

Budgeting for Health Rights of the Poor in Bandung District

In 2006 the Inisiatif Association made a presentation to the Regional Planning Agency of Bandung Municipality in Indonesia. In its presentation, Inisiatif challenged the municipality to provide free health services by abolishing the fee that users of health services were required to pay. The organization said that government should abolish the fee to avoid contributing to illness or exacerbating poverty. The Planning Agency responded by saying that Inisiatif must prepare a proposal for this reform in an academic policy paper.

In 2007 Inisiatif and the Indonesian Computer Society collaborated to conduct a survey of users of *puskesmas* (community health centers) in 30 subdistricts and two regional hospitals in Bandung. The survey showed that many residents of Bandung district could not afford the health services they needed.

Inisiatif also did a literature review and an analysis of health policy and budget. The researchers looked at which services were available, how much each service was used each year, and what each service cost. They calculated the prevalence of each disease that was meant to be treated by public health services. They also calculated the economic impact of each disease on the patients and their families. The calculations showed that the most vulnerable groups were poor workers in high-risk jobs with low income, elderly persons, unemployed people, and children.

Using budget documents, the researchers calculated how much additional money was needed to compensate government for abolishing fees. They identified different possible sources for the additional money and also investigated inefficiencies in how the municipality was spending its existing budget. Its investigation showed that the municipality could save 37.6 billion rupiah by removing overpriced items, irrelevant spending, duplicate spending, and spending that did not fit into the municipality's programs.

Inisiatif used the information from all these sources to write the academic paper. It submitted the paper to the *bupati* (head of municipality), the Municipal Planning Agency, the health agency, and the elected municipal council in July 2007.

Meanwhile Inisiatif mobilized support from community groups. It collected signatures and photocopies of ID cards from residents of Bandung municipality. It organized a seminar on free health services, bought space in mass media to publicize the issue, distributed small booklets, and displayed advocacy messages on posters and street banners. It also advocated with government officials and the council after mapping the supporters and opponents of the idea of a free health service.

After Inisiatif submitted the academic policy paper, they presented it at a hearing with the municipal council and the health agency. The organization then monitored the policy and budget process in the municipality.

The first victory happened when the health agency included money for a study of free health services in their activity and budget plan for 2008. The next victory was when money was allocated in the municipal budget of 2009 to abolish health service fees in all *puskesmas* in Bandung Municipality. The government officials had opposed abolition of fees, but the council agreed to increase the budget to allow fees to be abolished. The third big victory was the enactment of Local Ordinance number 10 of 2009 on health security in Bandung Municipality.