

What works to improve learning quality and student learning outcomes

INOVASI releases pilot endline data from partner provinces NTB, NTT, North Kalimantan and East Java

Jakarta, 25 November 2019 – Education quality improvement and the strengthening of Indonesia's human resources is a key priority for President Joko Widodo's government in the next five years. The national government's focus on improving literacy has created momentum for reading cultures in communities and schools. However, major gaps are still evident. Indonesia lags behind its counterparts in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on basic literacy and is thus behind in national and international benchmarking tests (PISA, 2015¹; PIRLS, 2011²).

Being literate is not just about an ability to read words. Other foundational skills include the ability to also analyse, synthesise, interpret and comprehend reading themes and text. With these abilities, Indonesian children can grow into adults with 'HOTS', or higher order thinking skills – able to conduct strategic reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking. These are core skills for the 21st century.

Simply put, if children do not develop strong basic literacy and numeracy skills in the early grades, they will find it difficult in the workplace later in life. Children who fail to grasp basic literacy skills will lag behind their peers in all areas of learning, with learning inequality widening over time. Teaching quality is also a significant issue for student achievement.

The Innovation for Indonesia's School Children (INOVASI) program, an Australia – Indonesia government partnership, is seeking to understand what does and doesn't work to improve student learning outcomes in 4 partner provinces and 17 districts across Indonesia. Between September 2018 – July 2019, a total of 54 pilots were implemented across INOVASI's four partner provinces: NTB, NTT, North Kalimantan and East Java. These interventions addressed a range of themes, including early grade literacy, school leadership, multi-grade schooling, mother language transition in the classroom, and inclusive education and community engagement.

INOVASI has learnt that with the right pedagogical training and knowledge, student literacy learning outcomes and teaching competencies can improve. INOVASI endline data from pilots that finished in July 2019 in partner provinces West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), East Java and North Kalimantan, showed notable improvements in student learning and teaching.

As pilots now come to an end, evidence from across INOVASI's partner districts paint a picture of learning outcome quality and improvement:

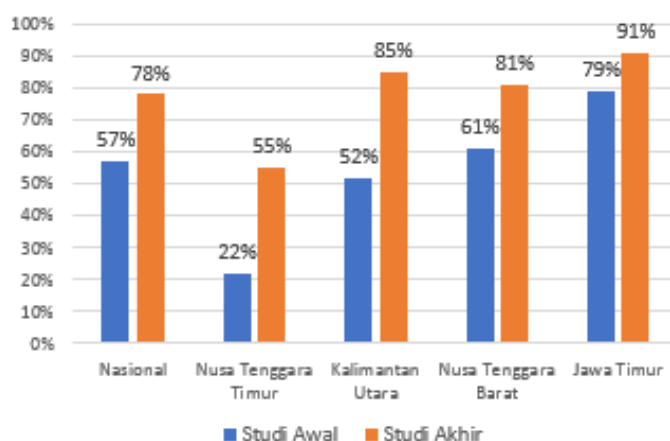
- At the sub-national level, INOVASI's work in 17 partner districts and cities identified three main problems contributing to students' poor performance and weak literacy levels: (1) the lack of a curriculum or methodology for teachers to teach reading in the early grades as it is falsely assumed that all children entering grade one are already able to read; (2) the lack of teaching knowledge and skills in how to teach reading and literacy; and (3) the limited access to appropriate reading material, especially in remote areas but also across the country in general. There is not enough engaging and age-appropriate children's literature available in the country.
- With the right pedagogical training and knowledge, teaching and students' literacy ability improved in kind. This was seen in all INOVASI partner provinces. As a result of the pilot training, teachers applied

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>

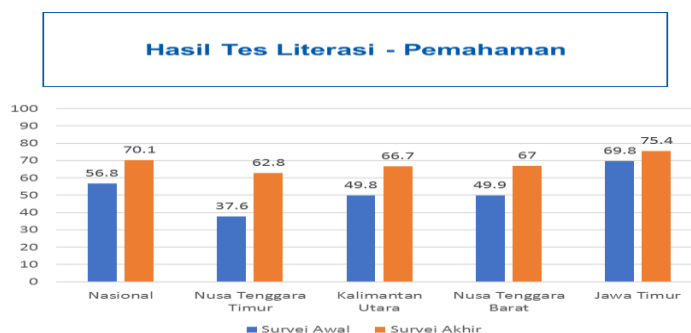
² <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/international-results-pirls.html>

new knowledge and techniques in the classroom to improve early grade literacy. This included the use of 'Big Books' for classroom group reading, and better teaching of phonological awareness so that students can better read and understand words and sentences. Endline data found that key areas of teaching improvement were: (1) the teacher now uses effective learning media to engage students; (2) the teacher uses a more engaging student centered teaching approach; (3) classes now have a reading corner; and (4) the class displays learning media such as teaching aids, posters, maps and other learning resources that increase student exposure to reading and words. Combined, these factors contribute to improved literacy learning outcomes.

- In all four INOVASI partner provinces, there was an increase in the percentage of students who passed the basic literacy test (a score out of 100): 150% increase in NTT (increase of 33 points), 64% increase in North Kalimantan (increase of 33 points), 33% increase in NTB (increase of 20 points), and 15% increase in East Java (increase of 12 points).



There were also improvements in student scores in reading comprehension, which are directly linked to HOTS. Reading comprehension scores increased across all four INOVASI provinces: by 25.3 points in NTT, 16.9 points in North Kalimantan, 17.1 points in NTB, and 5.6 points in East Java.



Reading comprehension skills can still be strengthened for all provinces. Evidently, while basic improvements have been made, future efforts to strengthen education quality should go beyond improving basic literacy. They should strive to give teachers better teaching methodologies and children better access to appropriate books, focusing on comprehension and HOTS.

In Bulungan, where the INOVASI intervention was expanded and supported by other stakeholders including working with private sector, mentoring, book supplies, digital books and village libraries, basic literacy test results show that this collaboration fostered significant increases in learning outcomes. In Bulungan district alone, the percentage of students who passed the basic literacy test increased from 57% to 94%, exceeding the average score of all other INOVASI partner districts and provinces.

INOVASI has submitted several recommendations for education improvement and literacy strengthening at the national and regional levels.

National recommendations include:

- Develop guidebooks regarding the primary school training curriculum (both PGSD, S-1 and PPG), to establish a systematic methodology for teaching reading and supporting literacy in primary schools.
- Increase teacher capacity by better using teacher working groups (KKG) for continuing professional development (for both literacy and numeracy).
- Review early grade textbooks and teachers' guides to ensure that children are taught to read in a systematic way, and that teachers encourage a reading culture through daily literacy activities in the classroom.
- Expand the list of students' reading books to make more reading material accessible to communities, schools and local government by involving the district government in evaluating the need for books and ensuring their availability, in line with the local context

Sub-national recommendations include:

Develop guidebooks regarding the primary school training curriculum (both PGSD, S-1 and PPG), to establish a systematic methodology

- District and city governments could commit to routinely assessing and reporting on early grade children's reading ability to inform parents and district offices on progress.
- District and city governments could also run literacy programs for students in all primary schools and to ensure they run continuously, they could provide an ongoing budget for students in regular primary schools and madrasahs.
- There are a number of excellent non-government agencies producing excellent early-grades reading material and children's literature in Indonesia. This includes traditional and digital books. Local governments can partner with these agencies to provide training and books and help establish good school and community libraries and community reading centres (taman baca masyarakat). Village funds (ADD) can also be used for village libraries and community reading centres.

Happy National Teachers' Day! May teachers continue to advance Indonesia.

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About INOVASI

INOVASI (INOVASI for Indonesian School Children) is an Indonesian and Australian Government education partnership program that aims to find and understand ways to improve student learning outcomes - especially those related to literacy and numeracy skills, both in class and at school. Working with the Ministry of Education and Culture, INOVASI has established partnerships with 17 districts spread across four provinces, including West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, North Kalimantan, and East Java. The program will run from 2016 – 2020 and is managed by Palladium on behalf of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

For more information, please contact the INOVASI Communications Team, or visit our website, Facebook, and Youtube at the following links: www.inovasi.or.id, Facebook [Inovasi untuk Anak Sekolah Indonesia](#), and YouTube [INOVASI Pendidikan](#).

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