

## **The Present State and Research Conditions Of Women's/Gender Studies in Indonesia<sup>\*)</sup>**

**Achie Sudiarti Luhulima<sup>\*\*)</sup>**

### **I**

1. The development of women's/gender studies and the establishment of women's study centers grew through two routes. Women's/gender studies grew in the 1970's from academic interests groups, while women's study centers were established in the 1990's with the encouragement of the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women (since 2001 the name is Ministry of State for Women Empowerment) Participation in seminars conducted in country as well as abroad in the early 1970's initiated and exposed several women academics and researchers to the importance of women's issues
2. For the Conference on the Role and Status of Women in Asia in 1974 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the women academics group in cooperation with the Indonesian National Commission on the Status of Women and the Indonesian Family Planning Association conducted a study and presented the results in a paper on "The Role and Status of Indonesian Women"
3. In 1979, the Dean of the School of Social Sciences of the University of Indonesia approved the establishment of the first *Kelompok Studi Wanita* or Women's Studies Group. In 1991 the Unit for Gender Studies and Development was established in the same School. At the Bogor Institute of Agriculture, a pioneer on the study of rural women and household economics in Indonesia was able to involve numerous staff from 16 public universities throughout the country in a study of household time utilization and decision making. From this program 25 master's theses was produced.
4. At a 1990 national meeting with regional government and central government agencies, the Minister for the Role of Women recommended the establishment of Women Studies Centers at institutions of higher education in support of the State Minister for the Role of Women (SMRW) programs in the regions. The Minister appealed to the Ministry of Education and Culture (presently the name is Ministry of National Education), specifically the Directorate General of Higher Education, the Ministry of Religion<sup>1</sup> and the Ministry for Internal Affairs, to support the establishment of at least one Women Studies Center (WSC) per province, preferably at the public university
5. With the strong and active support of the SMRW, and cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the number of WSC's are

---

<sup>\*)</sup> Presented to SCA Joint Project Workshop: "A Comparative Study of the Research Conditions of Women Scientists and the Present State of Women's/Gender Studies in Asian Countries: Towards a Human Centered Sustainable Development", Hanoi, 11 May, 2005

<sup>\*\*)</sup> GEST Group, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Religion is the responsible and umbrella agency for the *IAIN (Institute Agama Islam Negeri - Islamic Religious Higher Education Institute)*, where Women Study Centers (WSC) are also being established

growing rapidly. Academics at the private universities were also very interested to establish WSCs. Presently there are 122 WSCs throughout Indonesia.

6. In November 1990 a Postgraduate Women's/Gender Studies Program was established at the University of Indonesia. Its main role is to conduct women's studies program at a master's level. The Women's Studies Graduate Program of the University of Indonesia is the first of its kind in the country and was established to meet the need for professional people who had acquired a gender perspective to work in the government, private agencies and institutions. Since its establishment to 2003 the program have 116 graduates. Another Women's/Gender Studies Graduate Program was established in 2000 at the Hasanuddinn University at Makassar, South Sulawesi.

## II

7. Between 1987 - 1992, 34 lecturers from various Indonesian universities participated in 4-5 months lecture courses at VENA (*Vrouwen en Autonomie* - Women and Autonomy) Leiden University, Netherlands. The objective of the course was to provide participants with comprehensive information on women and development and a theoretical background to tackle gender-based issues. The course covered the following broad themes: (a) a general introduction to development theories and strategies, (b) a theoretical introduction on the concepts of gender ideology and the sexual division of labor, (c) an overview of studies on women's work and social transformation. The last part of the course consisted of an introduction in gender oriented research, including methodological issues. Sixteen (16) persons have attended a similar program at the University of Indonesia in 1994. In addition the School of Social Sciences of the University of Indonesia program has conducted numerous workshops and seminars attended by 266 participants from WSCs and also NGOs. Recognizing the difficulties in providing solid training in research due to financial and time limitations, these programs have instead to emphasize the educational or informational aspects.
8. The results of the training is that many of the staff of the Centers, who are also on the teaching staff of their respective universities, have introduced new courses or incorporated a women's or gender perspective into their teaching courses. The increasing need for gender awareness training for the wider community has also involved staff of the WSCs.
9. The WSCs are expected to provide the local government with information based on local research findings, culturally sensitive research regarding gender differences, which can provide valuable guidance in directing implementation of regional programs for the enhancement of the role of women in development (the term used in the 1990s - presently the term used is the empowerment of women program)

## III

10. Most members of WSCs are also on the teaching staff of their respective institutions and are involved in education and training. In this position they have great potential to introduce a gender perspective in any of their teaching assignments. Some have the opportunity to introduce specially designed courses or insert a gender perspective in the courses they teach. Other venues include seminars and workshops in which they can

present papers. There are also opportunities for addressing a wider and nonacademic audience in off-campus activities.

11. WSCs are expected to conduct gender-sensitive and interdisciplinary research, and provide research-based inputs to guide or maybe even redirect local public development interventions. One underlying assumption is that due to regional variation in socioeconomic conditions or cultural differences, people in general, and women in particular, are affected differently by similar development interventions. WSCs are also expected to carry out Situation Analysis for the regional government. They should also have the potential to assess the impact of the "empowerment of women" programs in their respective regions. More generally, they could be involved in assessing overall development efforts in their respective regions, focussing on the extent to which women have been mainstreamed and possibly providing advice on how mainstreaming women can be expanded or accelerated in all programs and projects implemented in their respective region.

## IV

### **12. Proposed Joint Comparative Study**

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- Mapping the existence of Women's/Gender Studies and their competence as research centers.
- To what extent Women's/Gender Studies contribute to the formulation of policies and programs for human centered sustainable development.
- What obstacles were encountered in conducting their research
- What measures should be taken to (a) enhance the effectiveness of their research findings for policy formulation and program planning of human centered sustainable development, (b) to enhance their scientific and academic recognition.

#### **Expected Output of the Study**

- Description of the actual situation of Women's/Gender Study Centers
- Description of Women's/Gender Studies contribution to policy formulation and program planning
- Obstacles encountered by Women's/Gender Studies in carrying out their research
- Strategic steps required to enhance (a) the effectiveness of the research findings of the Women 's/Gender Studies, (b) the scientific and academic recognition of women' s/gender studies.