

# Salasika

**INDONESIAN JOURNAL OF GENDER, WOMEN,  
CHILD, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION'S STUDIES**



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# Women's Circle Approach is an alternative path for gender responsive public procurement system in Indonesia

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public procurement is a strategic public-sector function that has been recognized as a vehicle in supporting the government to achieve social goals and sustainable economic development. In line with this, gender inequality can be a significant constraint to economic growth and poverty reduction. Women procurement specialists have experienced inequality access and poor participation in the capacity building program and lack of contribution being leaders in public procurement managerial positions. Most females who attended the training have returned their certificates due to the challenges of being the procurement committee. These indicate female gaps, barriers, and obstacles in working as procurement specialists. The main purpose of this study is to identify the importance of Women's Circle initiative to obtain additional support in increasing women's capacity to provide services better and succeed in the profession; to improve skills and networking of women and access, participate and perform their tasks as the procurement professional. The study reveals that the issue of female procurement specialist is still 'underground' and programs related to female procurement profession remain 'absent'. Gender stereotypes and discrimination indicate the main gaps to promote to the manager position, even though they have a high level of education, smart and also a good commitment to their work. Women are still recognized as the second group and are not allowed to play a leadership role, to some extent. This is due to the burden of domestic responsibilities that eventually catch up with them, making it difficult to remain in that role for an extended period of time. As a consequence, they have lack of self-confident, self-respect, self-esteem and also lack of capacities in communication and leadership skills and no motivation to promote themselves to the higher position. They agreed for the Women's Circle initiative and this forum plays a vital role in supporting female professional capacity, enhancing the bargaining position and, empowering women to negotiate career development. Women's Circle approach is a strategic path and potentially being an Educational and Training-based Forum or Learning-based forum; an agent of Reform-based Forum and as a Networking-based Forum. For a long-term benefit, Women's Circle becomes an agent of change among women procurement specialist that finally led to being champions for Indonesian government procurement in reaching the quality of being more equitable, transparent and accountable. This approach is one of the indicators for increasing the quality of procurement modernization program with a gender perspective.

**KEYWORDS:** *Women's Circle, procurement, gender and women procurement specialist.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is facing many problems in sustainable development, following a deep fiscal crisis in the late 1990s due to mainly the explosion of public debt (World Bank, 2001). The government of Indonesia has moved with some efforts to address the crisis and one of the steps indicated public procurement as a tool to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of public spending. Nowadays, there have been some progress, especially in the improvement of public procurement management as a strategic activity and a resource to improve the quality of government services (Sadikin, 2007, p. 597).

The important role of public procurement is now become more and more recognized and give special attention in developing the concept, regulations as well as institutional building (Kirton, 2013). The Government of Indonesia has officially established the National Public Procurement Agency in 2007 and it has been seen as a strategic public-sector function; a fundamental component that increasingly being recognized as a vehicle to support governments in order to achieve social goals and sustainable economic development; and as one of the efforts in reducing the burden of public debt (UNDP, 2010, p. 5). The National Public Procurement Agency also plays a vital role to assist government to enhance economic growth by achieving cost savings for the public sector for procured goods and services, while maintaining or enhancing the quality or value of those goods and services (MCA-Indonesia Report, 2014). Public cost savings could enhance growth to the

extent that such savings are utilized to procure additional growth-enhancing goods and services. This is a significant effort to modernize its public procurement system (Kirton, 2013).

National Public Procurement Agency has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) –Indonesia and agreed to sign implementing Entity Agreement (IEA) for Procurement Modernization Project in August 2013 in supporting 29 Procurement Service Units for the whole period of Procurement Modernization as a pilot project 2013-2018. Procurement professionalization program has conducted human resources training and has been trained 154 public procurement specialists and only 32 women participants among them at the first phase. This shows that about 20% only women procurement staff who had attended the training. Nevertheless, it was a very first stage of the training program of the project intervention. The above data indicates the gap between men and women participants, whereas women have less access and participated in the training. This means gender inequality still become major concern in public procurement policy (MCA- Indonesia, 2014).

Although National Public Procurement Agency does not explicitly discriminate against women, procurement realm is still men dominated profession. For example, previous professional training reported that most women who attended the training have returned their certificate due to the challenges of being procurement committee. These two issues have indicated women's barriers and

obstacles in working as procurement specialist. In addition, the involvement of women in procurement committee may also influence by policy makers who less sensitive and understanding about gender mainstreaming policy (SGIP, 2014).

Lack of comprehensive study on public procurement professional looking at gender perspective in procurement and limited data are available on issues of female procurement involvement and contribution. The only one, Gender Vendor Survey (2013) conducted on access to procurement, key barrier and trends reveals a number of gaps, barriers and obstacles became entry points to encourage and improve the ability of both male and female procurement professional to equally participate in procurement process. This first study in public procurement also found that procurement realm is dominated by male profession in which women are employed at lower positions, with the similar levels of education. In addition, lack of representation of women among procurement committee bodies may lead to missed opportunities to integrate gender perspectives or women's exclusion from available opportunities (MCA-Indonesia, 2014). These above gaps and barriers justify that women procurement need some supports.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the importance of Women's Circle formation for female procurement specialists to obtain additional support in reducing the existing gaps and barriers and increasing their capacity in order to serve the procurement process better and succeed in the profession. The

long-term objective of women's Circle aiming to improve skills and networking of women procurement specialists to access, participate and perform their tasks as the procurement professional. Therefore, this study was conducted to follow up the initiation of Women's Circle formation in supporting women as a special function and role in procurement services and to find out the appropriate framework suits the needs of women procurement profession.

This study was conducted in 29 Procurement Service Units (PSU) as a pilot project of MCA-Indonesia all over Indonesia. The total sample was sixty four (64) women as initiators who were public procurement employment from these 29 PSUs pilot and have been selected as the respondent of this study. Ten (10) Key informants, 4 men and 6 women, were representation from different profession such as private procurement, women activist, Ministry of Women Empowerment, National Public Procurement Agency, NGO and women leader.

This study applied a qualitative descriptive analysis and the data was collected through; 1) Focus Group Discussion (FGD); 2) In-depth interview; 3) Expert Group Meeting (EGM); and 4) workshops and seminars in order to determine the needs of women procurement specialist in increasing their capacity through Women's Circle approach. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with procurement specialist and carrying out either in Jakarta, neither outside of Jakarta with government and non-government institutions, including

the Indonesia Association of Procurement Professionals based on National Public Procurement Agency's recommendations to collate direct experiences and the needs in designing scope of the Women's Circle program and activities. In-depth interview were conducted in Bali, Bandung and Jakarta with different participants representing Easter Indonesia region, Western Indonesia and Central Indonesia or regional Indonesia. Another data were collected from expert group meeting, seminar and workshop in capturing data from different sources. These bring a description of Women's Circle formation with comprehensive descriptive qualitative.

## **GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY**

Gender equality is a universal goal that is found through some of the world's commitment and in many international instruments. For example, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979; UNTAC, 2004). Laws and regulation require to measures on non-discrimination both international and national and have the same opportunity for equality treatment. These are being recognized as a cornerstone of public procurement. This principle strongly encourages avoiding any discrimination in any part of the world (Coc. he el, 2006). This means that all nationalities shall be treated in the same manner, unless the difference is agreed and objectively

justified. Both direct and indirect discrimination is prohibited, and no national preferences are allowed. This principle applies in public procurement system which contracting authorities must remain non-biased and impartial toward all procurement specialists both men as well as female (Kirton el, 2013).

Internationally, gender inequality and women's lack of empowerment have been recognized as one of the reasons in blocking economic development and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2012). Although the term used is gender equality and women empowerment in practice, these often refer to affording women equal access and participation by seeking to improve their capabilities, since most societies tend to follow a patriarchal tradition. Therefore, the linkage between gender equality, women empowerment and public procurement policy investigates the inclusiveness government procurement policy and program with the effective management of very standard resources. How the issue of gender equality and women empowerment can be integrated internally in order to accelerate sustainable economic out comes in line with the concept of human capital development (World Bank, 2012). Adding a gender dimension to public procurement issue represents a commitment to achieving gender equality where it matters most in policies governing the flow of economic resources (UNCTAD, 2004).

At the same time, gender inequality is also the challenge, if the analysis based on the Indonesia Women's Profile. The picture of women in 2015, availability of the data shows that 4.467.982 thousands

public servants and 47.79 percent are women and 52.21 percent are men. This suggests that there is an equal opportunity for both men and women access to be public services including public procurement, whereas women represent 48 percent of all the staff. However, data also shows that only two percent of all women workforces in the public servant having managerial level comparing with seven percent of the women of the workforce. Women's overall representation in decision-making positions is twenty eight percent, but they are much more numerous at the lower echelons where they comprise twenty five percent of echelon III and IV each. In echelon I and II women only constitute nine percent and eight percent respectively  
<http://www.bkn.go.id>.

The above data indicates that women have less access and participation to be leaders in government bodies. While the number of women and men being public servants are almost equal. However, a gap remains between 'de jure' and 'de facto' implementation of a gender component in public procurement policy, as well as in the success of the efforts to achieve the stated goal of gender equality (Kirton et al, 2013, p. 17). At the same time, the authority on human rights perspective and public procurement law underlines that the use of public procurement to achieve social outcome is widespread, however, in the context of Indonesia its use to promote equality on the basis of ethnicity and gender. While closing gender gaps is a matter of human rights and equity, it is also one of efficiency of public procurement issues (Kirton, 2013).

On the other hand, the Government of Indonesia's National Development Plan (2010-2025) includes gender as one of the three cross-cutting issues to be addressed across all development sectors and other two cross cutting issues are sustainable development and governance (MCA-Indonesia, 2014). Indonesia has a National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in National and Development Planning and Programming based on the Presidential Instruction No 9/2000. The regulation underlines that Gender Mainstreaming direct all government ministries and agencies to adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy (MCC, 2011). This law requires all government agencies at the national and sub-national levels to integrate gender perspectives into planning and budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs, projects and activities of the ministries/non-departmental government, agencies, governors and mayors (Asian Development Bank, 2015). The law states explicitly that gender mainstreaming's strategy is essential part in achieving gender equality and equity and this implies that men and women should have equal opportunities in fulfilling the same position at all level of the civil services (World Bank, 2012).

In the context of public procurement system, there is no comprehensive gender works in public procurement professional and limited data are available on issues of women procurement involvement and contribution. A gender study conducted on access to procurement and key findings reveal a number of gaps, barriers and obstacles may become an entry points to encourage

and improve the ability of both men and women procurement professional to equally participate in procurement process. In addition, lack of representation of women among procurement committee bodies may lead to missed opportunities to integrate gender perspectives or women's exclusion from available opportunities (MCA-Indonesia, 2014). This first gender survey reveals some gaps and barriers to access and participate into procurement services among women procurement specialist. The study also recommends that these gaps and barriers could become an entry point to integrate gender dimension into procurement program and activities. However, this gender survey mostly focused on men and women-owned firm (MCA-Indonesia, 2014).

Despite the lack of data from previous studies focusing on the issues of women procurement involvement and contribution, a number of barriers also discussed during the gender coordinating meeting in West Nusa Tenggara. The FGD discussed issues of women's access and participation in their works, and identified a small number of women who included in procurement committee in Procurement Service Unit. This is not because of lack of understanding of their works, but due to cultural barrier and having less confident to work as part of decision-making team. It was also found approximately 90% of women procurement specialists who participated in professional training and have qualification, they returned their certificate due to lack of motivation being involved as decision maker and hold responsibility as Head of

Procurement Service Unit. The study also claimed that although women have rights to access and to participate to the higher position, unfortunately, the data indicates strong under-representation of women in the profession, especially at the highest echelons, even though some women are down in the 3rd echelon level.

In the context of Public Procurement Policy, a Presidential Decree No. 70/2012 on Government Procurement gives emphasis on the principles of transparency, openness, equity and non-discriminative to all parties and accountability (MCA-Indonesia, 2014). This decree clearly underlines non-discrimination between men and women who deal with public procurement process. However theoretically, public procurement has been introduced as a gender-neutral concept. A number of literatures indicated that gender discourse only comes out in the context of domestic economy perspective including women-owned firm issues. However, there are gender responsive procurement effects in the Public Procurement Policy (PPP) including the social issue of women as public procurement specialist (Sadikin, 2007).

The substantial steps in the public sector procurement legal reform process were; first, Presidential Decree no 18/2000 and this decree's existence was supported by amendments, since 1994. Second, a higher level of the development of law and regulation was enacted in 1999 for several aspects and the main issue was the procurement of civil works and related consulting services. New directives for this Construction Law were also issued in 2000. Furthermore, other laws,

either enacted or in draft, in respect to State Finance, Treasury, Audit, and Small-Scale Business all make reference to, and impact on public procurement (Indonesian Public Procurement, 2007).

Historically, some progress provided a promising success to improve the process of public procurement management reform and steps that have been done before are as follows; Firstly, Consultative Group on Indonesia had a meeting in Tokyo in October 2000, the Government of Indonesia confirmed its commitment to reforms of the public procurement system; Secondly, some initial recommendations provided by World Bank (2001) through a Country Procurement Assessment Report in 200 had been contributed to a dialogue with the Government of Indonesia focusing on the ways to make the public procurement system economic, efficient, transparent and more predictable with those recommendations mentioned. The Government of Indonesia has committed in three main points particularly for; firstly, ensuring the same standards for procurement and financial management are applied at national, provincial and district levels; secondly, establishing a National Public Procurement Office in formulating procurement policy, enhancing and monitoring compliance; and supporting National Public Procurement Office in the formulation of a public procurement law/regulation. The last, National Planning and Development Board was responsible for procurement reform and has established a steering committee to follow up the Consultative Group on Indonesia's commitment in developing a

National Public Procurement Office. This effort was supported by a secretariat and three working groups responsible for legal and policy, institutional, and human resource development (CGI, 2001).

In line with gender responsive public procurement policy, previous survey mostly focused on female-owned firms and limited information about their opportunities to engage in business transactions through procurement bidding. The previous survey underlined that only approximately 5% of women entrepreneurs who successfully won the bid related to Procurement Modernization by the Indonesian government. The survey also found that most often faced discrimination and harassment in bidding with government staff (ADB, 2015). However, very limited studies focused on women procurement specialist as the decision-making team in implementing gender responsive public procurement policy.

At the same time, the purpose of the procurement modernization project is to alleviate poverty. The project must be done effectively and transparently in understanding directly how much influence women officials in the public procurement. Therefore, it can be argued that in the concept of human capital development, public procurement cannot be focused the good sector only, but also in services issues. The result of interview conducted for this study found that although the government of Indonesia has a gender mainstreaming and women empowerment policy and program, but the issue of women procurement specialist is still 'underground'. It can be argued that gender equality and

women empowerment are also integrated into public procurement policy and follow that protocol.

For a long-term benefit, Women's Circle is expected to be sustained as an official independent organization for women public officers, once the step of intervention had been working properly. In the era of Women in Development, several women's organizations managed to provide support to women and but most of them varies greatly; such as non-governmental organization or civil society organization, women's professions (Joseph S, 2014). Indonesia has also recognized two women's organization under government's body. However, the main focus is basically for empowering the wives of male public officers, and some female public officers may become members. Another women's professional organization are Association of Indonesian Women Entrepreneurs and Indonesian Women's Association for Justice and none of these organizations concentrate to women public officer's as an independent organization that support women's capacity development. Therefore, women's Circle will be the only one female government officers' association supporting their career development including the issue of women in leadership.

### **GAPS, BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN IN PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**

The Global Gender Gap Report (2014) reported by the World Economic Forum underlined that women's participation and opportunity in economic sector is the

most significant gender inequality challenge for Indonesia. In the issue of public procurement, respondent who represented Ministry of Women Empowerment claimed that programs related to women procurement are almost absent. The only intervention is focused on the issues of women business activities. For example, in the bidding process, the announcement identified participants of tender are eligible for both women and men entrepreneur and they are encouraged to participate. This simple statement obviously confirms the support for women as well as men without discrimination on the basis of sex in procurement issues. Although this statement still underlines women enterprise only, but this also indicates that women participation in working force is still low including in public procurement setting.

However, Sadikin (2007) reported that;

*In few cases like Ministry of Transportation, it is a good example on women empowerment perspective in public procurement issues. They changed the technical specification on ramp access for 'bus-way' of Trans-Jakarta. At present, there are seven corridor routes to be more slopes, so women, kids and elderly are more comfortable and more secure to use the ramp access. While the design needs more spacious land, women and elderly participation in traveling by Trans-Jakarta has increased (p. 604).*

This is one path or another strategy to execute the bidding transaction and how public procurement professional use gender mindset to see the priority of public

procurement services. On the other hand, the empowerment of public procurement officers for quality of services, especially women officer is another angle that needs to take into account in order to support the gender responsive procurement services.

Despite the lack of studies in Indonesia focus on how women procurement professional contribute to the implementation of public procurement, several assessment shows a number of gaps and barriers in procurement system such as fewer women participate in procurement committee, lack of understanding of their works; they are not ready yet to be decision makers on the head of procurement service unit due to less confident, lack of skill as well as cultural barriers. This preliminary data suggests that there is a strong under-representation of women in their profession. Therefore, gender requirement issue in public procurement is one of the approaches in involving more women in public procurement services.

It is a question both of ensuring that all citizens are offered equal services regardless of gender but also a matter of increasing efficiency and quality of services. The study of Kirton (2013) recommends that there is a need to widen policies beyond the local to the global arena and encourage women to take on more leadership roles within procurement. In addition, there is also a need to increase women networks nationally and internationally and to enhance the capacity of women to take on decision making roles in order to effect any significant change. This suggests that policy makers are unlikely to know the extent to which

women entrepreneurs to successfully with government contracts. At the same time, the policy makers also need to make sure the involvement of women procurement specialist to support the improvement of services.

Therefore, Indonesia public procurement policy, program and activities in line with women empowerment issue cannot just focus on women entrepreneur only. There is a need to consider and to improve the quality of women procurement specialist who provides services. This study found that Women's Circle approach has come for a number of specific reasons and some of which are discussed related to women procurement's gaps such as lack of access, participation and contribution in decision making position, lack of involvement in procurement committee bodies and lack of communication, negotiation, and decisions making skills as well as lack of representation in Human Resource Development training program that lead them have lower level of leadership skills comparing with men procurement profession.

This was not merely because of men do not provide access and promote women as decision makers, but it was due to internal issues of women in some cases. They have lack of self-respect, confidence and self-esteem, lack of capacities in communication, negotiation and decision-making skills. In some cases, they do not want to be included in procurement committee due to the intervention from decision makers who have less sensitive towards women's role and responsibilities. They are also afraid of having a legal problem related to the procurement mechanism because of third party's intervention including the issue of

corruption. Although, in some cases, female can access and participate to be decision making team in their career pathways, the numbers of them are very small.

This study identifies women access and participation in public procurement indicating as a main problem, and they are mostly in lower level position. Ratio of women in managerial position is very low comparing with their participation rate. This is due to several reasons; Respondents from Western Indonesia and more developed region claimed that women have equal access and opportunity as men in leadership position, however women experience more challenge than men, and one of them stated;

*In my office, women play an important role in procurement service; men even see women have good opportunities as potential leaders, especially among smart women, well-educated and have high level commitment and responsibility for their work, therefore I cannot see any cultural discrimination and stereotype in terms of women in leadership, however, women face a challenge in public procurement only because of over loaded (Sri, East Java).*

This suggests that opportunities in promoting women to the top manager is not strongly because of a cultural barrier, and this does not indicate as the main gap for Javanese ethnic and other tribes in Western Indonesia. Internal capacities including lack of confident are the main reasons for promoting women public procurement in the higher position. On the other hand, several places in Eastern Indonesia indicate cultural differences, gender

discrimination and stereotype about women in leadership have been the main barriers and challenges. Women are still recognized as the second class in society and less opportunity to play a leadership role, although policies, regulation and initiatives should make people understand societal priorities and reach a higher level of consensus on women leadership role.

FGD's participant from Eastern Indonesia expressed her experience:

*In my place, it is difficult to promote women as leaders, even though they have high level of education, smart and having good commitment due to strong gender discrimination and stereotype in our society (Ina, West Nusa Tenggara).*

The level of formal education has no longer become a gap between men and women in procurement issues nationally. However, in relation with leadership and decision-making position, most women are placed in a lower position comparing with men. While few women who have higher positions in procurement workplace, the burden of domestic responsibilities such as childcare and other domestic works, eventually catches up with them.

It is claimed that cultural barrier especially the issue of gender discrimination and stereotype make them difficult to remain in that role for an extended period of time. These mostly seem to be cultural differences in some places. While in another places, leadership issue is actually from women's internal motivation. Although they have a high level of formal education, they are reluctant to be promoted due to gender stereotype of women having

double burden. This has been influenced in daily life both in the office and also at home. These are the most challenging gaps and obstacles among women procurement specialist. Issue related to lack of understanding and knowledge on procurement system might occur for those who just appointed to be procurement staff and they do not have any procurement background. This is common for public officers who always mobilize and move from one sector to another sector, therefore, public procurement staff needs to be trained.

The gap can be found in this situation when women have lack of access and participation in professional training. In most cases, women are put in the second row or second priority to be participant in certain professional training. Then, the opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding on their work are limited and many women procurement specialist are far behind due to the fact that they lack of skills and less professional. As a consequence women experience lack of opportunities to be promoted into higher level position. This case has become an obstacles and place women in difficult position to increase their skills and for their career development. Then, women's leadership position ends up with questionable.

Therefore, sustaining policy, regulation and program attention to women empowerment and gender equity require concerted and systematic effort for them to be translated into action. This strategy provides the framework for how Women's Circle promotes women empowerment and gender equity

objectives, and achieving program results.

## **THE FRAMEWORK OF WOMEN'S CIRCLE**

The rationale of Women's Circle formation is equity or 'closing the gaps, barrier and challenges' as an overriding goal provides high level entry point in women empowerment, gender and social equity across procurement. Women's Circle initiative responds to government policies, recognition that disparities undermine progress in achieving Indonesia's gender equity and also concern that the gaps and barrier are widening. This initial study has provided positive steps about Women's Circle formation and the framework of the forum has been formulated based on the expectation of the respondents.

Women's Circle is defined as a forum for ongoing dialogues among women procurement specialist where they can meets regularly, sustained formal and informal gathering and create a conducive place for professionalism to congregate for confidences, self-respect, self-esteem, increasing capacities to reduce the gap in terms of knowledge, experiences and perceptions of government procurement; and enhance bargaining position and empowering women procurement specialist to negotiate career development. In another word, women's circle is 'a place to meet, to have dialogue and networking on a regular basis, either formal or informal way to increase professionalisms, to reach for career development and to stay for leadership position.

The ultimate objectives of the Women's Circle have been formulated into a short-term and a long-term objective with series of interventions in assisting and supporting women procurement specialist to reduce the gaps, barriers and challenges of women access and participation in public procurement services. At the same time, increasing women's capacities, decision making and negotiations skills, self-respect, confidence, self-esteem and career development path as procurement professional for a long-term benefit are the major concern, including changing women's mind set for being minority group. This is related to gender stereotypes as underlined in previous discussion.

Women's Circle is also expected to be a change agent for enhancing gender perspective in procurement system through a gender inclusive and transparent process once women procurement specialist participated in Women Circle. For a long-term

benefit, the forum becomes an agent of change among women procurement specialist that finally led to be champions for Indonesian government procurement in reaching the quality of being more equitable, transparent and accountable.

In summary, Women's Circle framework was developed based on the result of this study, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 underlines that Women's Circle has been initiated as the first layer intervention to minimize gender inequality issue public procurement. This approach is also another path to empower as well as to strengthen the individual capacity among women procurement specialists. Women's Circle plays different vital roles for sustainability of the forum with the following approaches;

A LEARNING-BASED APPROACH; capacity building activities have been

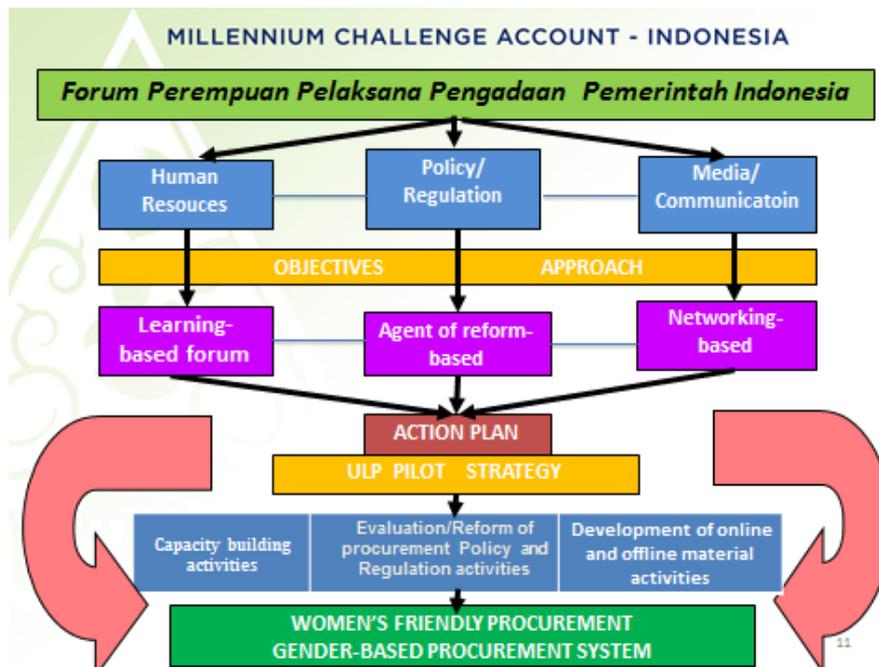


FIGURE 1. An Overview of Indonesia Women Procurement Specialist Forum

categorized two different focuses; the first target is activities focusing on reducing gaps, barriers and challenges, enhancing women's internal capacities (self-respect, confident and self-esteem) and increasing their knowledge and skills: communication, negotiation, decision making and leaders. These activities have to create societal common understanding and awareness that underline importance of women equality and leadership starting from women themselves. The second target is to increase the organizational capacity such as training of trainer (TOT) and developing some module and tools of organization such as education, communication and information tools. This strategy could support sustainability of the forum, enhancing professionalism and also promoting the forum program implementation.

**AN AGENT OF REFORM:** the implementation of bureaucracy-reform' needs to take into account in order to apply procurement reform system including policy, regulation and initiative on gender-based procurement modernization through comparative study. Disseminating information in sharing knowledge both national and international level and addressing the best practice on gender-based procurement reform is also another intervention that leads women to be more knowledgeable.

**AN AGENT OF NETWORKING:** an urgent need to develop some communication tools (training materials, brochure, leaflet and online material through blog and web of forum) in assisting women's networking. In another concept, sharing experience with women

procurement specialist who works in non-government procurement agent is another strategy to gain exchange program, sharing information and mentorship issues and the status of being independent forum for a long-term benefit. This approach also benefits to the membership point of view that more flexible to recruit both government and non-government procurement staff. Practicing the concept of gender-responsive procurement reform through ULP pilot is also another strategy in building a network in all level; national, regional and local level and for a long-term target is reaching an international networking procurement agent, especially related to center for capacity building programs.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study draws several conclusions in the need of Women's Circle approach as an alternative path for reaching gender responsive procurement policy and program. Firstly, the gaps, barriers and challenges experienced by women procurements specialist are mainly due to a) internal capacities of women; b) cultural barrier in the point of cultural discrimination and gender stereotype; c) women are reluctant to join procurement committees and take up decision making positions due to management, cultural and political influence. These are the underlining issues that have limited opportunity of women procurement specialists to access and participate fully and contribute in the procurement services.

Secondly, Women's Circle initiative has been identified as one

of 'the promising solution' since the National Public Procurement Agency needs to ensure that women's equitably benefit from the opportunities arising, and its intervention requires additional efforts as an alternative solution for reaching the goal of gender responsive public procurement system. Building a strong institutional capacity and creating a cadre of and career streams for women procurement practitioners as well as professional project managers through selecting procurement staff from the pool of trained personnel certifies in public procurement. At the same time, it also provides support to integrate gender mainstreaming intervention to reach the consensus of gender responsive procurement system through Women's Circle forum.

Thirdly, Women's Circle's initiative has formalized in achieving both a short-term and a long-term objective of the forum'. It was found three major function of the forum; they are 1) being a learning-based strategy facilitates learning process to change women's perspective, to be more confident, to be more respect and to increase their capacities as well as their competencies, their leadership skills through capacity building activities; 2) being a reform-based agent support women in changing their paradigm to involve as decision makers in procurement services and to achieve gender-based procurement reform and women friendly Procurement Service Unit; and 3) being a networking-based forum encourages women having a network for both government and non-government procurement professional with mentor relationship.

Finally, a political will and commitment to support women who are less skills and access in public procurement services is timely through Women's Circle approach. The Women's Circle engagement inform the future capacity building program for women procurement professionals that might be formally adopted by government ministries and institutions particularly by the Procurement Service Unit.

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