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ENGAGING RELIGIOUS GROUPS FOR LOW EMISSION DEVELOPMENT

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KEY MESSAGES

- Religious groups are identified as one of the key stakeholders in supporting the climate action implementation in DKI Jakarta. The six religious groups, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, have a significant number of believers that can be mobilized to accelerate the change to low-carbon lifestyle. According to BPS-Statistics of DKI Jakarta Province (2020), the number of believers of each religion in DKI Jakarta in 2019 are as follow: Islam (9.253.906), Protestantism (949.894) Catholicism (434.401), Hinduism (20.380), Buddhism (398.588), and Confucianism (1.517), representing 99, 99% of the total population in DKI Jakarta.
- Although environmentalism has been incorporated in religious teachings, not many of them relate to the climate change discourse. Moreover, not many religious leaders have integrated the issue of climate change into one of the central themes of their preaching. Through the Ambitious City Promises (ACP) project, DKI Jakarta sees this as an opportunity to engage the religious groups in supporting climate change initiatives in DKI Jakarta.
- The representatives of six major religions were engaged in developing key messages around the obligation of mankind to preserve nature as their home and derive a religious perspective on climate change topics. These key messages will be shared with the religions' congregations and the general public through specific modules on **Religions' Perspectives on Climate Change, Eco-Worship Buildings**, and **Eco-Preaching** advocating for climate action.
- The interfaith coalition can be an effective channel to mobilize religious congregations across Jakarta in accelerating climate action by increasing awareness of climate change issues and influencing behavioral change toward the environment. By engaging the religious leaders, the key messages around low-carbon lifestyle can be delivered to an audience which otherwise would not have been engaged by conventional climate change outreach approaches. Governments should therefore recognize and engage the religious groups as one of the key actors in the climate change initiative.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Indonesia is targeting 29% conditional and 41% unconditional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction per the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) by 2030. Meanwhile DKI Jakarta committed to a 30% GHG emissions reduction by 2030 and with only 10 years left to achieve this goal, DKI Jakarta saw the urgent need to accelerate the efforts to achieve this target and the government recognizes that it can only be achieved if all stakeholders are involved.

In collaboration with ICLEI's Ambitious City Promises project, nine (9) stakeholder groups in Jakarta, such as youth and children, religious groups, and business-

industry, have been identified as key actors through the stakeholder mapping exercise conducted with the city. Among the stakeholders, DKI Jakarta and the ACP project have jointly identified religious groups as key ally to engage a larger public in support of emissions reduction, and have started to reach out to these religious organizations in Jakarta. Six religious groups in Indonesia have a significant number of believers, and religious leaders have the power to engage them through their teachings and preaching related to preserving nature as part of their faith in God. Engaging religious groups will help accelerate on-ground actions for emissions reduction.

Engaging religious groups in environmental movements is not unheard of and was most recently undertaken by *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* – Islam Scholars Assembly of Indonesia in 2015. However, to collect the religious teachings related to climate change and develop educational modules from this perspective is a novel approach.

Through the project's religious modules on addressing climate change, the religious groups are guided to change believers' behavior to lead and advocate for sustainable lifestyles and reduce the carbon emissions in their daily activities. This three-part book series is an "interfaith perspective on how to save the world" consisting of the following modules:

- **Religions' Perspectives on Climate Change** is a collection of essays, one from the perspective of each

religion, on climate change and the relationship between humans and the environment.

- **Eco-Worship Buildings** describe how the worship building represents the harmony of relationships between God, human, and nature, introducing the concept of green building and the latest application for sustainable buildings. Each religious group contributed an article compiled into a guide on the challenges and opportunities of running an eco-friendly worship house.

- **Eco-Preaching** speaks of the teaching from each religion related to climate change and preserving nature, soon published as a pocketbook of eco-preaching with verses on key topics of each religion's choice such as water, air, land and waste to be shared widely with their congregations.



PROBLEM DEFINITION

Although there are climate policies at the national and sub-national government levels, participation of the public in the planning and implementation process of the policy is limited. As a result, a strong discrepancy between the public climate policies and its implementation, especially when citizens' action is needed, can occur.

Environmentalism is not new in religious teachings. Religious organizations around the world have a history of environmentalism on a global stage. On the signing of the Paris Agreement, 270 high-level faith leaders, alongside over 4,000 believers, submitted an Interfaith Climate Change Statement to World Leaders that expressed their "support for the full and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement" (Interfaith Climate Change Statement, 2016).

Working with communities requires a commitment to

engage with them at a deeper level. Community leaders are influential allies in the mission to tackle climate change from the ground up through awareness raising, behavioral change and public pressure. However, the initial discussion with the religious groups revealed that despite this potential, the climate change discourse has not yet included them despite the fact that many holy texts suggest the protection of the earth. Climate change has been discussed through the lens of policy, science, business, economy, but has rarely been seen from the perspective of religion.

At the same time, religious preachers have not consistently integrated climate change as a critical issue for their preaching. The emphasis of their teachings is mostly about the relationships between humans, and humans toward God, not yet between humans and nature. This aspect needs emphasis with the preachers, so they can translate it in their religious community engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

- The interfaith coalition can be an effective way to build bridges and reach diverse communities across Jakarta as the city and religious leaders focus their attention on the issue at hand. These six major religions in Indonesia have similar teachings and perspectives towards nature. Accordingly, nature is the only home for humans and God's other creations, and humans have religious obligations to preserve nature. As religious groups have a significant number of believers, engaging them presents a huge potential to accelerate the action plan of GHG emissions reduction strategies.
- A transparent and round-table approach is specifically crucial to reach a consensus among all organizations and carry the initiative engaging all religious groups. Therefore, representatives from all six religions discussed how to develop the outline and content that will constitute the modules.
- Ownership is imperative in participatory processes; hence the project team remained in the background while the content development was driven by the religious groups' representatives. Each module passed through the review of each organization to ensure that the content stays true to the teachings of each religion.
- Three modules were developed: (1) religious perspectives on climate change, (2) eco-worship buildings, and (3) eco-preaching. Once published, these will be distributed through the religious organizations. In particular, the eco-preaching modules will be used as reference for religious preaching on their regular events, such as Friday Praying for Islam, Sunday Mass/Service for Catholicism and Protestantism, weekly preaching for Confucianism and on ritual events for Buddhism and Hinduism.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increasing the involvement and collaboration of religious groups in the climate change movement will make the strategic action plan reach a bigger audience/public, thus increasing impact and acceptance. To make this initiative more effective, DKI Jakarta Government must consistently acknowledge the religious groups as a staunch ally for emissions reduction and provide structural and institutional support to their climate action initiatives. Engage religious groups in further discussions as part of Forum *Ikhtiar Jakarta* – the offline platform of engagement (integrated with *Kelompok Kerja* – Working Group for Climate Change).
- Engage religious groups for possible support for climate change initiatives through community action religious donations. In general, actively engaging and strengthening its relationships with stakeholders could provide DKI Jakarta additional and diversification of its funding and resource base.
- Maximize the usage of the modules to change behavior and real action towards GHG emissions reduction. DKI Jakarta could explore integrating the **Eco-Preaching** module in the curricula of religious schools. The modules of **Religions' Perspectives on Climate Change** can be used as a reference for political discourse towards environmental policy engaging religious leaders while the **Eco-Worship Building** module provides guidelines for standard worship buildings complementing and reinforcing the green building concept.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious groups are one of the key stakeholders that can contribute to DKI Jakarta achieving its target of 30% GHG emissions reduction in 2030. In acknowledging the power of religion in changing the mindset and thereby the behavior of their congregations to support mitigating and adapting to climate change, DKI Jakarta was able to enlist the commitment of the religious groups to develop three types of modules related to climate change. Each involved religion (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism) actually has many existing teachings on the relationship of humankind and nature but has yet to mainstream climate change in their teachings.

The religious representatives see the modules, and the momentum it has gathered, as an opportunity to re-introduce the teachings about nature to their believers as they become aware of the urgency for climate change action. The modules have been written by each religion's representative aiming to get the original perspectives of religion toward the theme of nature and consequently climate change. These modules are expected to serve as reference and guide for public discussions in the Working Group of Climate Change of DKI Jakarta and among religious believers.



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Authors

Nita Rosita
Happy Tiara Asvita
Selamet Daroyni

Jan-Albrecht Harrs
Jiwon Lee

Layout

Olga Tokareva

The purpose of the policy brief series under the IKI Ambitious City Promises project is to support more informed evidence-based decision-making on the priority areas within the project cities or their respective national governments. It is targeted at the policy-makers and the government officials who are involved in developing and/or executing the climate action plan.

The Ambitious City Promises project supports nine city local governments in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in developing and implementing low emission development strategies. Through the project, local governments in Southeast Asia adapt this model of inclusive, ambitious climate action, mainstreaming low emission development strategies and creating new climate leaders. The project is implemented by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI).