In 2018, there were a total of 3,059 registered childcare facilities specifically catering to children aged 0-6 years with operational hours of 8 hours a day, 5 days a week (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, there are around 221 thousand registered facilities for various early childhood establishments, including playgroups, kindergartens, and Islamic kindergartens (World Bank, 2020). Nevertheless, this facility has a limited operating duration of around 3 hours per day and frequently does not offer extra childcare services outside of these working hours (World Bank, 2020). Thus, the provision of childcare services does not adequately fulfil the demands of individuals who work in the informal sector or those who will/are looking for job. This is because they demand more time and flexibility. Therefore, the following are programme design proposed.

- Community-based care systems are childcare services provided by local communities in their own homes, each of which may accommodate around 10-15 children. This system is comparable to that utilised in Colombia, where individuals seeking to develop this business are given standardised training, guidance, and instructions. In Colombia, this approach is the most widely used, reaching more than 1.7 million children (OECD, 2022). This is applicable in Indonesia, where neighbours or communities have tight relationships built on mutual cooperation, particularly in rural regions. As a result, this community-based care system is adaptable to both rural and semi-urban settings.
- Customising childcare programmes with flexible enrolment and scheduling options is a programme designed to meet the needs of women in the informal sector as well as those who want to or are looking for employment. Chile has established a programme similar to this, including programmes tailored to specific requirements, such as programmes for individuals who work overtime, seasonal childcare, and programmes for indigenous people (Peralta, 2011). Indonesia may undertake something similar by focusing on the conditions and demands of Indonesian women, such as (a) a childcare programme that allows for more time and availability on weekends. This programme is designed for individuals who work on a shift system and have to work on weekends and other times outside of 9 to 5 office hours; and (b) seasonal childcare programme, which is intended for those who work during certain seasons, such as farmers during the harvest.

3: Establishing sustainable partnerships with shared responsibility.

Given that ECED reform would include numerous stakeholders at the state, provincial, and local levels. The vast number of stakeholders engaged requires more complex horizontal and vertical coordination. Thus, increasing inter-institutional collaboration is crucial to guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of childcare policies and initiatives. Collaboration amongst institutions is referred to as network or collaborative governance, and it has various advantages, including reduced communication risk, increased control and monitoring, as well as checks and balances through stakeholder involvement (Turnbull & Pirson, 2010). In addition, in this collaborative arrangement, all stakeholders may coordinate across organisational boundaries, share resources and motivation, establish accountability, and create measurement of performance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Ling, 2002). Then, it fits the conditions of all the stakeholders involved in childcare policies and programmes.

However, in this recommendation, collaborative arrangements or sustainable partnerships would prioritise programme quality and impact. The quality and impact of the programme have an important influence on its ability to continue and enhance over time. There are three aspects that must be initiated through a collaborative arrangement, including quality standards, training and support programs, and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

- To provide equal quality childcare services, nationwide standardisation is required. However, the state can play diverse and complementary responsibilities in providing child care, such as assessing service quality, properly regulating private and non-profit care services, and administering public childcare facilities (Moussié et al., 2023). Then, these quality standards may be developed collaboratively so that each institution/organization can raise concerns and achieve a mutual agreement that meets the interests of all parties.
- Training and support for service providers and carers is essential. It is because they will be dealing with children from various backgrounds and guiding their growth and development. In addition, sufficient competencies and knowledge have a significant impact on effective functioning of childcare services.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures are used to assess the impact and sustainability of the childcare programme. This monitoring and evaluation may be done on a regular basis for both short-term impacts such as child attendance level and their day-to-day progress, as well as long-term impacts, such as children's well-being and its effect on women's labour market participation.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, investing in a comprehensive childcare assistance programme for women in Indonesia's informal sector is a promising option. Those programmes can minimise barriers to employment participation by focusing on affordability, accessibility, and programme design. Moreover, success in the long run requires the establishment of solid partnerships between government and non-government institutions with shared responsibilities. As a result, the success of the childcare assistance programme will not only empower women but will also have substantial social and economic implications for future generations.

7. References

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