



Australian Government



**TASS** Technical Assistance for  
Education System Strengthening

# TASS News

Strengthening Indonesian Education, Together

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# A Few Remarks from TASS

## Creating Quality Islamic Schools

This edition of TASS News focuses more on Islamic school (*madrasah*) education and the Continuing Professional Development for Teachers (CPD) program as a means to create a brighter future for education in Indonesia. When addressing challenges facing *madrasah*, teacher competencies are key. Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs (PMA) Number 38 of 2018 regarding CPD is a positive step in the right direction when it comes to advancing *madrasah* education.

There is no doubt that teachers are an important element in education. The level of education quality is determined by teacher standards.

That is why TASS is very supportive of the new regulations surrounding teacher CPD. Through this initiative, teachers can be supported on an ongoing basis. The program does not only apply to government-run *madrasah* but also for private ones—keeping in mind the large number of students studying at private Islamic schools in Indonesia.

TASS believes that strong commitment, leadership and appropriate policies are the key ingredients needed to improve teacher quality and

competencies. A good example of effective CPD practice can be seen in East Java.

The budget which was allocated was used well, resulting in greater numbers of people benefiting. If this can be replicated elsewhere it will certainly be able to strengthen the quality of *madrasah* and form a well-adjusted and balanced generation of learners.

Our hope is that stakeholder collaboration and commitment will strengthen, and this CPD program can be replicated across other areas of Indonesia. By doing this, we can advance the education sector.



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## About TASS

TASS is a responsive, demand driven technical assistance facility funded by the Australian Government. Working with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, TASS seeks to strengthen key areas of Indonesia's education system. It does

this by supporting decision-makers to make changes to policy and plans, budgets and financing, and systems and practice, to improve the quality of teaching and reduce the impact of disparities on learning outcomes. The program began in January 2017, and will continue until January 2020.

**Joanne Dowling,**  
TASS Facility Director

# INCREASING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS (*MADRASAH*) IN EAST JAVA

**TASS has been supporting the Ministry of Religious Affairs since its commencement in 2017. One area of strategic focus for TASS has been the continued professional development of teachers in Islamic schools or *madrasah*. The quality of teacher instruction is a significant issue in Indonesia, including at Islamic schools which often service children from lower socio-economic groups. MoRA's Continuing Professional Development for Teachers (CPD) Program has the potential to increase teacher quality and student learning outcomes.**

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and TASS have designed a professional development program for state-run and private *madrasah* that involves school supervisor, headmasters, and teachers. The program aims to improve the quality of educational services in schools/*madrasah* and improve both teacher competency and their commitment to the profession in alignment with established teacher standards and performance expectations.

In addition the CPD program aims to respond to rapid changes in technology and society by upgrading teacher's skills, knowledge and understanding so that they can better support their students to develop the higher order thinking and range of 21st Century skills that will be required of the workforce over the next few decades.

An example of effective CPD implementation with school supervisors and *madrasah* headmasters and teachers (specifically for private *madrasah*) can be seen in East Java (Jatim). The CPD process began with an assessment of teacher competencies and performance in order to set the basis for compiling teacher profiles. This is the first step in formulating a plan for ongoing professional development which is discussed jointly with the community, including supervisors, *madrasah* headmasters, *madrasah* teacher working groups.

Through this process, a training plan was put in place for ongoing professional development. About 1,100 supervisors, 110,000 teachers, and 11,000 *madrasah* headmasters participated in the performance appraisal and will soon commence their professional development. While initially a major obstacle to widespread implementation, MoRA's limited budget for the program has actually sparked creativity and innovation through seeking alternative sources of funding and other in-kind contributions from organisations active in the Islamic education sector – as is appropriate

Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Java; some costs are borne by program participants themselves using BOS (school operational assistance) funds and a portion of teacher professional allowances that are nominally earmarked for professional development.

In other cases, the East Java office of MoRA entered into partnerships with local universities and CSOs to access expertise and funding for implementation, including Maarif, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, and Malang State Islamic University. These type of partnerships are encouraged under the Ministerial

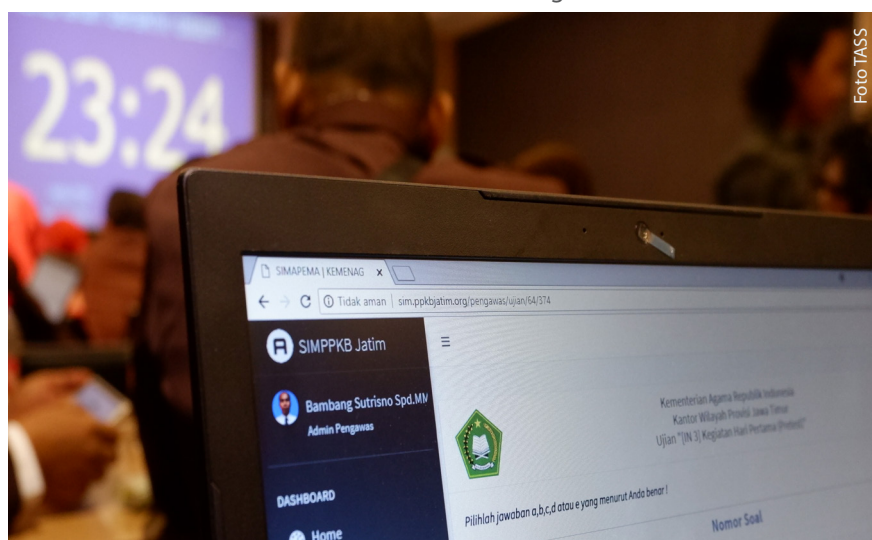


Foto TASS

for a sector in which over 90% of provision is privately run.

Funding for this program comes not only from the central government and the Regional Office of the

Regulation for teacher CPD, issued in December 2018. Teacher CPD in East Java is carried out at the school/*madrasah* cluster level. By bringing the program into schools, participants do not need to pay for



high travel and accommodation costs, and *Madrasah* traditions of personal sacrifice for a greater good meant that contributions from participants from BOS funds or their own professional allowances were up to five times as much as the provided budget.

This mode has the additional advantage of building a learning community at the cluster level, a place where teachers can come to access CPD, and jointly identify and solve problems. Syamsul Bahri, Head of the Madrasah Section in MoRA's East Java Office, said that supervisors, *madrasah* headmasters, and teachers now realise the importance of quality education in *madrasah*. The commitment to develop *madrasah* in East Java is very strong.

"Do not doubt the *madrasahs'* commitment. Even though there are still many things which need to be

improved, especially in improving competencies, the achievements of the *madrasah* have been quite good. In some rural areas in East Java, the *madrasah* are still struggling. But this has not made us pessimistic."

In his opinion, despite limited funds, rarely does a *madrasah* close its doors. They have stood the test of time and are used to such conditions.

"With cooperation in funding and technical support from TASS and the central government through the teacher CPD program, we are confident that our *madrasah* will become great."

The Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Java remains proactive in this area. This includes cooperating with various parties to seek alternative solutions to funding training to increase teacher competencies in Islamic schools.

### Teacher CPD in East Java

The budget of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the implementation of teacher CPD in East Java is about 375 million Rupiah (approximately AUD \$37,000). It is hoped that this budget will cover supervisors, *madrasah* headmasters, and teachers in 38 Regencies/Cities in East Java, reaching approximately 20,000 *madrasah*.

The budget is certainly minimal compared to the number of teachers there are around 170,000 teachers in *madrasah* in East Java. The scale of implementation presented a real challenge for the Regional Office of MoRA. In response, they have invested in *madrasah* supervisors based in districts to become master trainers. There are now around forty supervisors in regencies/cities in East Java that are responsible for teaching and running CPD activities

in their areas through the teacher working groups. Personnel from the Ministry of Religious Affairs play a key role in assuring the quality of CPD activities using instruments and tools developed by MoRA with TASS support.

It is hoped that this new system together with MoRA's commitment to improve will encourage even greater efforts to improve the quality of education in Islamic schools. East Java's experience shows that a limited budget need not constrain their high level of ambition. Laksono, Head of the Ponorogo district office of MoRA in East Java, said that all *madrasah* should be touched by the program, whether they are state-run or private.

"We must develop the *madrasah*, most of which are privately-owned. About 90 percent of the *madrasah* in

East Java are private. They are a key part of the government's efforts to develop the character and values of future generations. Even though they face difficulties, the *madrasah* keep moving forward," said Laksono.

"Development of the CPD program in East Java continues to be carried out, and the technical specifications, which include coaching and piloting, are already being implemented. Government assistance for this has encouraged us to work hard. The remaining costs are borne by the participants because they see the value of the benefits from this program. Through the program it is not just about the individuals though, we are also empowering various teacher working groups," he added.

In the future, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of East Java plans to further

develop teacher CPD in a phased approach. CPD will extend in 2019 from class teachers to subject teachers, in particular for those subjects which are tested in the national examination.

East Java has shown how a commitment to improving *madrasah* quality and the involvement of the wider Islamic education community can collectively advance a key policy priority. TASS looks forward to continuing to support MoRA as it expands the program to more provinces in 2019.



Foto TASS



## MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AWARDS INSPIRATIONAL TEACHERS

At a talk show hosted in Bandung by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, awards were given to five inspirational teachers. The awards were a show of appreciation for the dedication of those *madrasah* teachers who have served their students and community, despite numerous challenges and limitations.

One recipient of this award was Untung from the Miftahul Ulum *Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah* (MI, Islamic elementary school) in Sumenep Regency, East Java. Untung (which means fortunate in Bahasa Indonesia) is a teacher with a disability who has dedicated himself to the teaching profession for over 25 years. For Untung, teaching is a form of community service. In line with the meaning of his name, he said that he has been fortunate to be able to dedicate himself to education in Indonesia. Some of his students have followed in his footsteps and are now *madrasah* teachers.

“Praised be God, my students have followed and even surpassed me. I don’t yet have an undergraduate degree and I am not certified (which entitles teachers to better salaries). However, that has not been my objective. I was afraid if I

pursued that it would lower my sincerity for educating,” he said, which was met with applause from the hundreds of *madrasah* headmasters and teachers attending the talk show.

The Minister of Religious Affairs said that these inspirational teachers are special figures who have an inspiring spirit. “The nation and the people owe them a debt. If we reflect on this, we realize that we are unable to do what they have done,” he said.

Other inspirational teachers who received awards included Ahmad Haris (Alor, NTT), Suraidah (Sebatik, East Kalimantan), Indra Ariwibowo (Semarang, Central Java), and Supena (Lebak, Banten).

Ahmad Haris, a *madrasah* teacher on Bua Island, Alor, NTT, has to travel many kilometres from his house to the Bua Island *madrasah* in Alor. Each day the Ahmad must leave home before sunrise, travel through a mangrove forest, then swim across a mile-wide strait in order to teach.

Suraidah, a school headmaster at the remote Darul Furqan *madrasah* in Sebatik, Nunukan, North Kalimantan,

gave up her entire salary to the *madrasah* where she serves, and continues to provide tuition-free schooling in the *madrasah* she built under a stilt house for the local community. This is also the case for Supena, who struggles daily through kilometres of dangerous muddy roads in a remote area far from his home to serve at a *madrasah*.

Finally, Indra Ariwibowo, manager of a special needs *madrasah* in Semarang, has endured despite the absence of government financing, still managing to outperform other special needs schools in Central Java. As of now, there are no official ‘special needs’ *madrasah* according to the nomenclature of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. As a result, Indra cannot obtain additional financial support to purchase special equipment students need.



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**Teachers are the shapers of civilization, and these award recipients have incredible spirit. They explained that dedication and unconditional sincerity are the source of their inspirational efforts.**

Lukman Hakim Saifudin -  
Minister of Religious Affairs

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA



**Australia's religious education sector offers many parallels with Indonesia's own *madrasah* system. Since the 18th century, the Catholic education system has grown to be the biggest sector after public government schools in Australia. Today, approximately one in five Australian students attend Catholic schools – around the same proportion of students in *madrasah* in Indonesia. Other religious schools are also supported, including Islamic schools.**

Catholic schools have been a significant component of Australian education for more than 175 years, continuing to develop and grow in educational quality and public visibility. There are more than 1,700 Catholic schools around Australia, with more than 750,000 enrolled students, and almost 60,000 teachers. Like the Islamic education sector in Indonesia, the Australian government also attempts to strike a balance between respecting the

independence of the Catholic school sector, while ensuring it meets national requirements for quality and accountability. For example, Catholic schools are required to meet national standards, align with the national curriculum, and meet nationally agreed performance targets.

When it comes to financial support Catholic schools are funded by Federal and State Governments, as well as parent contributions and fees. The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is the primary body that liaises with national government and other key national education bodies on behalf of the Catholic education sector, to influence national education policy making.

In late 2018, the Australian Government announced additional financial support for Catholic and non-government schools between 2020 – 2029, of up to \$3.2 billion AUD. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison claimed this was “to give funding certainty” to Catholic schools and other non-government schools, helping them to continue improving

education quality and their contribution to Australian society.

## **Islamic schooling in Australia**

Although much smaller than the Catholic education sector, Islamic schooling also receives support in Australia. The Muslim community in Australia has a long history with contact between Muslims and indigenous Australians recorded as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries.

Some of the earliest visitors to Australia were Muslims from eastern Indonesia. The Muslim community has built many mosques and Islamic schools in Australia. It has made dynamic contributions to the multi-cultural fabric of Australian society.

The number of Islamic schools in Australia has increased in line with the growth of the Muslim population. According to data from the Islamic Schools Association in Australia, at present there are over thirty Islamic schools in Australia. Australia's first Islamic school was established in 1983.

One state which has seen rather rapid growth of Islamic schools is New South Wales (NSW). As reported by [kompas.com](https://www.kompas.com), the number of Islamic schools in NSW has grown three-fold over the past fifteen years to reach 22 schools, while the Islamic school student population has grown nearly 200 percent to number more than 10,000 students.

The Islamic school system in Australia is open to non-Muslim students and teachers. Not all teachers are Muslim, with around 70 percent Muslim, and 30 percent non-Muslim. According to the Australia Association of Islamic Schools, and similar to the *madrasah* system in Indonesia,

Islamic schools in Australia use national and state curriculum to prepare their students to become active contributors in all aspects of Australian life.

Students study religion from Muslim teachers, while non-Muslim teachers support the teaching of Australian values for national growth and prosperity.

Source: Kompas.com  
"About Islamic Schools in Australia"  
and other sources.

**The system applied in Australia's Islamic schools is aimed at making sure that all educational institutions in Australia can become forums for fostering diversity of culture and faith.**



## STRENGTHENING INDONESIA'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION FROM THE INSIDE OUT

**The Indonesian education sector is dynamic and continues to shift in line with global and external trends. It is critical that the main ministry responsible for education policy and priority setting continually reviews the effectiveness of the organisation to ensure it can respond to the changing environment and delivers upon the nation's aspirations.**

An organisational review is essential for any large and complex organisation, helping leaders to see what targets are on track, to measure performance, and assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of resource allocation. Organizations, including government organisations, must continually adjust their strategies and structures to respond to external trends and demands.

Didik Suhardi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, sees that a process to evaluate organizations is an effort to internalize ideas, knowledge, methods, and skills, as well as to serve as a reference

for improving organizational performance. In 2018, Indonesia's MoEC prepared to conduct their own organisational review process, the results of which had to be submitted to the Ministry of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform by November 2018. The review was timely, intersecting with the development of Indonesia's 2020-2024 Medium Term Development Plan and sector strategic plans for both MoEC and MoRA.

"Evaluation is needed so that high performance can be maintained. To be more objective, we need technical support from external parties such as TASS to conduct an organizational



Sekjen Kemdikbud, Didik Suhardi, Ph.D

Photo TASS

evaluation (of the Ministry of Education and Culture). We hope that TASS will give support to formulate a more focused business process,” said Dr Suhardi in conversation with TASS.

Didik said he hopes that the results of the review conducted by TASS will provide suggestions and recommendations to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

“Perhaps their recommendations could include a future alternative structure for the Ministry of Education and Culture. The results of the organizational review could indicate the current level of effectiveness of the organization in relation to the resources needed to manage education. These results and recommendations will support us to deliver on our hope of being able to increase the effectiveness of our work,” he explained.

The organisational review was conducted through semi-structured interviews and discussions with stakeholders both inside and outside the Ministry of Education and

Culture. The analysis was enriched by reviewing the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Strategic Plan for 2015-2019, the education sector priorities set out in initial drafts of the next Indonesian Medium Term Development Plan, and PISA and national test results and analysis.

Initial review findings were presented to MoEC staff from national and provincial offices in workshops hosted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Bogor and Yogyakarta; on those occasions TASS was also able to gather additional data and receive feedback on the initial findings. A range of key insights into MoEC strategy performance were reported.

These centred around ways of working and organisational behaviours that support achievement of organisational objectives within a decentralised education system. The report noted that effective partnerships with district and provinces become even more important to achieve sector goals in a system in which MoEC no longer has responsibility for delivery of education services but still retains a level of accountability for results.

“The results of the study show that the organisation still faces the challenge of balancing the implementation of routine duties with strategic thought and analysis. Many respondents reported that the Ministry has not yet achieved this balance,” explained David Hodges, the lead TASS consultant in the review team.

TASS suggested three main areas that should be prioritized and followed up by the Ministry of Education and Culture. This includes greater clarity and emphasis on strategic objectives, developing an institutional structure which supports achievement of key priorities, and development of effective strategies for partnership with provinces, districts and municipalities who in Indonesia’s decentralised system, are the main drivers of improvement in the education sector.

It is hoped that the review recommendations will help the Ministry strengthen its structure, processes and systems to be able to deliver on Indonesia’s commitments to a quality education for all.

# TASS SUPPORTS STRENGTHENING OF EDUCATION STANDARDS



**The Ministry of Education and Culture is introducing measures to accelerate student learning outcomes. These were discussed in a coordination meeting with the National School and Madrasah Accreditation Body (BAN S/M), the National Education Standards Board, TASS, INOVASI, and key units within the Ministry of Education and Culture.**

This meeting, facilitated by the TASS program, aimed to discuss and evaluate the learning outcomes indicated in national test (AKSI) findings and other associated data. These trends all indicate stagnation of learning outcomes.

The Ministry of Education and Culture acknowledges that there must be a fundamental change in the classroom learning process. Teacher evaluation must be done by giving precedence to quality and not merely pursuing administrative standards. It was recommended that teachers reflect on how to improve the learning process.

Totok Suprayitno, Head of the Research and Development Body (Balitbang) at the Ministry of Education and Culture, said that a key educational challenge is to align Indonesia's education standards with the policies and practices in the field. In that context, cooperation among parties must be continually encouraged so as to accelerate learning outcomes.

"We need broader support such as that provided by TASS, and hope for support from INOVASI from the aspect of implementing practices in the field, along with ADB for expert staff who can assist in harmonising educational standards with practices in the field. This includes setting specific targets related to learning outcomes in the Strategic Plan (Renstra)," he said.

TASS strategic consultants Bahrul Hayat and Hetty Cisłowski said that the results from PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) show that the teachers are the most influential (school-based factor) when it comes to student learning outcomes in school.

For that reason, there is a need to combine resources and quality improvement efforts so that teachers are well supported when improving their methods and student results. Additional findings from the TASS quality assurance review did indicate that a quality assurance system has been implemented in schools and

involves the Education Office and the LPMP, but has not been fully effective in driving improvements in educational quality at schools.

"The TASS review indicated that data has been systematically collected, but has not been utilized in planning at the level of the schools, Regencies/Cities, or Provinces, and does not yet reflect needs," said TASS Facility Director Joanne Dowling.

TASS recommended shifting the focus for quality assurance from guaranteeing quality to increasing quality, by focusing on the study process. There is a need for a framework for increasing school quality which integrates accreditation and education standards in order to raise quality.

"We have conveyed the results of the review (on educational quality assurance) to the Ministry of Education and Culture, BAN and BSNP, and have conducted a series of discussions with each institution to encourage these further discussions in order to be able to determine steps to align accreditation standards and educational quality assurances," added Joanne.

TASS will facilitate further meetings with the Directorate of Teachers and Educators. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss the government's planning priorities for system standardization and educational quality assurances for 2019.

The Research and Development Body will also coordinate a series of workshops on learning quality and education standards by involving the main units of the Ministry of Education and Culture, BAN SM, BSNP, BAN PAUD, TASS, INOVASI, and other development partners.



## INTEGRATING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NATIONAL PLANNING

**Indonesia has signed and ratified the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 4 is focused on quality education, with the issue of equal and accessible education a top priority in Indonesia's draft medium-term development plan for 2020-2024.**

In the lead up to the drafting of the plan, Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, together with TASS worked together to complete an Education Sector Review. The review, a key step in the plan's drafting, provided evidence and analysis to inform the setting of key directions, strategies and targets for the next five years.

The Minister of National Development Planning (PPN)/Head of Bappenas, Bambang Brodjonegoro, as quoted by [liputan6.com](http://liputan6.com), said that, for Indonesia, the SDGs are not only relevant as a global commitment, but also serve as a guide for the country in progressing towards middle income country status.

"By integrating the global agenda into Indonesia's national development plans, the government will take full ownership and responsibility for the implementation of the SDG agenda. This is the legitimacy and legal basis for the implementation of the SDG agenda in Indonesia into the future," explained Bambang.

### Leave no one behind

The SDG "leave no one behind" pledge reflects the commitments of all signatories to meeting all of the SDGs and achieve sustainable development for all by 2030. The fourth SDG target is focused on quality education with an emphasis on inclusion, equality, and lifelong learning.

The draft medium term development plan recognises that access to education is important, but even more important is ensuring that all children master basic literacy and numeracy skills as the foundation for further studies and skills development.

Hadiat, Director of Education and Religious Affairs at Bappenas, said

that Indonesia has developed an SDGs roadmap which aligns development planning with all 17 of the SDG goals. In achieving SDG targets, a key focus for Indonesia is to the provision of fair and equal access to education for all children in all regions of the country.

TASS is supporting Bappenas and Indonesia's SDGs Secretariat to determine how to calculate achievement against the SDG indicators, in particular indicator 4.1 (the proportion of students meeting minimum competency benchmarks in grades 2/3, the end of primary, and end of lower secondary schooling).

The SDGs provide a sound framework for improving education quality and equity. Indonesia must ensure that students acquire the requisite knowledge and skills to support sustainable development, including education, gender equality, and support for a culture of peace and anti-violence. Inclusion and participation, key to the sustainable development agenda, are essential.