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Literacy in development discourse and practice:
Comparative studies in Indonesia

By

Jenny F. Zhang

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Global Metropolitan Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Laura Sterponi, Chair
Professor You-tien Hsing
Professor P. David Pearson
Professor Sylvia Tiwon

Fall 2020

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Abstract

Literacy in development discourse and practice:
Comparative studies in Indonesia

by

Jenny F. Zhang

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

and the Designated Emphasis in Global Metropolitan Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Laura Sterponi, Chair

This dissertation study investigates the complexities of the relationship between literacy and international development in Indonesia. I focus on the Literacy Boost program from the international non-governmental organization Save the Children, and I explore how the program was differentially implemented and received in two sites: mega-metropolitan Jakarta, and Belu Regency, a largely rural region in Eastern Indonesia. Drawing on thirteen months of ethnographic research conducted between 2016-2017, I identify both intended and unintended outcomes of the Literacy Boost program.

I highlight the tension between the core Literacy Boost program components, standards, and practices, and the program's heterogenous manifestations in the two sites. I find that in each site, Literacy Boost had to confront systemic challenges at schools before and while implementing literacy programming. Whereas in Jakarta, Literacy Boost focused on issues related to school-based management, in Belu, it focused on banning corporal punishment in classrooms. Thus, Literacy Boost produced different short- and long-term impacts across the two sites, none entirely predictable nor coincidental. My analysis discerns how these distinct trajectories of development unfolded and were experienced by an array of Literacy Boost stakeholders. Furthermore, I explore how Literacy Boost programming was shaped by the exigencies of international development practice, including evaluation requirements and time constraints. These shared constraints notwithstanding, I show how in each site Literacy Boost was modulated by the distinct linguistic context, infrastructure and accessibility, and local notions of progress and development. In demonstrating how a literacy intervention has been taken up in situated contexts of teaching and learning, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of how international development processes succeed and falter across geographic, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

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Abbreviations and Indonesian Terms

ABK	Child with special needs (*anak berkebutuhan khusus*)
AUSAID	Australian Aid
BAPPENAS	Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning
CAC	Community Action Cycle
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
CWPM	Correct Words per Minute
DFAT	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAM	Human rights (*hak asasi manusia*)
IDR	Indonesian *Rupiah*
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JKP	Jakarta smart card (*Jakarta Kartu Pintar*)
KKG	Teacher working groups (*kelompok kerja guru*)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEAL	Measurement, Evaluation and Learning
MOEC	Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTT	East Nusa Tenggara Province (*Nusa Tenggara Timur*)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PNS	Civil servant (*pegawai negeri sipil*)
PPVT	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
PRIORITAS	Prioritizing Reform, Innovation, and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administrators, and Students
RPTRA	Child-friendly public spaces (*ruang publik terpadu ramah anak*)
SBM	School-based management
SD	Primary school (*sekolah dasar*)
SMA	Upper secondary school (*sekolah menengah atas*)
SMP	Junior secondary school (*sekolah menengah pertama*)
SUPER	Save-University Partnership for Educational Research
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCPM	Words Correct Per Minute

Ibu	Female honorific, mother, ma'am, Mrs.
Pak	Male honorific, father, sir, Mr.

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Introduction: "Reading makes kids smart and healthy, and God wills it"

At the first Literacy Boost teacher training I attended in Jakarta in September 2016, I observed Pak Asda,[1] the master trainer, hold court in front of 30 teachers, telling jokes and asking questions like a standup comedian: "Who here has read their WhatsApp or Facebook today?" He paused for laughter, and then continued, "How about a book? The Quran? A newspaper? What are the benefits of reading?" This part of the training was meant to sell the teachers on the benefits of reading, though it was a group that likely did not need much convincing. Pak Asda continued in this vein, eventually pulling out his trump card: "In an international survey about literacy, we ranked second to last in a survey of 62 countries, only above… *Botswana*." Laughter ensued at this joke that played on a sense of national self-deprecation, with a racist twinge. Pak Asda ended his lecture-cum-pep-talk with a final flourish: "Reading makes kids smart and healthy, and God wills it."

Pak Asda's three lines—about the benefits of reading, the fear of falling behind nationally, and the real reasons to encourage reading—were recycled in discourse about literacy everywhere: at Literacy Boost trainings, in the national media, in the policy reports and memos from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), and in publications from international non-governmental organizations. Indonesia's low national ranking, in particular, piqued interest whenever it was whipped out. Its potency was related to the sheer dreadfulness of being second-to-last. The actual ranking varied (e.g., "64 out of 65!" or "70 out of 71!"), and the actual subject of the survey was often glossed as "literacy," when it was actually a survey about reading interest and not reading ability. No matter the validity of this survey, which was conducted by Central Connecticut University (Gunawan, 2016), it contributed to the popular discourse about Indonesians being lazy about reading, or worse, illiterate. There was a certain, prevalent anxiety about literacy and education, and more generally, that Indonesians were falling behind.

It was clear that literacy had become a development buzzword in Indonesia. Though often thought of as coterminous and symbiotic, the relationship between literacy and international development is complex and inconsistent. Literacy is typically conceptualized both as an end goal in itself, and also as a stepping-stone to comprehensive international development visions, such as the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All movement, and the "Post-2015 Development Agenda" (Acedo, 2013). Just as with other international development indicators, literacy rates are often used to index other outcomes: greater individual empowerment, higher earnings, better health outcomes, and greater gender parity. With heterogenous aims and scales, and employing different logics about literacy and its effects, domestic and international actors have mobilized to promote literacy in Indonesia. In the pursuit of promoting literacy, domestic actors, from the MOEC all the way down to the grassroots organizations, mingle with international organizations such as USAID, Room to Read, and the focus of this dissertation, Save the Children's Literacy Boost program.

Paradoxically, literacy initiatives have come to dominate development priorities at a moment of record high literacy levels. The precise "literacy rate" of any nation is always approximate, and can be contested from several angles. But by all accounts, Indonesians can read. By one estimate, within 55 years of its founding in 1949, Indonesia's literacy rates skyrocketed from an estimated 5% to 87% (Lowenberg, 2000). More recently, UNESCO estimated the Indonesian adult literacy rate to be 95.22% and youth literacy rate to be 99.67% (UNESCO, 2018). Despite the incredible progress within a short span of time, the sheer number of people who are illiterate in the general population becomes a call for action. As a

[1] Pseudonyms for individuals and schools throughout.

MOEC representative put it, in 2016, of 165.6 million Indonesians between the ages of 15-59, 3.4 million were illiterate (Pratiwi & Utama, 2019). That number sounds like a technical problem to be solved, despite the fact that 3.4 million accounted for only approximately 2% of that population subset.

Given this paradox, literacy necessarily has come to encapsulate a range of meanings and practices in Indonesia. In this dissertation, I analyze the complexities of the relationship between literacy and international development at three levels: 1) at the ideological level, by examining how childhood literacy is conceptualized as an absolutely integral component of international development agendas, 2) at the institutional level, by examining how schools, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations interpret and implement literacy-related policies and curricula, and 3) at the community and individual level, by considering how these interventions shape and in turn are shaped by schoolchildren, their families, and teachers through everyday practices. I do so by comparing the practices, developmental processes, and educational outcomes of the Literacy Boost program in Belu Regency, a rural region bordering East Timor, and in North Jakarta, one of the five cities comprising the mega-metropolitan capital of Indonesia.

Figure 1. *Fieldwork locations*

Note: The two yellow pins indicate fieldwork locations. Source: Google maps.

The historical and geographic conditions of Indonesia make it an empirically and theoretically significant site for this comparative research. Tremendous variations in income distribution, historical interactions with development processes, and levels of education attainment across the archipelago are drawn into focus in the two project sites of Belu and North Jakarta. In Belu, many international organizations have worked with large, linguistically diverse populations of internally displaced people and refugees since the 1999 conflict in East Timor, while in North Jakarta, those who live in urban slums have been the target of many national economic and community development campaigns since the Suharto era (1965-1998).

Though Indonesia is a highly targeted country for development interventions, its linguistic, religious, and economic heterogeneity make the implementation of a standardized set of international development "best practices" particularly challenging. By focusing on the relationship between development and literacy, and the tensions between expert knowledge and social practices, this dissertation highlights the ways in which two geographically and socio-culturally distant communities have convergent and divergent experiences with Literacy Boost. Drawing upon fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Indonesia, I ask: **How was the Literacy Boost program differentially implemented and taken up in North Jakarta and Belu?** In doing so, I also investigate the processes, contestations, and

compromises that were entailed in the program's translation from international best practice to local contexts.

I found that Literacy Boost engendered an array of outcomes that exceeded what is normally monitored, evaluated, and reported by development NGOs (non-governmental organizations). In Belu, an emphasis on banning corporal discipline resulted in long-lasting, though contested, impacts. In North Jakarta, Literacy Boost focused on facilitating community engagement sessions, which indeed resulted in increasing participation and vocal feedback from parents. In both these cases, literacy took a backseat as Literacy Boost attempted to deal with what it considered to be more fundamental problems: classroom punishment and school mismanagement. I argue that the literacy-related impacts of the Literacy Boost program, though notable, were eclipsed by these other outcomes in Belu and North Jakarta. Beyond charting outcomes (both those intended and not), I found that the tools and temporalities used in program measurement—namely the Literacy Boost assessment and program timelines—limited understanding of the program's true impacts. By expanding the temporal frame and using a different set of measurement tools, this dissertation provides the larger story of Literacy Boost as it was implemented and taken up in Jakarta and Belu.

The findings from this study bear implications for Literacy Boost's implementation in Indonesia, both in its current and future program sites. More broadly, this project advances understandings of the relationship between literacy and international development processes, which can contribute to the better design, contextualization, and implementation of literacy initiatives globally.

Background of the study

The interdisciplinary research draws theoretically and methodologically from language and literacy scholarship, anthropology, geography, and city planning disciplines to analyze educational interventions deployed by international development organizations. In what follows, I outline the background of the study through two broad areas: literacy and reading cultures in Indonesia, and Indonesian development and education.

Literacy and reading cultures in Indonesia

Linguistic anthropologists and literacy scholars have shifted their focus from debunking the so-called "Great Divide" between oral and literate cultures (Goody and Watt, 1963), towards nuanced studies of individual and community literacy and language practices. Such socially embedded accounts of literacy ask how written forms are received and subsequently appropriated to fit existing local, social concerns (Besnier, 1991; Dyer, 2008; Kulick and Stroud, 1990). In the Indonesian context, scholars have highlighted the unstable relationships between text and authority, underscoring individuals' subjective and situated experiences of interacting with writing, narratives, and semiotic systems (Rutherford, 2000; Florida, 1995; Rodgers, 1993).

Building upon these accounts that problematize deterministic views of literacy and its cultural meanings, I analyze the sites of tension generated by the Literacy Boost program, by analyzing the dynamic relationships between individuals, communities, and international development actors and organizations. By drawing upon language socialization research and analytic methods (Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2012; García Sánchez, 2014; Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002; Sterponi, 2011), I underscore how Literacy Boost reproduces and disrupts existing modes of knowledge acquisition and group socialization. Through a thorough examination of local educational conditions, literacy practices, and textual traditions, this dissertation centers the local within pervasive, and indeed persuasive, international development discourses.

Language, literacy, and the nation

Several foundational texts of Indonesian studies emphasize the absolutely fundamental relationship between language, literacy, and the nation in Indonesia (Anderson,

1983; Anderson, 1990; Errington, 2000). In his seminal work on nationalism, Imagined Communities, Anderson (1983) makes the case that print-capitalism, in the form of widely-circulated newspapers, facilitated the formation and circulation of a new, national imagination of Indonesia. In this conceptualization, the availability of print, coupled with a rapid increase in literacy skills, was fundamental to the formation of the modern Indonesian nation-state. The model, however, raises the question of who and how many people possessed both the abilities to read and write (in Bahasa Indonesia) and the access to print materials. The systematic exclusion of most Indonesians by the Dutch Colonial state from schooling—both men and women—meant that at the time of Indonesian Independence most Indonesians were functionally illiterate.

The first Indonesian president, Ir. Sukarno, made universal literacy in Bahasa Indonesia—which used a roman script—a major goal (Anderson, 1983). In 1948, Sukarno initiated *Pemberantasan Buta Huruf*, or the "Eradication of Illiteracy" movement, inspired in part by the Cuban mass-literacy campaign in which average citizens were mobilized to educate each other to read and write. The fact that this campaign took place just three years after Indonesian nationalists declared Independence (and before it was recognized by its former Dutch colonizers) and while Indonesia was still embroiled in a war evinced the importance of mass literacy to Sukarno and the new Indonesian state. As Indonesia's Movement for the Promotion of Reading Interest (*Gerakan Pemasyarakatan Minat Baca*) notes, in Sukarno's view, literacy for the people was about more than just the ability to read; in the Leninist view, the people were not political subjects without literacy (Sularso, N.D.). Sukarno often referred to the title of the widely publicized work of Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904) *From Darkness into Light*, or in Indonesian, *Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang* (*Door Duisternis Tot Licht*). Her book (Kartini, 1985), a compilation of her published letters written in Dutch, shocked the colonial world; it described the enlightenment process that came with education and literacy and vociferously advocated for the education of "natives" (Toer, 1962/2003).[2] That literacy discourse in Indonesia is so strongly tied to literacy in Bahasa Indonesia, which uses a roman script, is evidence of the strength of the association between nation, language, and literacy. After all, other writing systems, including *Jawi* and *Pegon,* have been in use for centuries in Java, Sumatra, and across the Malay-speaking world.

The first forms of institutionalized education in Indonesia came in through religious institutions, particularly the traveling Muslim *santri*, who used Arabic script to write Javanese language and taught along their pilgrimage pathways in networks of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and later, Christian and Catholic missionaries, who came to convert with Dutch and Portuguese traders and colonial powers. During Dutch colonial rule, schools were segregated largely by race, such that there were Dutch schools for children of Dutch colonial officials and select children of high-ranking Indonesian officials, schools for children of Chinese descent, and separate, inferior schools for inlanders, or "native" Indonesian children (Anderson, 1990; Mrazek, 2010; Stoler, 1996). In the late colonial period, Indonesian activists and nationalists founded Kartini schools and Taman Siswa independent schools for Indonesian children who were largely excluded from institutionalized schooling. Thus, from the very beginning of the Indonesian state, and indeed

[2] Though Kartini's words, and her story, are the source of national pride (e.g., Kartini Day, or *Ibu Hari Kartini*, is a national holiday), her legacy is much more complicated. Sylvia Tiwon (1996) highlights the gap between what Kartini herself wrote and her "public re-presentation": while Kartini wrote that she desired the freedom to never marry, in the Indonesian translation of her letters (originally written in Dutch) that sentiment was rendered as the desire for freedom from a "forced marriage." Her radical rejection of marriage was thus watered down into a more palatable rejection of forced marriage. And though Kartini is an emblem of women's empowerment through education, in a parallel move, the role of women's organizations—especially the *Gerwani* (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia,* or the Indonesian Women's Movement*)*—in promoting education for the masses has been largely excised from the official history of Indonesian education (Wieringa, 2002).

preceding its founding, education—and by extension, Indonesian literacy—has been inextricably bound to Indonesian nationalist ideals.

The *sumpah pemuda* (Youth Pledge) of 1928 is a particularly strong marker indicating the significance of language ideology to Indonesian nationhood. The pledge vows *satu tanah air, satu nusa, satu bahasa*, or "one motherland, one nation, one language." This one language, significantly, was Bahasa Indonesia. An Indonesian national version of Bahasa Malay, for centuries Bahasa Indonesia had been used as an inter-ethnic language of trade across the archipelago (Adelaar, 2004). Bahasa Indonesia, unlike the Javanese language (which had many more speakers of it as a mother tongue), had a democratic feel. It was a forward-looking language, without ethnic affiliation; though many used it as a lingua franca, few claimed it as a mother tongue. It was, as Anderson (1983) wrote, an "essentially political language," without the religious and aesthetic affiliations of the Javanese language. Tan Malaka (1897-1949), an Indonesian nationalist and Sukarno contemporary, wrote that this new language would be capable of expressing scientific rationality, which in Indonesia was previously only possible using Dutch, English, or other Western languages (Malaka, 1943/1999). This revolutionary optimism in Bahasa Indonesia as a tool to unite the nation has had long-lasting reverberations for Indonesian schooling, to the present day.

Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, where Belu is located, is home to approximately 70 distinct languages, while there are an estimated 726 languages spoken across Indonesia (Grimes, et al., 1997; Catalogue of Endangered Languages, 2019). During Suharto's 32 year-long New Order regime, Indonesian language was linked with modernity and national development (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Errington, 2000; Maier 1993), while minority languages were outright banned in official settings, including in schools. Schoolchildren in eastern Indonesia who use their local languages were not only shamed, but at times also faced physical punishment (Arka, 2013). The legacies of such restrictive language policies persist, even as changing guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Culture increasingly encouraged the use of local languages as mediums of instruction in the early primary grades, with a full transition into Indonesian-language instruction by the fourth grade. While stopping short of punishing students who speak in local languages at school, many teachers today nonetheless discourage local language use at school and reinforce the widely-held notion that Indonesian is the proper language for learning and in official settings (Goebel, 2018; Tamtomo, 2018; Zentz, 2014). State policy was one (albeit outsized) factor in the widespread language shifts observed across Indonesia, from local languages to the national language. Bahasa Indonesia has often been viewed as necessary for academic and career advancement; it is one of the three subjects on the national high school examination, itself a key step before enrolling in tertiary education. Bahasa Indonesia, as the language of the state, is also a prerequisite for employment in many sectors, including the civil service, which has been a significant driver in the making of the Indonesian middle class especially in peripheral regions like Belu. Thus, even as local languages are considered central components of identity for many ethnolinguistic groups, the combined forces of historically-stringent language policies at schools and the pull of socioeconomic advancement has led to the increasing dominance of Bahasa Indonesia—and the concomitant local language loss—across the archipelago.

Thus, in Belu and other linguistically diverse regions of Indonesia, Literacy Boost and other education interventions had to consider how to "boost" literacy rates in Indonesian, when many children entering primary school did not even speak it. Helena, a national education advisor for Save the Children, told me about their attempts to publish storybooks in local languages for students in Belu. The project was meticulously organized, employing local writers and artists to produce leveled storybooks and experts in the local languages as consultants. Even so, the project failed. Helena explained, "When we piloted the books in

several villages, people said, 'This isn't my language! I can't read this story'" (personal communication, September 14, 2016); the variation within languages, particularly those without a strong print tradition and standard orthography, was often too great for the storybooks to be widely used.

Literacy and "awareness"

Through the success of mass literacy campaigns and as Indonesia neared universal primary education enrollment, Indonesian literacy levels rose dramatically in the twentieth century. But moving "from darkness into light" was, and continues to be, marked by contestation over the knowledge and narratives that should be accessed through reading. There is a persistent tension between literacy as mass enlightenment and a tool for national development, and imperatives (often political) to sequester and control knowledge.

In his study of the culturally and politically significant Javanese *wayang* (shadow puppet) tradition, Anderson (1990) notes that the most powerful weapon is the *serat kalimasada*—a letter, rather than an arrow or a sword. The contents of the letter are kept secret; in the *wayang* idiom, power resides not in the dissemination of knowledge, but in the guarding of that secret knowledge. The *serat kalimasada* is a powerful metaphor for the complex and sometimes contradictory notions regarding knowledge and enlightenment that complicate Kartini's call to move "from darkness into light."

In writing about the forms of textual consumption of the Quran in Tidore, in the Moluccas in Eastern Indonesia, Baker (1993) also shows how reading—in the broad sense—encompasses both the possibility for enlightenment and contestation over knowledge. He argues that for many Indonesians, "light" must be contextualized not against the "darkness" of illiteracy, but against the "dark" knowledges—indigenous knowledges that are guarded as secrets by shamans, and which cannot be shared widely given their danger. In Baker's study, participants of a Quranic reading group viewed the Quran, a text that is ideally transmitted orally through recitation (Messick, 1993), as the light, received from and disseminated widely by foreign sources in the foreign language of Arabic, published for all to hear and share. Both Anderson (1990) and Baker (1993) point to the distinction between knowledge that can be widely shared, and knowledge that must be sequestered.

Booking learning within the idiom of light, or knowledge that is made explicit, was also thusly depicted by my interlocutors. From them, I learned that in many minority languages of Belu (and across eastern Indonesia), the only written artefacts were Bibles, orthographized and translated by missionary-linguists in languages like Bahasa Bunak and Bahasa Kemak. Text, literacy, and enlightenment are not the sole province of secular, school-based learning in Indonesia, then; rather, for many, they are closely bound to religious practice and ideals.

The Bahasa Indonesia word *kesadaran* can be variously translated as "awareness," "consciousness," and "realization." Like reaching religious enlightenment, becoming conscious is a transcendental experience that is not necessarily equivalent to literacy practice. During the course of my research, I was struck by how often literacy was tied to a sense of gaining "awareness." Whenever I was in Kupang to observe at teacher training sessions or in transit to Belu, I met up with members of a grassroots literacy organization that delivered books to children in remote languages, who had limited access to print material. One of these activists, Jack, described how formal education in Belu was just that—a formality, saying, "it is about getting certificates, getting promoted year after year even if students have not yet mastered the skills necessary to advance" (personal communication, August 10, 2017). It was in this context that grassroots organizations aimed to directly reach children, giving them books "so that they become more aware."

The question of becoming "aware" is important; for both its advocates and critics, *kesadaran* had a critical edge to it. Conversations with grassroots activists like Jack, and with

many Literacy Boost staffers as well, frequently touched on literacy as means to reach awareness. Though they did not cite Paolo Freire (Freire, 1970, Freire and Macedo, 1987) directly, the idea that literacy could inspire not just awareness of facts and figures, but also a critical consciousness about society, history, and politics (*conscientização* in Freirean terms) hovered at the edge of these conversations.[3] Yet at the same time as large-scale initiatives to promote literacy were launched, there were concomitant movements to shut down other literacy activities. As the anthropologists Abdulgani and Badila note, across Indonesia over the past 20 years, radical conservative groups have attacked actors and organizations promoting literacy, under the banner of rooting out Marxism and Communism (Abdulgani & Badila, 2019). They have stormed public readings and organized boycotts of publishers known to publish leftist works, all in the name of rooting out Marxism and communism. The 2006 boycott of Ultimus Books was the first in the Reformation Era, a time of supposedly more free-flow information and open-mindedness (Abdulgani & Badila, 2019).

In recent years, several youth-driven efforts to promote reading have also been the subject of critique and at times attack by conservative, military, and security forces. To these critics and attackers, literacy activities were dangerous and literacy actors (e.g., grassroots activists, publishers, and bookstores) were actively undermining the Indonesian state and its security apparatus. In Prowolinggo, Central Java, the grassroots group Vespa Literacy's public reading event, in which they spread books out on tarps in the town square, was subject to a crackdown by security forces. The security forces broke up the event and confiscated books, citing pro-PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, or Indonesian Community Party) leanings; allegedly, one of the books on offer was by D.N. Aidit, a PKI leader ("Police, military condemned", 2019). In the West Java city of Bandung, the grassroots Street Library was violently disbanded by a military unit, with its general accusing the literacy activists of being "a biker gang posing as bibliophiles" (Dipa, 2016). A gang of right-wing vigilantes raided a Gramedia bookstore in Makassar, supposedly to root out Communist books in August 2019 (Hajramurni, 2019). Similar events in Bandung, Malang, Yogyakarta, and other cities across Java have been violently disbanded.

Such raids have been widely condemned. Yet from these examples, it is evident that literacy and its promotion are not strictly in, nor depicted as within, the realm of technical skill-building. Rather, they also contain political valences: reading is about gaining knowledge, accessing narratives that are often guarded. In the case of Bandung's Street Library, literacy and democracy became intertwined concepts: literacy promotion *was* democratic practice. Especially significant in an oral-dominant schooling culture, reading allows one to access information about sensitive periods of Indonesian history (e.g., 1965 and 1998), which would otherwise remain highly guarded, and indeed, inaccessible to most students and adults.

On a more prosaic level, reading was at times perceived of as antisocial behavior, even within groups working to promote literacy. One night in 2016, while hanging out with a group of literacy grassroots activists in Kupang, the capital city of Nusa Tenggara Timur province, I observed Marco as he attempted to read a newspaper while the others teased him, "Why so serious? What are you reading? What's so important that you have to ignore all of us?" After some time studiously avoiding them, the finally responded, "For a group of people who talk so much about the importance of reading, it's awfully hard to do any reading!" Likewise, in the iconic romantic comedy film *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (What's up with Cinta/Love?) (Soedjarwo, 2002), the male protagonist's loner status is depicted in shorthand when we see him reading alone in the school library during the lunch hour. In many homes

[3] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (*Freire, 1970) and Freirean ideas about critical consciousness circulated among Indonesian activists during the New Order era, and indeed, were formative concepts as they worked to promote education for the people and non-elitist education (Rahardjo, 2014).

that I visited, children were exhorted to read and study, yet with little space to be shared among many people many children could hardly do so.[4] Reading and study habits could also be difficult to justify for poor families; reading at night required light, which in turn requires money to pay for electricity. Thus, when it came to literacy, a contradictory set of perceptions frequently came to the surface. Even as reading was constantly hailed as an important activity for students, reading alone was often derided as "resting", not doing much, or evidence of antisocial tendencies.

Beyond encountering negative social perceptions, there were other barriers to incorporating reading in daily life, related to the materiality, scarcity, and expensiveness of books. Though there were libraries in North Jakarta, no parent I spoke to at the primary school SD Sarjana had ever visited, before attending a Literacy Boost event at one library. Upon my first visit to Atapupu, Belu, I was pleasantly surprised to see a town library steps from my host family's home. I asked around, including with the children I spent much of my time with, whether they had ever used the library. The answer was uniformly "no." I later discovered one possible reason when I visited the library myself, which was attached to the village office. As a "special guest," I was doted upon by the village office staffers, and upon request, allowed into the library. The library was usually padlocked, presenting a strong barrier to visits from the general public. I was further surprised to see that many of the books on the shelf were still wrapped in plastic shrink-wrap. This library represented many of the challenges surrounding literacy promotion work in Indonesia. When I asked why the library was locked and the books still in plastic, the village office staff member told me that books were easily destroyed by children and teenagers, and also easily disintegrated by the elements. Thus, though building a library and stocking it was a village priority, access was limited. Reading was aspirational and also discouraged.

It was into this multilingual literacy climate and history that Save the Children intervened with its Literacy Boost program. Literacy in Indonesia was attached to an array of meanings, and to say that literacy in Indonesia meant any particular thing—intellectualism, leftism, piety, social isolation—would leave out other, equally prevalent meanings. The official Literacy Boost language frames literacy as apolitical, a technical achievement, even as it acknowledges the importance of community and family settings in promoting childhood ability and interest in reading. Amidst competing attitudes about reading, Save the Children cultivated particular attitudes, practices, and policies surrounding childhood reading and education. This dissertation analyzes how the intervention both synergized with and contradicted these situated literacy practices.

Indonesian development and education

Development in Indonesia was and remains a major practical industry and concept, though it has undergone considerable evolution in the past half century (Heryanto, 1988). Robertson-Snape writes (1999, p. 598) of development as an idea and practice:

> If there is a conception of an objective public interest in Indonesia, it has grown up around the concept of economic development. National development, or *pembangunan* as it is called in Indonesia, was the rallying cry of the Suharto government and the public justification for his strong personal leadership.

Development was the crucible for national action and personal sacrifice. Education played a central role in Suharto's development vision. Errington (2000) notes that building a huge

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[4] One literacy advocate I met, Ibu Lara, worked to promote a "TV-free hour" in a community in Yogyakarta, so that children could focus on their homework each night and seek help from their caregivers (personal communication, January 10, 2017), revealing the difficulty of finding time to read or study alone in many family settings as well.

network of public schools was Suharto's first policy move, recognizing that the "monopoly of legitimate education more central than the monopoly of violence." Indeed, alongside strong gains in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), bolstered by gains in industries like light manufacturing (Papanek, 1980), primary education became widely accessible for the first time in across the Indonesian archipelago. Widely lauded as an emerging economy, a "Southeast Asian Tiger" alongside Malaysia and Thailand, Indonesia looked to be on a steady growth trajectory. However, wealth accrued to a small group of businesspeople, chiefly Suharto's family members and associates (Searle, 2000). In 1998, the cards came crashing down, resulting in widespread poverty as prices for everyday goods skyrocketed and the Indonesian *Rupiah* fell rapidly in value against the US dollar (Kristof and Wyatt, 1999).

The 1998 economic crisis precipitated large-scale changes in Indonesian governance. After mass protests, Suharto stepped down and with the economy in free-fall, international agencies stepped in. Development, a formerly strongly nationalist project, became one that directed by international agencies. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, notably, pushed a raft of policy, finance, and governance measures in their restructuring of the Indonesian economy. Democratization, decentralization, and neoliberalism became part of common vocabulary as Indonesians grappled with the seismic political and social shifts in the Reformation Era. As I demonstrate in Chapter 2 (Speaking Up), these shifts made enduring impacts on schooling in Indonesia. New methods of measuring outcomes, apportioning resources, evaluating success, and importantly, doing so in transparent ways, were among the impacts on Indonesian education.

The World Bank's Social Safety Net Program (The World Bank, 2012) was a significant instance of an international agency's involvement in Indonesian education. Among its programs to stabilize the Indonesian economy and ensure the basic needs of its poorest citizens, it aimed to preserve access to critical social services, notably in the areas of health and education. In distributing aid to poor households in the form of monthly cash grants (i.e. school scholarships), the Social Safety Net firmly linked educational access and completion with national economic development (The World Bank, 2012). Though noble in design, it faced a basic problem: resources were allocated through layered levels of elites (e.g. village heads and school committees), who made the ultimate determination of who should get aid, in what form, and how much. Several issues arose. First, local elites felt pressure to be fair in their distribution of aid in order to not violate community norms of solidarity. Second, and perhaps related to the first point, there was significant leakage of aid to non-poor households.

That a program aimed to improve livelihoods would produce unexpected and adverse outcomes in local settings is no longer a surprise (see for example, Ferguson's study of the World Bank's interventions in Lesotho, 1994). In the Indonesian context, anthropologists (Li, 2007; Tsing, 2004; Welker, 2014) have traced the knotty relationships between communities and international actors, demonstrating the ways in which universal standards and best practices mediate between the global and the local levels to produce unpredictable outcomes. In Chapter 2, I elaborate how these patterns of governance and financial mismanagement have endured, shaping schooling experiences in Jakarta today, and how Save the Children's Literacy Boost has attempted to address them.

The World Bank was one among an increasingly diverse mix of actors in Indonesia's education landscape since the Reformation era. Like in other developing countries, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) exerted significant influence on Indonesian policymaking. The MDG Goal 2 is to achieve universal primary education, and accordingly, Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional of Indonesia*) has issued annual reports on progress on this and other goals (see, for example, BAPPENAS, 2010), highlighting the

Government of Indonesia's all-out efforts to improve access to schooling. What critics note, however, is that school quality is often a secondary concern (personal communication, Jack, August 10, 2017; personal communication, USAID official, August 16, 2017).[5]

Decentralization took on outsize importance in Indonesian education since the mid-1990s. The education scholar Christopher Bjork (2003, 2005) examines decentralization measures as they affected the balance of powers between the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) and teachers on the ground. From the curricular aspect, beginning in 1994 decentralization meant that up to 20% of the curriculum could be determined locally, in accordance to local needs and socioeconomic concerns. In Bjork's study in Malang, East Java, the 20% *mulok* (or *muatan lokal,* i.e., local curriculum) consisted of apple farming and animal husbandry; these were the vocations that students could expect to enter at the end of their schooling careers. Conceived of as a way to boost enrollment (parents were expected to be supportive of education that generated future job prospects), decentralizing curricular control also entailed a fiscal logic. Though schools were expected to create curricular modules comprising 20% of the total curriculum, the MOEC would not be responsible for funding these units, despite the fact that, in most cases, local curricular units consisting of more hands-on training would cost much more money than traditional curricular subjects (Bjork, 2005). Following Bjork's method of tracing the arc of a development logic through its policy manifestation and on-the-ground experiences, I show in Chapter 2 how decentralization and local participation—key concepts in international development of education—were operationalized and experienced by stakeholders at focal schools in Jakarta.

Teachers have been conceived of as a change-agent by both domestic and international education reformers. For example, USAID's PRIORITAS[6] project pinpointed teachers as levers to effect systemic change in an ailing educational system. Yet, as the influential Indonesian educational activist Darmaningtyas (2015a) notes, teachers are both educators *and* MOEC civil servants, teachers are tasked with transmitting central directives. When education reformers task teachers with transforming curricular design, pedagogy, and classroom culture, they ignore the primary, institutional role of the teacher as a bureaucrat within a deeply entrenched hierarchical ordering. Further complicating the possibility for teachers to act as a united front in improving the quality of Indonesian education is the fact that they are stratified according to their civil servant status, which accords differentiated pay, benefits, and teaching loads (Darmaningtyas, 2015b).

The stratification between PNS and non-PNS teachers was indeed significant in the present study, which I explore in detail in Chapter 2. It was also something I observed during preliminary fieldwork in 2015 in Belu, Indonesia, where teachers without PNS certification were ineligible for teacher training and other professional development opportunities, and were compensated at drastically lower rates than their PNS counterparts. When programs like Literacy Boost target teachers, through additional training in pedagogy and other professional development, they also face the issues arising from civil servant stratification.

These studies focus our attention on policies and institutions that shape Indonesian education, and their effects at particular historical moments. For example, Bjork (2005) points out that decentralization in the 1990s was meant to build on teachers' purported desires for increased individual autonomy, but failed in large part because those teachers and administrators had been trained during the New Order, when individual autonomy was severely constrained. My research shows how institutions like the MOEC and Save the

[5] E.g. the Government of Indonesia's focus on building one-room school houses in disadvantaged regions (*daerah tertinggal*) and on fixing the physical structures of existing schools.
[6] PRIORITAS, short for Prioritizing Reform, Innovation, and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administrators, and Students, ran from 2012-2017 and focused on improving basic education through a number of measures, including capacity building for education officials, teachers, and teacher training institutes.

Children, and policies like the 2005 Teacher Law and Jakarta Kartu Pintar (JKP), condition experiences at focal schools.

In this dissertation, I examine the institutions, people, ideas, and policies that are shared and travel across the diverse settings of the Literacy Boost intervention. This research takes seriously the programmatic and evaluative practices and ideologies of development professionals. Formulations of "calculative practices" (Miller, 2001), expert knowledge (Mitchell, 2002), and "rendering technical" (Li, 2007)—all techniques to translate abstract, complex social problems into concrete, actionable international development plans—are critical to understanding how Literacy Boost conceptualizes and operationalizes literacy. I also draw inspiration from scholars who have questioned the ways that assessments, benchmarks, and quantitative measures imply a universal literacy that is objective, scientific, and neutral across cultural and linguistic contexts, often finding variability, inconsistency, and even internal contradiction in official definitions and measures of literacy (Bartlett, 2008; Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Dyer, 2013; Robinson-Pant, 2008; Hamilton, Maddox, and Addey, 2015; Street, 1995).

In this study, I extend this line of questioning by asking how development and literacy are co-constituted in Save the Children's assumptions and vision, and by examining the tensions that arise in such conceptualizations. At the same time, this project expands the analytic frame to include discursive representations of literacy and development by non-development professionals, including the subjects of the intervention: students, parents, teachers, and school administrators in Belu and North Jakarta. The dissertation thereby extends the scope of the research object beyond the top-down production of literacy knowledge and practice, by including the ways in which other social actors, produce knowledge and practices about both literacy and economic development. In doing so, I also illuminate how literacy discourses may be better aligned, between what is planned in literacy development interventions and what is desired by constituent communities.

An introduction to Literacy Boost

In July 2017, I spent some time watching Opi as he completed the in-class assignment set out by his first-grade teacher, Ibu Rita. It was early in the new school year and the task of the day was to learn how to count, as well as how amounts were represented in number form. Opi was new to all of this; he, alongside about half of his classmates at SD Bose in Belu, had never attended preschool nor any other form of institutionalized early learning. Though Opi may have played around with pens before, he had experienced limited exposure to writing, reading, and print text in his home and community environments.

Following an exercise in the textbook, Ibu Rita asked the students to connect the number of items with the corresponding Arabic numeral. The textbook example appeared straightforward, as the left-most photo in the triptych below shows. Opi and his classmate did not have individual workbooks, however, in which he could draw the lines between the corresponding items. Instead, Ibu Rita had reproduced the exercise on the board, drawing balls as the objects and writing 1-5 in random order to the right. After a full hour, Opi produced his work, which did indeed include all the elements that Ibu Rita had drawn on the board. But Opi had spent much of his time carefully copying the balls, making sure that the lines inside of the balls were in the right place. For a six-year-old, his attention to detail was remarkable. Yet the lesson's objective had clearly not been reached in Opi's case. Though he had written the Arabic numerals and connected them to the balls, like Ibu Rita, it was evident he not only misapprehended the instructions, but also the basic early numeracy logic in the lesson.

Figure 2. *Opi hard at work*

(Left) The textbook exercise; (Middle) Opi hard at work; (Right) Opi's handiwork. Source: author.

In the second-grade classroom at the same school, a similar situation played out in Ibu Mira's class. She copied a sentence from the workbook onto the board, and the students spent the next hour copying that sentence into their notebooks. Several students laboriously wrote down the text line by line, but it was clear they had not yet memorized the alphabet, either orally or orthographically. For these students, it was as if the task was to copy a complex drawing, and they would be assessed on based on their ability to copy these shapes. It was a test of their hand-eye coordination, of their abilities to achieve verisimilitude, more than a measure of their ability to read or write. While some of their classmates may have recognized some or even all the letters, many students in the class struggled with identifying individual letter sounds and blending sounds into words.

Figure 3. *Students copying a sentence*

(Left) Students copying the sentence; (Right) One student's handiwork. Source: author.

Like in Ibu Rita's class, Ibu Mira's second-grade students did not have individual textbooks. Those textbooks contained a multitude of exercises aimed at bolstering alphabetic knowledge.

These scenes unfolded at SD Bose, a primary school in Belu, Indonesia, which would

seem like an idea site for an educational intervention, increased school funding, and teacher training. However, SD Bose had already participated in the Literacy Boost program for the previous four years. It had ended just eight months prior to my classroom observations. Ibu Rita and Ibu Mira had each attended multiple Literacy Boost teacher training workshops. There were neat stacks of untouched student textbooks on a classroom bookshelf. The Indonesian Constitution mandates that 20% of the national budget should be spent on education. While the percentage of actual education spending is much lower, SD Bose was not a school that suffered from massive funding shortfalls. In fact, in 2017, the school had a new library, which was a luxury in comparison to many threadbare schools in the area.

Save the Children, a child-protection organization founded in 1919 in Great Britain, has operated in Indonesia since 1976. As three senior Save the Children Indonesia staffers note, "Save the Children is the largest independent nonprofit, child-based movement in the world. Our 29 member organizations from northern and southern nations work in more than 120 countries to improve children's lives and protect their rights" (Lundine et al., 2013). Notably, in this statement Save the Children is framed as a movement that happens to be a nonprofit, rather than a nonprofit that focuses on children. During the period of my fieldwork, from 2016-2017, Save the Children in Indonesia transitioned from being part of Save the Children International (i.e., a recipient country) to establishing country membership.

At the time of my fieldwork, its Literacy Boost program had been or was in the process of being implemented in eight regions in Indonesia, and in 23 countries globally. In Indonesia, Belu was the first Literacy Boost site, and by the time my fieldwork ended in August 2017, the Jakarta site was in the process of shutting down its operations. At the same time, Literacy Boost was scaling up in Sumba, Lombok, Sumbawa, and Kupang. Literacy Boost was influential, based on best practices and literacy research, and well-regarded within the international development community. What effect did Literacy Boost have, then, on Ibu Rita's and Ibu Mira's classrooms?

The Literacy Boost program varied dramatically in its reach, practices, and consequences across its sites, and even within them at individual schools. However, the program was always based upon three branches of intervention: literacy assessments, parent and community engagement, and teacher training.

Literacy assessment

The Literacy Boost assessment was a one-on-one oral literacy assessment that was used to establish baseline, midline, and endline literacy levels at participating schools, as well as at a number of control schools. It was an assessment of five component literacy skills: alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. In addition, students were asked a range of questions about their home lives and literacy practices. The test was administered to at least 20 students at each school. I examine the Literacy Boost assessment in detail in Chapter 1. In it, I discuss issues related to the language of the assessment, its format, and its reliability.

Teacher training

Teacher training was a central activity in the Literacy Boost program in both North Jakarta and Belu. Literacy Boost's teacher trainings were set up in a cascade model. The first step was to train "master trainers" such as Pak Asda, who I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. The master trainers were usually selected school headmasters and school supervisors,[7] who in turn transmitted the Literacy Boost modules to teachers at training sessions organized and supervised by Literacy Boost. Subsequently, those teachers were expected to bring their newly acquired knowledge and skills to their schools and districts,

[7] School supervisors, employed by the district education office, were in charge of monitoring and supporting teachers and headmasters at schools in their district, which contained approximately six schools.

sharing them through teacher working groups (KKG – *kelompok kerja guru).* Ensuring sustainability was the logic behind the cascade model: the idea was that even after the conclusion of the Literacy Boost intervention, master trainers and teachers could continue to promote literacy.

The teacher training sessions focused on literacy pedagogy, curriculum, and literacy best practices. For example, teachers learned about the importance of creating print-rich environments, as well as how to turn transform their classrooms by using educational posters, by labeling items such as chairs, shelves, and whiteboards, and by involving students by making hands-on projects such as a "wall dictionary." The teacher training modules were based largely on the Literacy Boost Teacher Training Toolkit. Realizing that many teachers in Belu—especially those who had little or no prior teacher training—were ill-equipped to absorb the literacy material, Literacy Boost staffers realized they needed to offer a more general teacher training focused on topics such as student-centered learning, classroom and time management, and positive discipline principles and practices.

Community Engagement

The final component of the Literacy Boost approach was community engagement. In both Belu and Jakarta, by bringing not only educators but also parents, local leaders, and other community members on board early on in the process, Literacy Boost sought to ensure community support for literacy initiatives. Parent engagement sessions and Reading Camp (*Pos Membaca*) were the most common forms of community engagement. In its ideal form, Reading Camp met weekly and was run by volunteers. At Reading Camp, students could access grade-appropriate storybooks, short stories printed in local languages (when available), play literacy skills-building games, sing songs, and enjoy story time. Particularly in Belu, where Literacy Boost worked with schools that were located up to four hours away from the field office, community engagement was seen as vital to the program's success and sustainability.

In Jakarta, Literacy Boost partner schools were encouraged to organize parent engagement sessions, in which parents attended a series of talks focusing on good nutrition, instilling learning habits in their children, and positive discipline techniques.

Research Methodology

A basis for comparison

A central question driving the research was: what binds the two research sites, North Jakarta and Belu, together? During the course of my research, I continually confronted the vast differences between the two sites, to the point where comparison between them appeared moot. Their contrast can be depicted using multiple geographical scales. North Jakarta was centrally located, in the city through which vast majority of air traffic in and out of the country flowed. Belu was peripherally located, accessible by overland travel and by ferry from nearby cities and islands in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province. During my fieldwork, a new air route commenced, linking Belu to Kupang. The schools and communities where I conducted my research in North Jakarta were squashed into tiny lanes in a metropolis of 30 million people, while in Belu, the official population was less than 250,000 people spread out across the whole district. The contrast can also be understood in terms of human geography. Though Jakarta was religiously diverse (and along other identity axes of ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status), the schools where I conducted my research were attended by a nearly uniform Muslim student and teacher population. In Belu, my focal school, SD Bose, was a Catholic school and nearly all of the students attended mass across the street at the parish cathedral.

Belu is a prominent signifier of the distant east of Indonesia. One of 110 districts (*kabupaten*) in the Indonesian part of Timor Island, Belu is the setting for recent popular films including *Atambua 39 Degrees* (Riza, 2012), *Aisyah, Biarkan Kami Bersaudara*

(Aisyah, let us be a family) (Novianto, 2016), and *Rumah Merah Putih* (Red and White House) (Sihasale, 2019). In these films, Belu is depicted as remote, dusty, beautiful, and often a place of intense conflict: between locals (see below), between (Catholic) locals and (Muslim) outsiders, and between Indonesians and East Timorese. In fact, one of the three parochial priests in the town where I conducted my research played the role of "The Priest" in two of those films. Despite Belu's outsize reputation, the reverse geographical imaginary might have been even more potent. Children in Belu, and indeed from across the archipelago, learn about Jakarta and its sights and monuments from the first grade on, looking toward the metropole.

There were vast differences between the two sites, but the Literacy Boost program was the control variable, stitching the two together through the circulation of literacy discourses, practices, funding, and people. In both places, teachers and headmasters spoke of building a culture of literacy (*budaya literasi*) at their schools, and in both places, parents were continually reminded of the importance of reading at home with their children. Literacy Boost was not the only program to stitch together Jakarta and Belu. At the time of my research, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture also ran a program focusing on childhood nutrition that targeted three districts in Timor, including Belu, and Bekasi, one of the five metropolises of greater Jakarta. There was, somehow, a persistent connection between a romanticized remote, rural poverty and the urban variety.

The work of comparison can both ascend and descend in geographical scale. Moving towards smaller scale comparison, I found that people within Nusa Tenggara Timur Province talked of the variation within, rather than comparing to places without. For many, comparing Timor and Flores was generative,[8] while comparing Belu and Jakarta was an endless, and thus moot, exercise.

On an even more minute scale, my interlocutors in Belu often talked of the differences between two abutting towns, which appeared to a visitor as one town in the middle of vast stretches of grassy hills and the sea. I stayed with my host family in one town and conducted my research at school in the next town. A total of approximately three kilometers separated the two, but people frequently mentioned the vast differences: between K-town and J-town, between "us" and "them," between the "true" locals and the settlers—those who had resettled from Timor as a result of the war. The village head of J-town, a town of mostly long-time residents, compared the two towns: "They are so diligent, planting when one thing has been harvested, planting again. Vegetables, fruits, yams, and potatoes. In K-town you can get fruit every day, papaya and bananas. Here in J-town, not so much. That is something we should learn from the Timorese. That's a great contribution, a plus, from them. But of course, there are many minuses as well. For one, they wreck the forest, they take the wood to burn and they take the stones. That's a big problem" (personal communication, July 27, 2017). Others talked about how one place had more culture and the other was already too modern. From the vantage of Jakarta, Belu already signifies some geographical specificity, distinguished as it is from other districts in Timor. Yet within a small area in Belu, the two abutting towns were often discussed in contrastive terms by the locals themselves, suggests that there are ever-smaller units of the "local."

Similarly, during the course of my research in Jakarta—whether at a teacher training session or a parent engagement session—I was made to understand the paramount differences

[8] Education activists on Timor Island pointed out the differences between Timor and Flores, for example, noting that the latter had a longer history of out-migration of working-aged adults to palm plantations in Kalimantan and Malaysian Borneo, resulting in stronger networks for new migrants and also more strained educational experiences for their left-behind children, who often lived with grandparents. Indonesian Timorese, on the other hand, had only been migrating on a large scale over the past 10 years and thus had weaker networks, less protection at the plantations, and adults often brough their children with them.

distinguishing schools within the same area. Notable differences included the levels and types of funding that schools received, their status as a national (public) school, a foundation (private) school, or an Islamic school.[9] The gulf between two schools that were located within a half kilometer of each other was large, and indeed the category "Jakarta school" felt insufficient to describe them both. Thus, through the course of my research, I felt the drive to burrow deeper into the specificity, the idiosyncrasy of each place, in order to understand why the Literacy Boost intervention played out as it did. I engaged therefore a double methodological practice, generating generalizable results of education research, while also attending to the rigorously local practices associated with anthropological research.

Toward the larger end of comparison was cross-country comparison. As I noted, Pak Asda's teacher training spiel that poked fun at Indonesia's low ranking in an international survey of reading interest was not out of the ordinary. Cross-country comparison was prevalent among international development of education practitioners and donors, In the World Bank report "Teacher Reform in Indonesia" (2010), Indonesian students' learning outcomes were defined in relation to those of students from other countries, rather than using an internal system of evaluation. In this world, comparison, usually through assessments like EGRA, PISA and TIMSS,[10] was the key method of setting benchmarks and standards. The language is clear: "Indonesian students simply performed poorly when compared to students in other countries. International benchmark tests showed (and continue to show) that student outcomes in Indonesia are lower than those in neighbouring countries...In the 2006 [PISA]…Indonesia ranked 48 out of 56 countries in reading" (World Bank, 2010, p. 22). Cross-country comparison persists despite the fact that there is growing awareness that educational standards and curricula must be adjusted to local conditions and needs, if only to ensure better educational outcomes.[11] Literacy Boost was not free from such pressures; Save the Children also engaged in such cross-national comparison (Dowd, et al., 2013).

Thus, the work of comparison manifests myriad material and ideological interests, largely hinging on the scale or geographic unit at hand. I was not the only person who wondered about the fruitfulness of comparing North Jakarta and Belu. Jerry, a Save the Children staffer who worked at two Literacy Boost sites in Eastern Indonesia, mused, "Why is there Literacy Boost in Jakarta? We [staffers in Belu] all wonder this. Because in Belu, children actually have problems reading. If they do not get Literacy Boost, and often even when they do, many do not learn how to read. But in Jakarta, everyone learns how to read" (personal communication, October 12, 2016).

To a large extent, Jerry was right. If judging by the Literacy Boost assessment results, early-grades students in Jakarta learn to read without the intervention. Even if many students in Jakarta experienced difficulties with higher-order reading skills such as reading comprehension, they were much more fluent in reading than their counterparts in Belu, even

[9] Islamic schools were under the aegis of the Ministry of Religion rather than the Ministry of Education and Culture.

[10] EGRA (Early Grades Reading Assessment), PISA (Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) are widely used to conduct cross-country educational comparison.

[11] While it issues statements comparing Indonesian students to those from neighboring countries on measures like PISA, it also pushes for local control in their School Based Management initiative, arguing that local conditions and local participation are paramount in the good governance of schools. Another question is—which students get selected to be tested, to represent "Indonesia"? The Minister of Education and Culture in 2017 commented on Indonesia's poor performance: "Perhaps all the students who participated in the test this year were from NTT." The implication was, of course, that students from the east do poorly on the tests and the Indonesian scores would be higher if Javanese had taken the test.

at the project baselines.[12] From interviews with higher-ups at Save the Children in Indonesia, the rationale for implementing the same intervention in such different contexts was "to see if there was an urban-rural divide" (personal communication, Klara, September 16, 2016), and thus, I too followed their logic in conducting my research in North Jakarta and Belu. The various scales of comparison, with their affordances and many gaps, complicated both the common NGO line of "Where We Work" but also my research methodology.

A productive method for comparison work is that of the "vertical case study" championed by the international education scholars Frances Vavrus and Lesley Bartlett (2006). Noting that international education practice and research tend to veer toward cross-national comparison and policy transfers across disparate contexts, the vertical case study is a multilevel analysis that requires "thorough understanding of the particularity of the micro-level" (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006, p. 97). To engage in a vertical case study, a researcher must examine an educational matter along vertical geographic axes—the local, national, and international scales, say—rather than along the more common horizontal axis of cross-national or cross-contextual comparison (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006, p. 100). In this method, it is through detailed analysis of the instantiation of policies and programs in particular local contexts that it is possible to gain understanding of the policy or program beyond abstract theorization. Because this kind of analysis emphasizes extensive area studies understanding and is, relative to standard NGO evaluations that rely largely upon quantitative analysis, time-consuming, it is rarely employed for the research projects commissioned by Save the Children and other international NGOs.

This dissertation engages in the vertical comparison of the Literacy Boost intervention. The juxtaposition draws comparison between the following levels: the international level, at which Literacy Boost ideals, curricula, and program structure are drawn up; the national level (in this case, the Save the Children Indonesia Country Office), where those ideas and documents are interpreted, translated, and disseminated; and the local context. It is this last level that is the most complex, for I have chosen two sites, which break down further in into three schools and their communities—two in Jakarta, and one in Belu. What happens in the schools, how Literacy Boost program elements are reinterpreted and experienced, and the synchronies and gaps between the levels form the subject of this dissertation.

Data collection and analysis

The dissertation is an empirical study of the intersections of international development and literacy development. Its data were generated through document analysis, participant observations, and interviews. These methods allowed me to analyze the goals and methods of Literacy Boost, and how they were taken up, adapted, and appropriated by parents, teachers, and educational officials. The data were collected during two months of preliminary fieldwork (July-August 2015) and thirteen months of fieldwork (July 2016 – August 2017) in Jakarta and Belu, Indonesia. The data corpus is comprised of extensive fieldnotes from participant observations, audio and video recordings of key activities (notably classroom lessons, teacher training sessions, and Reading Camps), pedagogic, policy, and planning documents, and (49) semi-structured, in-depth interviews with parents, school administrators, teachers, and Save the Children staff. These research methods allowed me to discern tensions between standardized, international best practice, and local interpretations of the contexts, processes and meanings of literacy, education, and international development.

[12] If using measures of "functional literacy," there was strong evidence that students who finish sixth grade are functionally literate – that is, they are able to decode and produce written text when necessary—including filling out paperwork, a constant demand in hyper-bureaucratized Indonesia.

Document analysis

Document analysis allowed me to gain an understanding of the literacy ideals and measures that drove the program, as well as how other goals—such as increasing parent participation and reducing corporal punishment (the foci of Chapters 3 and 4, respectively)—were tied to the central literacy goals of the program. I collected extensive Literacy Boost program documents, including: the Literacy Boost assessment tool (which I analyze in chapter 1); the teacher training toolkit in English and its Indonesian translation; monthly field office reports that were submitted to the country office; and monitoring and evaluation reports—notably, the Baseline, Midline and Endline Reports. I also considered Save the Children's own data, gathered through surveys, previous qualitative research, and quantitative analysis of assessment outcomes, important sources of data for the current study—not as reflections of the literacy situation, per se, but as a way to understand their formulations, measurements, and operationalization of literacy. This analysis took place before starting fieldwork in July 2016, and continued through the writing.

Literacy Boost participant observation

Through participant observation at Literacy Boost events, I learned how staffers thought about literacy and their work, how they planned and spent the days, and how they conceived of tensions in program implementation and reception. I conducted fieldwork at events including: Literacy Boost teacher training and parent engagement sessions, meetings with district education officials, and daily life at the office. I spent a great deal of time with Literacy Boost staffers of all levels as they moved across schools and sites, between meetings with donors, technical advisors, and parents. To that end, I wrote field notes and made audio and video recordings when I conducted observations at teacher training sessions and Literacy Boost public presentations (for example, to the Indonesian MOEC)

I spent the most time at the two field offices in Belu and in North Jakarta, and I also visited the Country Office in Jakarta for scheduled interviews. At the field offices, I was given a desk where I could park my stuff and write up notes. The offices were bustling places, host to several Save the Children projects each. Staffers were constantly going in and out, visiting field sites and organizing training sessions and meeting with officials, and then coming back to regroup, write reports, organize for the next event. The North Jakarta field office was a mere 15-minute motorcycle taxi ride away from where I lived, a remarkably short commute in traffic-clogged Jakarta. When conducting research in Jakarta, I often went to the office by motorbike taxi and then joined the Literacy Boost staffers in a Blue Bird taxi to their destination for the morning.

Between July 2016 and August 2017, my home base was a rented room in a house in Central Jakarta. The family who hosted me consisted of a married couple in their late 30s and the husband's younger brother, who was completing his last year of university. The house was located in densely-populated neighborhood that abutted a military complex. This house was equidistant to the focal schools in North Jakarta, the Save the Children Country Office in South Jakarta, and Atma Jaya, my host university in Central-South Jakarta. I spent many days in North Jakarta visiting the focal schools, but only several nights, as my staying with my host family—Pak Ferry, the headmaster of SD Sarjana—necessitated moving others around in the house; they always insisted on giving me the best bedroom.

I spent three months in eastern Indonesia, in addition to the two months I spent there in 2015. Of the five months total, I spent one month in Kupang, the provincial capital, on various trips to attend teacher training sessions and conduct interviews. I spent the rest of the time in Belu, in both the district capital, Atambua, and with a host family in Atapupu.

In Atambua, I stayed at a long-term hotel, about a 20-minute walk from the field office or a few minutes away by motorcycle taxi. Though Atambua was the largest city in Belu, it was still a small city (with a population of 76,052 in 2015), with no car taxis at the

time of my research. I took informal motorbike taxis, and the drivers were sometimes paraprofessionals (*tukang ojek*), but more often were just people who happened to stop that day, on their way to somewhere else. The Belu field office was a compound with a security gate. The drivers on staff and on retainer (mostly former staff drivers, who had earned enough to buy their own cars and rent their services at a higher, daily rate) were critical to the operations; there was literally no other way to reach all of the target schools and sites, as public transportation was limited and slow.

Unlike in Jakarta, in order to conduct classroom observations and spent time with the surrounding community of a focal school, it was necessary to spend longer sojourns with a host family; it was not possible to commute and still capture the full spectrum of literacy activities. In Atapupu, I stayed with a family of six: a grandmother, a mother and father, and three elementary-aged children. The community was small, so I had a visible presence there. The headmaster of SD Bose was a distant relative of my host family's father.

In both cases, the time commuting—up to nearly three hours each way to a school in Belu, and often an hour each way to schools in Jakarta—constituted some of the most significant research time with Literacy Boost staffers. It was during the long commutes that we built rapport and often forged true friendships, and it was also then that we talked about the programs and their challenges, the daily ins and outs of communicating with all the program stakeholders, of planning all the various program activities, and on reporting on them. It was also during commutes that staffers, including drivers, would hold forth on what they thought Literacy Boost was doing (or not doing) in the recipient communities. Finally, it was during commutes that I could test out my theories and ideas of how the program was being taken up by communities.

When we reached the schools, in both Belu and North Jakarta, I was often treated as a Save the Children staffer. I had, after all, arrived in the same car and was often introduced by a staffer. Only at my focal schools, SD Roro and SD Sarjana in Jakarta and SD Bose in Belu, did teachers and students come to distinguish me from Save the Children (who were almost always referred to as "Save"). At the school visits and training sessions, I usually opted to sit at the back of the classroom or conference room, to better be able to observe the whole group and to be able to move around. On some occasions, however, I was exhorted to sit in the front of the room, with the other VIPs. This was also the case occasionally at larger Save the Children events, such as the "Village Talk Show"—a high profile advocacy event with stakeholders and staff from across NTT Province and Jakarta: I was recruited to serve as a translator for a European visitor. I was treated as a quasi-insider, included in Save's emergency phone tree: I received a call after a bombing in Jakarta to make sure that I was safe.

Focal school participant observation

After preliminary fieldwork in 2015, I planned to conduct observations at schools in both Jakarta and Belu. I chose the sites in order to generate internal comparisons—both within Indonesia, across the two sites, but also within each site. Save the Children staff facilitated initial introductions to headmasters at SD Roro, SD Sarjana, SD Bose, and SD Wamea. I then scheduled meetings with each headmaster to discuss my project and to secure permission to conduct classroom observations and interviews.

Table 1. *Fieldwork sites – schools*

School	Location	Funding type
SD Sarjana	North Jakarta	Private (Foundation)
SD Roro	North Jakarta	Public
SD Bose	Belu	Private (*Inpres*)
SD Wamea	Belu	Public

At SD Roro, SD Sarjana, and SD Bose, I strove to become a regular presence at the school, meaning that I wanted students, parents, teachers, and other staff to become somewhat accustomed to me observing, asking questions, and hanging around. As education scholars know, “qualitative” research can refer to a wide range of research methodologies. In one of Save the Children Indonesia’s own qualitative studies (Royanto, 2016), classroom observations also figured into the research design. One key difference, however, was that in that study design, the researcher visited several schools for classroom observation, each for one day. In my discussion with the researcher, she acknowledged the limitations of such a research design, as well as her strategies for circumventing them. For example, teachers and headmasters were alerted to her visit, as well as the aims of her visit (to ascertain the pedagogical and other classroom impacts of the Literacy Boost intervention), and often prepared carefully. At the last moment, however, she would request to observe another class, one that had not prepared specifically for her visit (personal communication, August 14, 2017). This way, she reasoned, she would get a more authentic view of how well the Literacy Boost intervention had worked.

Though I understood why the researcher would use such a technique given the constraints—namely, that she had just a few weeks to conduct a great number of classroom observations and interviews, and just a few more weeks more to write up her findings in a report—I myself would not implement such a “gotcha” methodology. Though I was also interested in understanding how Literacy Boost *actually* impacted teachers, students, and schools, I did not want to catch anyone out. Rather, my approach was to hang around long enough so that the pressure to perform Literacy Boost techniques for my benefit would wear off. Indeed, I observed this happening at my focal schools. At SD Bose, for example, at the beginning of my fieldwork period, I was treated both as a special guest from Save the Children and from the United States, and was ushered into the headmaster’s office each morning when I really wanted to be in classrooms. Eventually, the shine wore off and I was allowed to simply observe from the back of classrooms, sometimes sitting with a pod of students. By the end of my time, teachers like Ibu Mira and Ibu Rita were asking me to step in for them when they had other pressing (or not so pressing) tasks, treating me more like a classroom aide than an evaluator.

When I conducted classroom observations, I brought along my notebook and my phone. Though I took photos of classroom artefacts and student work, as well as videos of instruction and interaction between the teacher and students, most of the classroom findings were captured in my fieldnotes. While in the classrooms, I jotted notes, and wrote full notes, often with interpretation and analysis, in the afternoons and evenings after conducting the observations.

At schools, I also strove to observe at as many Literacy Boost or other literacy-themed activities as possible. At schools like SD Roro in North Jakarta, there were many such activities, which included parent engagement sessions on topics like social-emotional parenting and childhood nutrition. SD Roro was also the only school that that had a regularly-meeting Reading Camp, though it looked different than what Literacy Boost had envisioned—rather than an after-school extracurricular activity, three teachers pulled struggling readers from their classes one to two times a week for intensive literacy instruction. In small groups of seven to 10 students, teachers worked on phonemic awareness, read books aloud, and conducted other literacy activities that they had either learned at Literacy Boost teacher training sessions or through their own initiative. At other schools, like SD Sarjana and SD Bose, Reading Camp, Reading Buddies and other Literacy Boost initiatives had ceased to run. Even so, I still observed at the Community Action Cycle meetings with parents, teachers and other community members (SD Sarjana), and at the school library (SD Bose).

Conducting intensive participant observation in the community enabled me to immerse myself in the broader ecology of literacy practices and cultures of writing at each site; in particular my investigation of school activities was enriched by examining the nuclear family, school settings, and other community institutions and practices (e.g.: church settings in Belu, and food stalls and other commercial spaces in Jakarta). When and how reading, writing, and textual artifacts are used in daily life– and what meanings are attached to these literacy practices—was best be grasped through an open-ended ethnographic approach (Boyarin, 1993; Heath & Street, 2008; Schieffelin & Gilmore, 1986).

Interviews

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with staff members at all levels of Save the Children: at the local/field offices, country office, and from international offices. These interviews often took place at Save the Children Country and Field offices, and when granted permission, I audio-recorded the interviews and took field notes during and immediately after the interviews. These somewhat official interviews stood in contrast to everyday interactions with staffers at the Save the Children offices, where I spent much time planning, writing up notes, reaching out to other stakeholders (e.g., school headmasters), and generally hanging out and chatting (*nongkrong*).

In my fieldwork I aimed to capture the viewpoints and perspectives of as many Literacy Boost stakeholders as possible, ranging from parents attending their first community engagement activity to program donors from international aid agencies. I also strove to understand the literacy and education landscape from a bird's eye view, by meeting with as many education officials, literacy activists, NGO staffers and technical advisers, and donors as possible. Existing contacts and interlocutors referred me to their contacts in the District Education Office, and in turn, they referred me to the national Development Planning Board. Whenever possible, I audio-recorded interviews, listening to them again as I wrote fieldnotes and transcribing relevant excerpts. At times, people were wary of being recorded, and in those cases I took notes sparingly during the meeting, and wrote full fieldnotes immediately after the conclusion of the interview.

A note on translation. I translated all of the interview segments included in this dissertation myself, keeping in mind the linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein's observation that "finding comparabilities and overlaps in the way words and expressions do their culture-specific indexical work is a task eminently anthropological, inasmuch as it is comparison of cultural forms of social action" (2003, p. 91). That is, the lexical, semantic, and register choices I made while translating were as intentional as my presentation of particular excerpts or ethnographic vignettes. Undoubtedly, translation of the same text by others would yield varied results. Furthermore, as Silverstein notes, "we are always tempted simply to reproduce a phonologically adapted form of a 'native' term in an otherwise target-language ethnographic text. In essence, this makes the target-language ethnographic text the supervening 'context'... for the now-borrowed term" (2003, p. 88). In an attempt to bring readers closer to the story, rather than always interject as the middle(wo)man with my prose as the "context" for Indonesian terms, I attempted to provide English translations for all terms, despite the seemingly untranslatability of certain terms or ideas.

Data Analysis

The dissertation examines the relationship between literacy and international development through the three dimensions of the individual, the institution, and ideology, corresponding to Vavrus and Bartlett's (2006) local, national, and international levels in their vertical case study schema. The central unit of analysis for the dissertation is practice: the everyday actions of individuals that reproduce or disrupt existing routines, systems, and structures (as conceptualized by Bourdieu, 1977; Handsfield & Jiménez, 2009; Lave, 1993; Ortner 1984; Saxe, 2012). I adapt Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1986) and

delineate three levels of context in the analytic schema of practices: the micro, meso, and macro levels. By honing in on micro-level human action, with an eye towards the meso-level institutional structures in which individuals operate, as well as macro-level ideological and cultural processes, I provide both a bird's-eye analysis of policy and curricular impacts and a ground's-eye view of how individuals bring change into being (or not) through everyday practices.

The micro level includes specific practices such as classroom instruction, students' reading and writing activities, and at Literacy Boost, international development planning and evaluation practices. Fieldnotes, video and audio footage, and other materials collected during participant observation comprise the focal data in the analysis at the micro level. In the analytic schema, these everyday practices are not isolated phenomena, wholly lodged within the micro level of the individual. Each practice is nested within an institutional structure, or what I call the meso level of analysis. At the meso level, in which various institutions, such as Save the Children, the focal schools, and District Education Offices are the key foci, I examine interview transcripts with the teachers, school principals, school supervisors from the Ministry of Education, and NGO staff to make sense of how institutions mediate between individuals and larger ideological processes. The micro and meso are in turn nested within a broader, macro level of analysis: the cultural, social, political, and ideological contexts—the ideas, curricula, and policies in global circulation. In order to situate my analysis of practices and institutions within this encompassing level, I examine policy, curricular, and evaluation documents, using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), identifying the ideological underpinnings of discourse, including those pertaining to literacy, education, and international development.

This treatment of the data corpus elucidates the relationships between individual or collective practice, the institution, and larger cultural and ideological contexts. No single level is static; I explore, identify and describe the dynamic upstream and downstream interactions between the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. This analytical framework allowed me to draw together concrete, local practices, within the institutional constraints and affordances of schools, government, and NGOs, and in light of global circulations of policies, discourses, and ideologies.

Researcher positionality

I was introduced to Save the Children staffers in Indonesia through their formal research internship program. As a graduate student researcher with the Save-University Partnership for Educational Research (SUPER), I was tasked with writing a report on issues related to multilingual teaching and formative assessments in Belu (Zhang, 2015), one of the two eventual sites of research for this dissertation. In addition to connecting me with sites for fieldwork and facilitating introductions with key interlocutors, such an arrangement allowed me access to the organization's inner workings and staff members. I became friends with several staff members from the Save the Children Country Office in Jakarta during the preliminary fieldwork, and when I arrived in Jakarta again in 2016, presented them with my proposed research design. They were accommodating and supportive, but also expected that my research would help them. We discussed the possibility that I work with their data to produce a report. In the end, I presented my findings to Save the Children at a series of meetings: two presentations at field offices in Belu and North Jakarta (one of which included technical advisors from the United States and Australia) and at a meeting at the Save the Children Country Office in Jakarta. In these cases, I prepared findings with the edict of "what next?" in mind, as Save the Children staffers were primarily interested in the direct implications and application of my research to their own programs. That said, I found Save the Children staffers to be receptive, rather than defensive, when I presented certain, unpromising scenarios.

In embedding with Save the Children, I neither wanted to present their work as unvarnished good nor to act as an investigative journalist, waiting to catch them out and show how imperial and disconnected their programs were. Rather, I aimed to capture the vicissitudes of everyday international NGO life and practice, in all of its idealism and realism, its aspirations and compromises, and the big showcase events and the ho-hum of office life and routine school visits.

Prior to, during, and since conducting fieldwork, I have studied Indonesian language, literature, and cultural studies. Being able to speak Indonesian with a degree of fluency meant that I did not rely on translators for interviews, presentations, or at meetings. At times, I was asked to serve as a translator myself, as in several instances when there was an international visitor (usually an advisor or donor) at a Save the Children event. Despite my linguistic fluency, however, there was of course much that I missed, whether due to linguistic, cultural or other blind-spots.

In order to give a full account of my primary research tool—myself—it is necessary to discuss how I was often perceived. Particularly in Jakarta, where I spent more time and where I interacted with more people overall and more strangers, every day I had a recurring conversation, which entailed someone asking me, “Where are you from? But really, where are you from? Your face…”. As much as it is possible to theorize the fracturedness of identity, race was, for many, the most accessible, on-the-tip-of-the-tongue entry into conversation.

There were several variations of and facets to these conversations. When asked if I were Japanese or Korean, I was usually meant to take it as a compliment; Japanese and Korean pop culture (e.g., soap operas, fashion, beauty treatments, pop music) were influential and indeed aspirational among certain Indonesian demographics, and signified wealth, style, and cosmopolitanism. The meanings of being Chinese—either from China or Chinese-Indonesian—were more fraught. The history of Chinese-Indonesians is complex, variegated along class, geographic (both in the source and target locations), religious, linguistic lines, among other factors. Broad stereotypes about Chinese-Indonesian identity include both wealth and frugality, an in-group mentality, and apoliticism, which is also often read as a lack of nationalism. The most poignant reminder of the antagonisms between Chinese-Indonesians and “native” Indonesians are the mass rapes of Chinese women in Jakarta and other cities around Indonesia during the uprisings against Suharto (Strassler, 2004).

In addition, several stereotypes about Chineseness were in frequent circulation. In Belu, as a Literacy Boost staffer helped me to secure a homestay for the length of research for my pilot study, the homestay owner began to speak to me in Mandarin, upon learning of my family heritage. The Literacy Boost staffer, in benign tones, said “Ah, money, the language of the Chinese”: here, the stereotype of Chinese as traders, business people and financiers, of a mutual-help network that exclusively helps other Chinese to get ahead (easy and cheap credit through your Chinese network, for example; access to goods to sell from family members on Mainland China). The fact that I was an American researcher, and not a business person, did not dent this image that linked the Chinese with money in the Literacy Boost staffer’s mind.

Thus, when people asked if I was Chinese, and when they knew that I was Chinese(-American), I carried a set of considerations and calculations about what the person was *really* asking, implying, or assuming about me—what I would need to make clear or undo or counter in my response to their question. These considerations also stemmed from others’ worry for my safety. For example, Mira, an officer in the North Jakarta office, cautioned that “with my face” I should not spend too much time in Cilincing, especially after dark, and also advised me against staying overnight with families in the area. At the time of my research, the Jakarta gubernatorial election was at fever pitch. This election held national significance;

the last mayor of Jakarta is now serving his second term as Indonesia's President. The incumbent, commonly known as Ahok, was a prominent Chinese-Indonesian and a polemical figure, attracting much attention for statements he made on the campaign trail that were deemed blasphemous and causing offense of Muslims. In this kind of keyed up, tense environment, being of Chinese descent was not a "neutral" position, nor even in truly outsider position.

Layered atop considerations of race, of course, was my gender. Traveling and researching alone, far from home, was a curiosity for some of my interlocutors, who asked me plainly about my marital status, if I had children, and why not. In sum, there was a constellation of signs that people read about me when they looked at me, through my answers, which in turn helped them to figure out how well I conformed to their understanding of Chinese, American, Asian, woman, Westerner. I have no doubt that this influenced people's thinking of me, our relationships, and how and what kind of things they shared with me. Being read as Chinese, even if I had explained that I grew up in the US and received all of my education there, seemed to help some people categorize me as "Asian" and thus not completely foreign.

Finally, though it is customary to discuss the fieldwork as "there", removed, bounded in time and space, suspended in a crystalline frame of fieldnotes, videos, recordings, and photos, the data were interpreted both during and after fieldwork as my own life circumstances evolved. Chief among the changes was the fact that I became a mother myself during the writing of this dissertation. Questions about how to spend time with children, how to educate them, and how to discipline them became intensely personal rather than purely conceptual matters. Notably, though I had spent the better part of a decade thinking, reading, and writing about literacy socialization and ideologies, being a part of such campaigning—as a parent bringing her child to the pediatrician's office—made a distinct impression. Undoubtedly, being on the receiving end of a literacy campaign during the writing of the dissertation made me reconsider parents' reactions to Literacy Boost events in Indonesia in a new light.

Summary of chapters

My analysis of the Literacy Boost program in Indonesia proceeds in four chapters. In Chapter 1, I evaluate three aspects of the Literacy Boost assessment, one of the three primary activities of the Literacy Boost program: the definition of literacy through the assessment, content validity of the assessment, and the context in which assessment takes place. The Literacy Boost assessment offers the most direct definitions of literacy, and also produces the quantitative results that donors look to when they assess the program. For these reasons, the Literacy Boost assessment—even if it takes up only few days in the whole program cycle—has outsize significance in the overall intervention. Drawing upon document analysis and participant observation, my examination highlights instances of disjuncture: between the skills championed in the literacy intervention and the assessment measures, between the purpose of the intervention and the assessment, and between the contexts of testing and the assessment format. In doing so, I examine how the Literacy Boost assessment was designed and administered, and how literacy was conceptualized and evaluated.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I explore how the Literacy Boost program was implemented and experienced in Jakarta and Belu. Though the program is often described to encompass three activity areas—assessment, teacher training, and community engagement—I found that it was other activities and program foci that had greater impacts on participant teachers, schools, and communities.

Chapter 2 foregrounds how uncertainty—for teachers, parents, and indeed, schools—conditioned educational opportunities, decision-making, and teachers' prospects in North Jakarta. Facing dissatisfied, undercompensated teachers at these schools—many of whom

found literacy to be an issue of secondary importance in relation to their daily struggles— the Literacy Boost program used participating planning as a way to acknowledge the teachers' perspectives as well as those of other marginalized stakeholders. I focus on the case of one Literacy Boost partner school, showing that though the program's focus on participatory planning may have indeed empowered parents, teachers, and students, it was also a time-intensive process that sometimes distracted from the straightforward message of promoting childhood literacy. By facilitating greater participation and transparency at the school, Literacy Boost intervened into existing power dynamics, resulting in unintended backlash against the marginalized stakeholders that it intended to empower.

Chapter 3 focuses on discipline and authority, and in it I show how schools as a general institution, and then as a specifically Indonesian one, enforced disciplinary order upon bodies and minds. I examine how the Literacy Boost positive discipline campaign was received, interpreted, and negotiated by people in Belu, outlining how ambivalence about positive discipline stemmed from nostalgia for times past, as well as from anxiety about changes in social hierarchy—in particular, in the relative positions and behaviors of children and adults. Discipline was not only a concern in Belu, however; I show how the Literacy Boost program in Jakarta amplified trends toward self-discipline and transparency in Indonesian education.

In Chapter 4, I shift my focus to the temporalities of the Literacy Boost intervention. I investigate the temporal logics employed by three Literacy Boost stakeholders: its participating schools, its staffers, and its donors, finding that Literacy Boost staffers acted as brokers of not only culture and content, but also of calendars and temporalities. Unpacking the intervention's temporalities and their intersections help to shed light not only on the lived experiences of the development process, but also on the potential for program uptake. I argue that many of the tensions arising from the Literacy Boost intervention had to do with expectations for how time should be divided, used, and measured.

I conclude with a reflection on the dissertation's findings, and how they illuminate development's unforeseen pathways and outcomes; and their implications—implications not only for Save the Children as they implement Literacy Boost in new sites in Indonesia and around the world, but also for education officials, teachers, and parents involved in these programs to promote literacy.

Chapter 1. The Literacy Boost Assessment: Defining and evaluating literacy

One day in July 2015, I accompanied a group of literacy examiners to SD Wamea,[13] a primary school in Belu, on the border with East Timor. There, 20 second graders participated in the Save the Children's Literacy Boost baseline assessment. As with all of Save the Children's Literacy Boost programs worldwide, the success of the intervention was evaluated largely on the basis of the assessment results. To demonstrate success, there should be significant gains between the periods of testing at baseline, midline, and endline assessments, which were administered at the beginning of the project, at the midway point, and after the conclusion of the four-year intervention.[14] That day at SD Wamea, I observed the examiners as they sat down one-on-one with the students and asked them a series of questions about their home lives, and then a battery of literacy items featuring letters of the alphabet, vocabulary words, and a short written passage. What was immediately striking was how the examiners spoke a language other than Indonesian with most of the students. They prompted students to respond and offered clarifications on questions using Bahasa Bunak, a Trans-New Guinea language that is wholly distinct in structure, language family, vocabulary, grammar, and morphology from Indonesian, which is an Austronesian language (Ethnologue, 2018). The disjuncture between the verbal cues given in Bahasa Bunak and the items on the assessment, all of which tested students' proficiency in *Indonesian* literacy, was glaring. How could a child demonstrate their literacy skills in Indonesian, a language they did not even speak? And what do we make of assessment results in such situations?

This chapter addresses this paradox by analyzing how literacy was defined and operationalized in Save the Children Indonesia's Literacy Boost program (hereafter Literacy Boost), an influential international development intervention focused on early grades literacy. There are three sections to this chapter. In the first, I examine literacy as it was defined through quantitative metrics in program documents. In the second section, I examine the content validity of the Literacy Boost assessment by analyzing its measures of alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. I evaluate each measure in light of current literacy research, as well as against the stated goals of the Literacy Boost program in Indonesia. In the final section, I return to the paradox of the students at SD Wamea who were tested for literacy skills in a language they did not understand. By elucidating salient contextual factors, such as assessment capacity, linguistic adaptations of the assessment, and the testing environment, I evaluate the cultural validity of the assessment. I end by discussing the varied purposes of the assessment, and conclude that despite the fact that the assessment results ultimately served the purpose of convincing donors to maintain support of the intervention, the Literacy Boost assessment system can and should more closely mirror both current research about reading processes *and* the literacy ideals promoted by Save the Children.

Background

Much research on literacy assessments—whether focused on vocabulary assessment, text readability, construct validity, or other issues—draws largely from American contexts (see for example Campione, 1989; Frankel et al., 2016; García & Pearson, 1994; Johnston, 1997; Johnston & Costello, 2005; Pearson et al., 2007; Rathvon, 2004; Shepard, 2000; Valencia et al., 1989). Scholarship on literacy assessments has gained more urgency as in the

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[13] This school was considered to be one of the more remote schools, as it took about two hours to reach on rocky roads by car.

[14] As I discuss in Chapter 4, the Literacy Boost intervention length varied by site, but on average they lasted four years.

wake of high-stakes testing regimes mandated by No Child Left Behind (2001), and more recently, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010).

In the international development context, literacy programming and assessment abound. The scholarship on literacy work in international development falls broadly into two categories. The first focuses on the results of literacy assessments, analyzing them to determine the efficacy of the literacy intervention. These analyses usually take the assessment at face value, often use quantitative methodologies, and are used to help design new international development programs (Dowd et al., 2013; Dowd & Friedlander, 2016). The Literacy Boost Baseline, Midline, and Endline reports represent some of the quantitative evaluation conducted by Save the Children itself, based on large samples of student literacy assessment and socioeconomic survey results.

The second group of scholarship takes a critical stance toward international testing regimes. The most notable targets are the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) (Davidson & Hobbs, 2013). Notable areas of critique include vulnerabilities in assessment capacity and construct validity (Solano-Flores and Milbourn, 2016), tendencies toward cross-national comparison, and increased emphases on testing globally.

This chapter attempts both to take the assessment as face value, by analyzing the Literacy Boost assessment's literacy measures, and to examine it critically, by contextualizing it within the larger development model. As such, this chapter represents a counterpoint to Save the Children's own analyses as found in their Endline Reports (e.g., Brown, 2013). I do not question their research methodology or their interpretation of the Literacy Boost assessment results. Rather, I take a step back to look at the larger picture of how the assessment is constructed and administered, and what the test *does* for the organization. In doing so, I aim to elucidate how literacy is conceptualized and practiced by Save the Children, and because of their influence in the field, by other international development organizations.

This chapter draws upon a subset of the data I collected over 15 months in Belu and North Jakarta, Indonesia. For this study on the Literacy Boost Assessment, I rely on the following data corpus: two model versions of the Literacy Boost Assessment, notes from observations at two examiner trainings (Belu 2015, Jakarta 2017), notes from observations of Literacy Boost assessment days (Belu 2015, Jakarta 2017), and interview data with the assessment writers and evaluators, and the Literacy Boost Baseline, Midline, and Endline reports issued by Save the Children from both Belu and Jakarta.

Defining literacy

One of the key questions of any literacy intervention is how best to define literacy. There inevitably arise gaps between how literacy is defined among different groups of people, and in particular, between its definition by an international development organization like Save the Children—itself a mashup of definitions put forth by donors, program staff, and outside experts—and its definition by the teachers and parents in a small town in Belu. During my research, definitions of literacy abounded at every Literacy Boost teacher training session, in daily conversations at schools, and among Literacy Boost staffers. Most often, the definition was something as straightforward as "the ability to read and write," or in Indonesia, "*kemampuan membaca dan menulis."* Often, the *menulis*, or writing, was dropped from common definitions of literacy, a subtle but telling reflection of the pervasive emphasis on reading over writing.[15] Beyond the discourse of literacy, writing was also routinely deemphasized in daily lessons for young students. In my classroom observations I found few

[15] This is true not only in Indonesian classrooms. In their study on emergent writing literacy skills, Puranik and Lonigan (2014) note that the overwhelming majority of literacy research, pedagogy, and assessment on emergent literacy skills is focused on reading.

opportunities for students to write, besides when they were asked to copy words or sentences from the board. Writing meant copying.

Even "reading," or *membaca,* has multiple valences that hint at the contested visions and practices of literacy instruction. *Membaca* in its original form means "to recite." Indeed, to read the Quran, a text of overwhelming significance in Indonesian society, is to recite it. A common trope in popular discourse is the disjuncture between reading (or reciting) the Quran and deeper comprehension of the text (Baker, 1993; Toer, 1991). The slippage between recitation and reading, not to mention writing, was one that teachers, students, parents, and Literacy Boost staff continually grappled with: was a student a proficient reader if they could correctly pronounce the words on the page? Or were they readers only once they reached a certain level of understanding and comprehension of the text?

Significantly, the transliteration *literasi* has entered the Indonesian lexicon, and it was frequently used by all who were involved in the Literacy Boost program. The driving force of the Literacy Boost intervention was in some ways undefinable without this imported vocabulary; with *literasi* came a set of meanings distinct from the rigid *membaca* of rote recitation and the outdated *keaksaraan*, which also meant literacy—though imbued with a sense of critical consciousness. *Literasi* brought with it a set of educational ideologies and practices about what makes for a "good" or "struggling" reader. *Literasi* in the Literacy Boost program connoted striving, development, and self-improvement. *Literasi* was also associated with discrete reading skills. The Literacy Boost program, in all the countries in which it is implemented, emphasized the five skills widely thought to be critical to reading: letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). In one sense, literacy was the amalgam of these five skills, used in tandem to decode text and produce meaning.

The most concrete definition of literacy could be found in the Literacy Boost's project documents. The project logframe, a planning document widely used by international development organizations, was jokingly referred to as "the project Bible" by Klara, Save the Children Indonesia's national education officer. In it, literacy was defined through quantitative metrics. Though the Literacy Boost project was comprised of many activities ranging from teacher trainings, reading competitions, book publishing in local languages, and parental engagement sessions, the ultimate success or failure of the program hinged upon the metrics found in a few compact pages of the program logframe and the "Results Measurement Table."

No matter how complex or contextualized *literasi* activities were in the Literacy Boost program, its operationalization was clear: students should read at least 35 words per minute by the end of the intervention. This was the ultimate threshold for determining the total number of newly literate students, and consequently, the success or failure of the intervention. The logframe formulated it thusly: "Improved student performance from students from participating schools in average word per minute reading ability," footnoted with "This indicator is a proxy for literacy. In addition, we will measure letter recognition, word recognition, accuracy, and comprehension under output one of the Results Management Table (see below)." In other words, the program would be considered a success if *fluency* rates were boosted from an anticipated baseline of 20 correct words per minute (CWPM) to 35 CWPM.[16] Following a trend in international development education programming, oral reading fluency represented other "higher order" literacy skills (Gove et al., 2018).

The full Results Measurement Table elaborated more metrics for literacy. The key program output was for "early grade primary students [to] receive assistance to boost their

[16] In much American educational research, the term Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) is used. However, in research about reading fluency in international contexts, the term Correct Words Per Minute (CWPM) is used more frequently. I will use the latter, CWPM, throughout.

literacy." Metrics related to alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary, fluency (already highlighted as the central indicator), and comprehension were defined in the following table.

Table 2. *Literacy Boost Results Measurement Table*

Skill	Metric	Baseline Prediction	Target Goal
Alphabetic knowledge	Participating up to 8000 second-grade students across up to 80 target schools correctly identify X letters of the alphabet on average.	19/26 letters of the alphabet	22/26 letters of the alphabet
Vocabulary	Participating up to 8000 second-grade students across up to 80 target schools correctly identify X of 20 common vocabulary words.	11/20 vocabulary words	15/20 vocabulary words
Reading fluency	Participating up to 8000 second-grade students across up to 80 target schools accurately read X words per minute (WPM) from a simple reading passage.	20 words per minute	35 words per minute
Reading comprehension	% of the up to 8000 participating second-grade students across up to 80 target schools who can correctly answer at least three of five comprehension questions from the simple reading passage."	20% of girls/20% of boys	40% of girls/40% of boys

Source: Literacy Boost Indonesia Logframe (2015)

These indicators were measured across the intervention at baseline, midpoint, and endline with the Literacy Boost assessment. From these indicators, we can see that although there are more elaborated measures that add up to a sum of literacy, it was reading fluency—how quickly students read—that counted the most.[17] Literacy was thus defined as reading speed, though the exact relationship between fluency and comprehension is not fully understood (Pearson, et al., 2007). I also want to point out that the goals were quite modest, especially for comprehension; the goal was for 40% of students to correctly answer three out of five straightforward reading comprehension questions that required little critical thinking or interpretation. In the next section, I examine how each of the literacy skills were constructed and assessed through each test measure.

The Literacy Boost Assessment: content validity

The baseline and endline assessments were organized such that at each participating school, 20 students (ideally 10 boys and 10 girls) from the second grade would be tested. Students were then tested in a one-on-one format by an examiner, who were often temporary hires. As the project logframe laid out, the same assessment format should be administered at both baseline and endline, though the content should vary between the two tests (e.g., different words in the vocabulary section at baseline and endline).[18] But before testing

[17] Oral reading fluency has three main components: accuracy, rate, and prosody. In defining reading fluency as number of Correct Words Per Minute (CWPM), two of those components are accounted for (accuracy and rate), while prosody is unaccounted for (see Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Rasinksi, 2006).

[18] In Jakarta, the examiners were mostly young, university students. Their short-term pay for the one week's worth of hard work (days starting at 6 am, ending about 12 hours later, to be repeated for five days) could be as much as they would normally earn in a month, and could cover their housing costs, tuition, and other incidentals for a month or more. In Belu, the examiners were mostly female, with just four male enumerators out of 22. According to the monitoring and evaluation officer in Belu, the enumerators were freelancers, newly graduated

students on the literacy skills, examiners first conducted a socio-economic survey with each student. Students were asked a series of questions about their homes, their parents' work, and their reading habits. Answers to questions like "What material is your home's roof made of?" and "Does your family own a motorbike?" served as proxies for a student's socioeconomic status, which was later used in tandem with literacy assessment results to paint a broader picture of how the Literacy Boost program was not only boosting literacy, but development in North Jakarta and Belu.

In this section, I examine the four literacy measures on the assessment: alphabetic knowledge (*tes huruf*), vocabulary (*kata yang paling sering digunakan*), oral reading fluency (*kelancaran membaca nyaring*), and reading comprehension (*pemahaman membaca nyaring*). I describe each test item, how it was administered and scored, and analyze each item within the current debates about how to best assess each literacy skill. The section ends with a series of recommendations on how to amend the Literacy Boost assessment to better evaluate literacy skills in Indonesian language.

Alphabetic Knowledge

Students were tested on all 26 letters of the Indonesian alphabet in the alphabetic knowledge measure. The letters were placed out of order and some were capitalized and others in lower case. The students were asked to name the letters in each row while the enumerator tallied up the total number of correct answers.

Figure 4. *Sample Alphabetic Knowledge Section (Indonesian)*

Baris 1	e__1	L__2	v__3	G__4	p__5
Baris 2	S__6	b__7	Q__8	r__9	D__10
Baris 3	h__11	w__12	Y__13	K__14	u__15
Baris 4	N__16	t__17	A__18	x__19	J__20
Baris 5	c__21	Z__22	m__23	f__24	O__25
Baris 6	i__26				

Note: From Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

Testing alphabetic knowledge is common for early literacy testing, and researchers have examined the relationship between alphabetic knowledge (of the letter names, letter sounds, and letter writing) and later literacy development. Alphabetic knowledge is shown to predict later decoding ability, spelling, and reading comprehension (Piasta et al., 2016), and indeed, it is the first of the "big 5" literacy skills widely championed in literacy programs. Alphabetic knowledge is comprised of two distinct skills: letter-name knowledge, and letter-sound knowledge (Piasta et al., 2016, p. 524). In other words, if a student can name all the letters correctly but cannot produce or identify the corresponding sound(s) for that letter, their alphabetic knowledge is only partial. Focusing on how alphabetic knowledge and oral vocabulary knowledge relate to phonological awareness (the ability to manipulate sounds—in this case, both blending sounds into a whole word and breaking down words into their constituent sounds), Oullette and Haley's (2013) study underscored the importance of both working on letter-sound knowledge and oral vocabulary in the early years. Other researchers have also noted that oral language development is central to predicting later reading achievement—underscoring just how critical *oral* Indonesian language development is to later Indonesian literacy achievement (Dickinson et al., 2010; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).

Testing alphabetic knowledge presents some challenges, as Piasta and colleagues (2016, p. 526-527) note in their study: assessments that test letter-sound correspondences can be long and/or difficult to administer by teachers, they often do not take into account inter-

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from university, or housewives, and they were happy to be called on for this work, for which their stipends were a boon in an economy where there are few opportunities for formalized income.

letter differences (e.g., some letters and their sounds may be harder to learn than other letter-sound combinations), and the timed aspect of the test may be difficult for children.

The Literacy Boost assessment only measured letter-name knowledge, as students were asked to name each letter, but not to sound-out each letter. Other foundational literacy skills such as onsets, rhymes, and phonemic awareness were not assessed, though they were emphasized in teacher training sessions. It seems that since it was not explicitly tested in the alphabetic knowledge section, the degree to which a child understood letter-sound correspondences was deduced from their performance on the vocabulary and reading comprehension sections.

Vocabulary

Students were asked to read from a list of 20 "most frequently used words" in the vocabulary measure. A sample list is below (Literacy Boost Assessment, 2016). The scoring for the measure was 1 point for every word pronounced correctly, which the examiner would score as the student read the words. At baseline, the average correct words read was 11, and the target was to raise that number to 15 (out of 20).

Figure 5. *Sample Vocabulary Section (Indonesian)*

yang	kembali	dengan	teks
di	itu	hahasa	mendeskripsikan
kelas	tanda	Indonesia	ciri
kamu	menggunakan	cerita	tegak
ayo	tepat	bunga	tumbuhan

Note: From Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

Figure 6. *Sample Vocabulary Section (English translation)*

that	return	with	text
of	it	language	to describe
class	sign	Indonesia	trait
you	to use	story	erect
come on	right (proper)	flower	plant

Note: Author's translation.

The words spanned the semantic domains of school (text, class, to describe, language) and the environment (flower, plant), with half the words exceeding any particular semantic domain. There are nouns (e.g., bahasa/language), verbs (e.g., mendeskipsikan/to describe), adjectives (e.g., tepat/right), pronouns (e.g., kamu/you), and interjections (e.g., ayo/come on). The words varied in syllable length: there were three one-syllable words, 10 two-syllable words, four three-syllable words, one four-syllable word, and two five-syllable words. The syllable length may be one measure of word complexity, but frequency of use may be another. For example, though "tumbuhan" (plant) has three syllables and "tegak" (erect) has two syllables, the latter almost certainly is more challenging for most young students, as it is used less frequently in daily speech.

Save the Children Indonesia (Brown, 2013; Pisani et al., 2014) refers to the vocabulary measure as a "single world recognition test," what is commonly called a sight-word recognition test in literacy research. As the name suggests, the student should immediately recognize the word when they see it, or be able to quickly (or automatically) decode the word. A sight-word recognition item tests the student's breadth of vocabulary knowledge. To best measure sight-word knowledge, the words should not follow standard decoding processes (Ouellette, 2006). Otherwise, reading a list of words is merely a decoding exercise, and does not measure students' knowledge (or recognition) of the words. As such,

the list of vocabulary words should include some irregular words. The words on the sample Literacy Boost vocabulary list are all easily decodable words. So long as a student is able to decode, or sound out the words, they will be able to read all the vocabulary words even if they do not know the meaning of the words.

Sight-word recognition tests generally do not work as well in the Indonesian language context; Indonesian is an orthographically-transparent language (Winskel & Wijdaja, 2007) and most words are easily decoded using regular decoding processes. There are exceptions, mostly in vocabulary borrowed from Arabic, Chinese, or other languages (e.g. "Ashari" requires the reader to distinguish the /s/ and the /h/ instead of blending them as /sh/ like in most regular Indonesian words). However, these irregular words—such as those with unusual diphthongs, or with letters that are pronounced in unexpected/irregular ways—do not appear in the Literacy Boost word list above. Nearly all of the words on the list conform to the basic pattern in Indonesian language: regular alternation between consonants and vowels.

Reading researchers focusing on vocabulary have emphasized the multiple dimensions of vocabulary knowledge: breadth, depth, and fluency of access to vocabulary knowledge (Ouellette, 2006; Tannenbaum et al., 2006). There is general consensus that greater, deeper, and more fluent vocabulary knowledge is linked with higher levels of reading comprehension, but the nature of the relationship—whether merely correlative or causal—remains unclear.[19] Pearson, Hiebert and Kamil (2007) have argued for more nuanced vocabulary assessment in order to determine the nature of the relationship of vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, distinguishing between receptive and productive vocabulary, and between decontextualized and contextualized vocabulary assessment. Receptive vocabulary, of course, is the primary focus of vocabulary assessments, and the Literacy Boost vocabulary measure was no exception. It was also a decontextualized test item, such that students being assessed had no contextual cues as to the meaning or correct pronunciation of the word. On the contextualized-decontextualized continuum, the most contextualized format accounts for the polysemous nature of words (i.e., words have multiple meanings), requiring students to do "close reading of the surrounding context to make a selection from among a set of real meanings of real words" (Pearson et al., 2007, p. 289).

Other measures of receptive vocabulary include the widely-used Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), in which the examiner says a noun or verb word, and the student is asked to choose from four options the picture that best corresponds to that word. More involved, depth-focused vocabulary measures include those in which students are asked to orally define a word said by the examiner, to provide synonyms for that word, to use target words in sentences, and/or to distinguish between multiple meanings of a word (e.g., rose [the flower] and rose [stood up], in Tannenbaum et al., 2006, p. 385). The Literacy Boost assessment did not measure the depth or fluency of access to vocabulary knowledge, as students were not asked to enumerate the meanings of the words or to distinguish them from other words.

Aside from the format of the vocabulary (sight-word recognition, definitions, asking to state synonyms, etc.), the selection of words is another area of significance (Pearson et al., 2007). Klara, the Save the Children Indonesia national education officer, explained the process of selecting the words that would appear on the Literacy Boost assessment: she and the rest of the team creating the assessment looked at textbooks for the first, second, and third grades, and selected words that frequently appeared in them. Though not a particularly

[19] In their systematic review of research on vocabulary instruction, Wright and Cervetti (2016) found that targeted vocabulary instruction does help students on reading comprehension tasks that include target words. Their findings show that vocabulary interventions seem to be less influential in terms of improving general reading comprehension.

precise or scientific method, there were few other resources, such as vocabulary lists, in existence or easily accessible (personal communication, June 8, 2017).

Reading Fluency

Reading fluency was just one part of the literacy assessment, but it took on outsize value as the primary indicator of Literacy Boost program success. Even if other literacy targets were met (for example, the percentage of students who read with comprehension rose from 20% to 40%), the project would not be considered a success without hitting the reading fluency target at well. Students were considered fluent readers if they could read 35 words per minute from the reading comprehension passage (Literacy Boost Logframe); students who read less than 35 correct words per minute were considered not fluent.

To score the task, the examiner asked the student to read the passage from the laminated copy in front of them. The examiner, following along on their tablets, counted the number of words that the student correctly read in the first minute. Students were allowed to take as much time as they needed to finish the passage, but only the words read within the first minute were counted. If students could read less than five words correctly in the first 30 seconds, they were considered "not a reader," and the enumerator then read the passage to the student. This way, students did not struggle for an undue amount of time on a task that was clearly too challenging. At the same time, students who could not yet read fluently could still attempt to answer the reading comprehension questions after hearing the passage read to them.

Figure 7. *Sample Reading Comprehension Passage (English translation)*

Grandpa and Grandma Arrive
Returning from their sightseeing trip, Rio's father received news that Grandpa arrived. "Grandpa and Grandma are already at the train station! Let's quickly go to the station!" Rio's mother said. After arriving at the station, Rio said, "Oh, there are Grandpa and Grandma!" "Grandpa…! Grandma…!" yelled Rio. Rio and his younger sibling ran to greet Grandpa and Grandma. Grandpa and Grandma hugged their grandchildren. "We missed you guys," said Grandpa and Grandma. "Let's bring Grandpa and Grandma's suitcases to the car!" Rio's father said. After arriving at home, Rio and his family felt happy. They were happy to be gathered together. Grandma then opened the packages. The packages were full of gifts. Rio received a backpack. His sibling received a cute doll.

Note: Author's translation of reading comprehension passage from Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

For Save the Children, the emphasis on fluency was justified: "Reading speed is key to ensure students can grasp the message of the text" (Brown, 2013, p. 17). This statement, from the Literacy Boost Endline Report in 2013, draws on research that posits a direct bridge from reading fluency to reading comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). In this view, if a student does not read fluently (and thus decode text with a degree of automaticity), it is not possible for them to grasp the meaning of the text. Fluency, measured here by reading speed and accuracy, becomes a stand-in marker for automaticity in decoding. Meanwhile, the third component of reading fluency, namely prosody (or the stress, intonation, and rhythm of speech), was not measured. Literacy researchers (Pikuski & Chard, 2005; Rasinski, 2006; Rasinski et al., 2015) have noted the connection between prosody and reading comprehension. As Frankel et al. (2016) noted, there is "a reciprocal process whereby

employing prosody supports comprehension, and comprehension supports prosody. The reader's ability to project appropriate prosody onto the text assists in constructing a meaningful message" (p. 11). Thus, by reducing reading fluency to just two out of its three component parts, the Literacy Boost assessment did not measure a key skill that is connected to reading comprehension.

Reading fluency is widely used in international development of education programs as a proxy indicator for reading comprehension and, as in the case of Literacy Boost in Indonesia, a measure of the program's impact on students. One of the most comprehensive and critical studies of reading fluency in the international development context has come from within the Save the Children organization. Dowd and Bartlett (2019) question the fluency indicator from multiple fronts; Dowd was the director of research for Save the Children USA for many years. They first point out that fluency norms—usually referred to as correct words per minute (CWPM)—are often arbitrarily determined. There is not a precise reason, for example, to use 35 CWPM as the threshold for reading fluency in the Indonesian context.[20] More troubling is the tendency toward cross-national comparison based on the CWPM. It appears as a simple, clean numerical indicator, ideal for cross-national comparison despite the vast educational, linguistic, and cultural differences between nations. But it is not just comparing across nations that should give us pause, but also within them. For example, Dowd and Bartlett (2019) point out the differences *within* Indonesia between students who speak Indonesian at home and those who speak another language at home: "readers with comprehension who speak Indonesian at home read 43 CWPM, statistically significantly faster than those who do not speak Indonesian at home, who read 33 CWPM on average" (p. 202). Determining the best possible fluency norm is difficult, if not impossible, in Indonesia for this very reason: that in a multicultural, multilingual place, linguistic differences can account for vast variation in reading fluency.

Perhaps most significantly, Dowd and Bartlett (2019, p. 195) point out that reading comprehension—the ultimate goal of learning to read—may actually slow down a reader. Citing studies (Roehrig et al., 2008; Petscher & Kim, 2011) that show students who read with comprehension may actually read fewer words per minute than their non-comprehending but quick-decoding peers, the authors complicate the notion that reading fluency is an adequate stand-in for reading comprehension. Finally, the authors note that by focusing on reading fluency, literacy interventions value fluency at the expense of other literacy skills, which also have important bearing on reading comprehension: namely prosody and vocabulary—both important, but more difficult to measure than reading speed.

Reading Comprehension

The Literacy Boost reading comprehension measure was comprised of ten questions about the text that the student read for the reading fluency measure. The examiner read the questions to the student, who still had access to the text but did not see the questions. The examiner often looked directly at the student during the reading comprehension section. After reading the question, he could look up, unlike in the reading fluency section, when he had to follow along and mark words read correctly and incorrectly on his tablet.

Figure 8. *Sample Reading Comprehension Questions (English translation)*

Reading comprehension question	Correct answer
1. Can you retell the content of the passage?	Rio and his family pick up Grandpa and Grandma from the station, they head to Rio's home, Rio and his family feel happy because of Grandpa and Grandma's arrival,

[20] For fluency norms in the United States, see Hasbrouck and Tindal (2005).

	Grandpa and Grandma brought gifts for Rio and his younger sibling
2. Who arrived?	Grandpa and Grandma
3. Where did Rio and his family pick up Grandpa and Grandma?	The station
4. With whom did Rio go to the station?	His father, mother, and younger sibling
5. What did Grandpa and Grandma do when they met their grandchildren?	Hug them
6. What feeling did every family member feel when they all got together?	Happiness
7. What gift did Rio receive from Grandpa and Grandma?	A backpack
8. Why did Rio's family feel happy when they all got together?	Because Grandpa and Grandma don't live with them, they don't meet all the time, it has been a long time since they have met Grandpa and Grandma.
9. Why did Grandpa and Grandma give gifts to Rio and his younger sibling?	Grandpa and Grandma love them
10. If you do not live with your Grandpa and Grandma, what would you feel when you meet them? Why would you feel that way?	Correct answer if student answers in agreement or disagreement with explanation that uses all the references from the story

Note: Author's translation of the reading comprehension questions from Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

The reading comprehension questions largely focused on information stated explicitly in the text. For example, questions like "Who arrived?" and "What gift did Rio receive from Grandpa and Grandma?" have straightforward answers, which the students either get right or wrong on the basis of the content of the passage. For these questions, there was no room for extemporaneous response, to make connections, to draw on students' personal experience or background knowledge; the correct answers were all to be found in the text. Even a question that could include an individual interpretation from the student ("Why did Grandpa and Grandma give gifts to Rio and his younger sibling?") had a straightforward correct answer: Because Grandpa and Grandma love them. One can imagine how a student might use their understanding of the reading passage in combination with their own ideas to offer up other answers: because Grandma and Grandpa feel guilty, because Grandma and Grandpa are rich, because Rio and his sibling always expect gifts from their relatives, and so on. The final question of the comprehension section was an exception, and allowed for student interpretation.

As many scholars have pointed out, reading comprehension is the ultimate goal in reading instruction (e.g., Campione, 1989; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). Acquiring phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and becoming fluent decoders are all skills in the service of eventually becoming comprehending readers. Reading comprehension itself has also undergone critical revision: from understanding on a factual basis, to becoming a more critical and analytical reader (Pearson & Cervetti, 2017). The ultimate goal, then, is not to reach understanding by simply extracting the meaning from the text, but a process of meaning-making that involves the reader interpreting the text in conjunction with the reader's background knowledge, own experiences, and ideas.

There has been a call by scholars to craft reading comprehension assessments that better reflect this vision of what reading comprehension is and should be (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Johnston, 1997; Pearson & Cervetti, 2017; Shepard, 2000; Valencia et al., 1989). After all, many have pointed out the link between assessment and instruction, for better or for worse, and the hope of designing an assessment (or new assessment format) that is based upon principles of analytic, critical reading comprehension is that instruction will also move in that direction. Some have called for a move toward reading portfolios, rather than a one-off assessment that determines reading comprehension levels (Johnston, 1997; Johnston & Costello, 2005, p. 259). García and Pearson (1994) enumerate other ways to assess reading comprehension, including performance assessment, authentic assessment, and portfolio assessment. Meanwhile, others have called for dynamic assessment, in which the examiners work within the "zone of proximal development" (following Vygotsky's model) and aid the student such that the student is able to answer comprehension questions correctly (Campione, 1989). In this model, what is measured is not a zero-sum evaluation of students' comprehension proficiency, but rather, their ability to learn *during* the test and apply new strategies to answering questions.

In some ways, these more progressive reading comprehension models are not an impossibility for the Literacy Boost program in Indonesia or elsewhere; students are already evaluated in a one-on-one setting, with enumerators dedicating significant time and energy for each student. In fact, I observed examiners offering scaffolding for students for questions in both the socioeconomic survey section and the literacy assessment, probing and leading students to answer when they initially resisted. Yet two factors remain challenges in instituting a truly dynamic assessment to measure reading comprehension. First, examiners were short-term hires who underwent a two-day training session, not professional clinicians. Thus, they lacked the uniform training necessary to intervene equally across student populations, which then could lead to uneven results. Second, the prerogative to ensure standardizable, quantitative literacy assessment results is central to the international development infrastructure, of which Save the Children is a part. Dynamic assessments may be more useful for understanding the actual capabilities of the actual students being assessed, and lead to better outcomes for those students (Campione, 1989; Johnston, 2011; Rathvon, 2004), but ultimately the development infrastructure is more concerned with large-scale measurement, than individual student outcomes (Ferguson, 1994; Hamilton et al., 2015).

Recommendations: New directions for the Literacy Boost assessment

The Literacy Boost assessment can be improved. Some aspects of the assessment can be easily tweaked, while others would entail significant changes in how examiners are recruited and trained, and how the test is administered and scored. In parallel with the literacy skills themselves, which become progressively more challenging, effectively testing literacy skills becomes more complex with each skill.

On the easy-to-amend end of the spectrum is the alphabetic knowledge measure, which was limited to letter-name knowledge, leaving out letter-sound and letter-writing knowledge. The letters tested also varied between the upper-case and lower-case, introducing unnecessary variability between letters. Piasta et al. (2016) found that testing *less* letters may be more effective, and that a limit of eight or ten letters should suffice, displayed in both cases side-by-side (e.g., Nn). At very least, letters should be given uniformly in upper-case or lower-case to account for inter-letter and inter-case differences.

By reducing the number of letters tested, examiners could use the extra time to test letter-sound knowledge. In addition to asking students to name the letters, they would also ask them to say a sound of that letter. Examiners, following Piasta et al. (2016), would mark as correct *any* acceptable letter sound (including long vowels). Because phonemic awareness is continually emphasized in Literacy Boost teacher trainings and the literacy curriculum,

directly assessing it—rather than its indirect assessment through decoding exercises in the vocabulary and reading fluency sections—would provide a more granular view of students' literacy abilities.

Given the ultimate aim of Literacy Boost—to increase the number of children who can read with comprehension, and not only quickly (even if the Literacy Boost assessment is weighted toward reading fluency)—the vocabulary and reading comprehension measures should reflect the goal of meaning-making through text. The vocabulary section only measured students' ability to decode words, and not their understanding of word meaning.[21] While there are practical challenges to using more complex vocabulary measures, it is possible to distinguish students' reading ability from their oral vocabulary knowledge. In multilingual settings such as in Belu, vocabulary modal scores are often zero. Given many students' lack of familiarity with the Indonesian language, even in the second grade, vocabulary assessments in Indonesian would of course be low and contextualization cues (embedding vocabulary items within reading comprehension sections, for example) may not result in any more nuanced assessment of students' vocabulary knowledge. Developing a simple picture-based measure like the PPVT, in which students are shown four pictures and asked to select the picture that best corresponds to the word said by examiner, would test receptive vocabulary knowledge. Especially in multilingual settings like Belu, using the PPVT or a similar measure would allow examiners to distinguish between students' Indonesian vocabulary knowledge and their ability to decode Indonesian words.

Reading fluency, as I have noted, is considered the most important indicator in the Literacy Boost assessment and indeed, in evaluating the entire program. In amending the reading fluency measure, there are both practical and theoretical considerations. On the practical side, there should be more consideration of the Correct Words per Minute (CWPM) and set different CWPM fluency thresholds for students who do not speak Indonesian. In the case of many students who do not speak Indonesian in Belu, the fluency measure tests both their decoding abilities and their knowledge of Indonesian language.[22] As Dowd and Bartlett (2019) noted, the focus on reading fluency in international development programs (including Literacy Boost and EGRA) is largely due to research like the National Reading Panel (2000), which "set aside second language learning because that topic was simultaneously taken up by a separate NICHD research initiative. This absence is notable given the degree to which this report has informed international reading assessment and intervention design for multilingual populations around the globe" (p. 190). Though the research on CWPM may not exist in the Indonesian context, the Literacy Boost test developers would do well to work with linguists to determine an appropriate CWPM for both Indonesian-dominant and non-Indonesian language contexts.

On the theoretical side, the disproportionate emphasis on reading fluency should be adjusted. Whether fluency actually is the most significant literacy indicator is up for debate, and certainly the thresholds for fluency vary across context (Dowd & Bartlett, 2019; Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005). What to measure in interventions like Literacy Boost, how to measure it, whether the measures match the skills, and whether those skills actually lead to reading—all these questions entail much research in each *particular* context. The drive for particularity may very well be impossible to operationalize for NGOs that are under pressure to deliver programming in varied contexts. Given the relentless push for quantified results,

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[21] In a pedagogical parallel, I observed in early grades classrooms that fluency and the correctness of pronunciation was heavily emphasized, whereas actual comprehension and meaning-making was rarely taught or assessed.

[22] Furthermore, many students in Belu (and also in Jakarta) have limited preschool experience and their home languages are oral, meaning they have had little experience decoding written text when they arrive in primary school.

however, the tools used to produce those results need to be refined as much as possible for each social and linguistic context.

There was a gap between Literacy Boost teacher trainings on reading comprehension, and how students were assessed on reading comprehension. In the training sessions, teachers were encouraged to adopt new understandings and operationalizations of reading comprehension. Teachers were encouraged to elicit nuanced answers to their reading comprehension questions, and to ask questions that were not simply fact-based. Meanwhile, the reading comprehension measure on the assessment adhered to simple, fact-based questions. Considering the connections between assessment and instruction and curriculum (Shepard, 2000), the reading comprehension measure could include more open-ended questions for students to demonstrate analytic and creative thinking. This would be difficult to score and quantify on a large scale, and students may very well score poorly on such a measure, but it would represent a shift toward meaningful reading comprehension assessment.

In amending the assessment to better reflect Literacy Boost's program goals, on the more difficult end of the spectrum is the recommendation to include a writing measure. Overall, the Literacy Boost assessment is receptive. The literacy that is being measured is only reading literacy, and excludes writing literacy. Scholars have shown links between *writing* letters and alphabetic knowledge (both letter-name and letter-sound correspondences), word reading skills, and letter identification (Molfese, 2010). Puranik and Lonigan's (2014) study found that conceptual, procedural, and generative knowledge about writing is predictive of later achievement on writing tasks.[23] In other words, for students to become *fully* literate—with both receptive and productive literacy capabilities—writing must be taught alongside reading from the early years.

There is also a basic question of whether literacy is best conceptualized as five component skills, and indeed, this question has been asked by some within Save the Children (Bartlett et al., 2015). They write that for EGRA-inspired interventions, "literacy is being conceptualized in compartmentalized, staged reading skills", and that such "approaches have isolated 'core reading components,' rather than emphasizing how they develop together" (Bartlett, et al., 2015, pp. 308-310). As I explore in the following chapters, Save the Children's Literacy Boost approach did not closely mirror the literacy assessment. In other words, it did not promote reading fluency at the expense of other program priorities, which included community engagement and classroom discipline reform. Yet the Literacy Boost assessment was modeled on the five, staged reading components. One question for future research and development practice, then, is whether it will be possible to design program evaluation metrics that capture students' literacy progress without such isolated, staged reading components.

Contexts of Testing

Thus far, I have analyzed how literacy is defined through quantitative metrics on a literacy assessment. With regard to the content of the assessment, there are areas for improvement, to better align with the literacy objectives of the intervention and also with current research on literacy assessment. These assessments do not happen in lab environments with ideally distributed test subjects. Education scholars (García & Pearson, 1994; Solano-Flores & Milbourn, 2016) have stressed that test scores must be evaluated within contexts: of assessment capacity (how tests are developed), cultural validity, and

[23] In Puranik and Lonigan (2014), conceptual knowledge includes knowing that writing in Indonesian proceeds from left to right, knowledge about print, and knowledge about the purposes of writing; procedural knowledge includes alphabet knowledge, and letter and word knowledge; generative knowledge includes knowing that words and sentences carry meaning.

consequential validity. In this section, I outline how the Literacy Boost assessment was created, its translation to the Indonesian language, and its interactional structure between examiner and student.

Creating the assessment

Not all assessments are valid. In writing about the development and uses of international tests, Solano-Flores and Millbourn (2016) write about four stages in the lifespan of an assessment: 1) Test Development, 2) Test Translation, 3) Test Administration and Analysis of Test Results, and 4) Use of Assessment Data, each of which should conform to certain standards to be considered valid. The first two stages—test development and translation—are facets of what is often referred to as "assessment capacity", and can be indexed by the number of assessment experts in any given country (Solano-Flores & Millbourn, 2016).

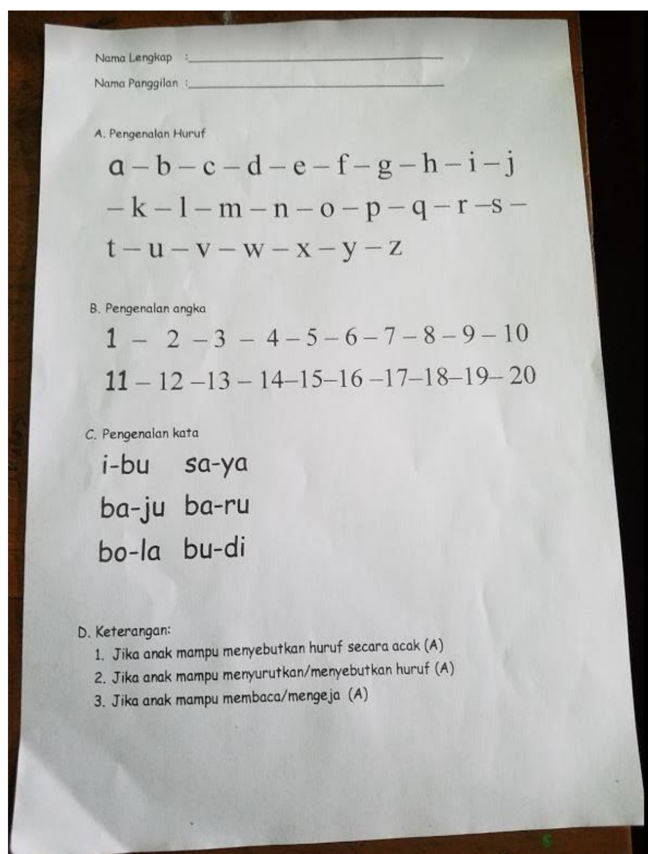
The Literacy Boost assessment was developed by three staff members who spearheaded the translation of the Literacy Boost program, both into Indonesian language and as much as possible, local cultural contexts in the areas of program implementation. None of the three were experts in assessment, by the standards of Solano-Flores and Millbourn, but have become the in-house experts through years of working for Save the Children and on the Literacy Boost program. With periodic input from select "experts," the three Save the Children staffers translated the Literacy Boost assessment from a generic global English version into the Indonesian language (Klara, personal communication, August 8, 2016). There are challenges in translating all assessments, and even more so for literacy assessments, whether due to orthographic, syntactic, or other linguistic differences between source and target languages (Davidson & Hobbs, 2013; Gavin, 2011). Studies of Literacy Boost in Yemen, for example, highlighted how translating the assessment was complicated by not only Arabic orthography, in which diacritics are used, but also because of dialectical and register differences that appeared both regionally and also between home and school contexts (Gavin, 2011).

In Indonesia, similar differences in register prevail (Errington, 2000; Goebel, 2015; Zentz, 2014, 2017). Speaking Indonesian language fluently means different things depending on class, context, region, educational level, and purpose. If in textbooks a rigid Indonesian is standard—and students do take Indonesian language classes through high school and are tested on it for their exit examinations—that register is rarely if ever used in daily conversation or even mass media. This gap between the Indonesian language that is tested and what is spoken in daily life was even larger for students who entered primary school with little to no exposure to Indonesian language (of any register), such as those at SD Wamea. In Belu, a linguistically super-diverse region, it was not uncommon for there to be more than one local language spoken by students in a single classroom (Zhang, 2015). The challenges of translating the Literacy Boost assessment, then, spanned not only the writing context- and grade-appropriate content on the assessment, but also in thinking about the purposes of the assessment at schools like SD Wamea. The assessment became not only a barometer of literacy skills, but of Indonesian language skills.

Even translation into Indonesian for Indonesian-dominant contexts, like North Jakarta, present challenges. The Indonesian language is predominately an orthographically transparent language, meaning that most Indonesian words are pronounced as one would expect. However, linguistic research has shown that it is syllabic knowledge—not letter knowledge—that is the "salient unit" in Bahasa Indonesia which predicts later reading achievement. Furthermore, Bahasa Indonesia has a relatively transparent system of affixes, so the morpheme is another important linguistic unit for early readers and spellers (Winskel & Widjaja, 2007). The Literacy Boost assessment largely skirts the debate about whether to focus on letter knowledge or syllable knowledge, as it does not test phonemic awareness

directly.[24] Even so, the assessment was based on the principles of English-language literacy, given its test measures of letter knowledge, whole vocabulary word knowledge, and reading fluency and comprehension. In contrast was the entrance assessment for children entering a primary school in North Jakarta.

Figure 9. *Entrance examination for North Jakarta primary school*



Nama Lengkap : ____________________

Nama Panggilan : ____________________

A. Pengenalan Huruf

a – b – c – d – e – f – g – h – i – j

– k – l – m – n – o – p – q – r – s –

t – u – v – w – x – y – z

B. Pengenalan angka

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

11 – 12 – 13 – 14 – 15 – 16 – 17 – 18 – 19 – 20

C. Pengenalan kata

i-bu sa-ya

ba-ju ba-ru

bo-la bu-di

D. Keterangan:

1. Jika anak mampu menyebutkan huruf secara acak (A)
2. Jika anak mampu menyurutkan/menyebutkan huruf (A)
3. Jika anak mampu membaca/mengeja (A)

Note: Image by author (2017)

Like the Literacy Boost assessment, this assessment tested letter-name knowledge and receptive vocabulary. The vocabulary words, however, were broken up into syllables, reflecting common wisdom and teaching practice about how to teach children to read. In translating the assessment, the Literacy Boost staffers had to grapple with test content issues (like how to select appropriate words for the vocabulary measure). On top of that, they also had to grapple with questions about the very literacy skills themselves, like whether the same five literacy skills matter in the same way, with the same balance, for the Indonesian language.

The testing environment and the "interactional substrate"

Literacy researchers have increasingly recognized the significance of task and context in evaluating students' literacy abilities. Toyama et al. (2017, p. 163) write that "…a text at

[24] More direct engagement on letters-versus-syllables has occurred in teacher training sessions. At a teacher training session in Jakarta in November 2016, a Literacy Boost trainer asked the teachers to close their eyes, and tell her how many sounds are in the word "*makan*," All the teachers responded audibly with "*ma-kan*," breaking the word into the two syllables. The trainer persisted, asking for the number of sounds, not syllables, and later told me that this – the salience of the syllable for not only students but teachers – was a recurrent stumbling block at all teacher training sessions. The idea of promoting sound-letter awareness was not foreign to them, but calling it "phonemic awareness" and emphasizing the individual letter (rather than the syllable) caused confusion among the teachers. From classroom observations and interviews, it was clear that teachers often taught phonemic awareness with syllabic constructions, rather than with individual letters (BA – DA- FA- GA, and so on).

any level can be rendered more or less difficult because of factors in the reading process in addition to text—those related to reader, task, and context." In this model, the very same reading passage may be processed very differently by the same student in different scenarios.

Furthermore, we can look at literacy testing as an interactional achievement; these oral tests, administered by an examiner to a student on a one-on-one basis, could only produce those neat, quantitative scores through interaction, whether vocal prompts, interpretations, responses, gestures, and/or other cues. Maynard and Marlaire (1992) refer to these forms of interaction as the "interactional substrate," and in their observations they note how examiners sped up or slowed down (when the child's attention span appeared to be waning, the examiner often sped up; when the child needed more help in getting to the right answer, the examiner often slowed down), how examiners acknowledged and evaluated children's responses with smiles, a head nod, or perhaps a vocal "good." On the child's side, the child *learns* during the test by reading the examiner's feedback, modulating their responses accordingly (Maynard & Marlaire, 1992, p. 184). Applying these findings to the Literacy Boost assessment, what was measured was not only the "accountable" score of Correct Words Read Per Minute, but also the child's ability to learn during the course of the test—not only decoding words, but decoding interactions with the examiner.

Returning to SD Wamea, the logistical and organizational challenges of Literacy Boost assessments in Belu were immediately evident. The four examiners, the Literacy Boost Monitoring and Evaluation staffer, and I were asked to introduce ourselves to a classroom of about 30 second-grade students. Many of these students had limited understanding of Indonesian language, but could follow the formulaic introductions. Like many other schools in Belu Regency, there was no excess indoor space at SD Wamea. Though there was a large field in front of the school, there were no unused classrooms or other meeting rooms. Thus, it was determined that the best place to conduct the assessments would be in the classroom itself. All the students were ushered outside, told to wait in line, while the four examiners tested the students one-on-one. The teacher moved in and out of the classroom continuously; she had to keep the students waiting outside in order and from making too much noise, and translated for students and examiners inside whenever needed.

Luckily for most of the students, at least one examiner spoke their language, and thus, they could conduct the assessment in translation. Though the examiners were diligent and thoughtful, there was little coordination on the translated versions of the assessments; they developed in real time as examiners realized the linguistic context of SD Wamea. However, for some students, the teacher had to step in and provide more scaffolding for the student, whether due to a language issue (needing not only words in 'their' language, but 'their words' – familiar words), or because they were frightened in front of a new adult, or of being in this unfamiliar situation of a one-on-one assessment.

The one-on-one interactional structure of the assessment was indeed a point of stark difference between it and everyday classroom activity. Most classroom time in both Belu and North Jakarta, and indeed across most primary schools in Indonesia, is spent in the whole-class format, in which teachers ask questions to which the entire class responds together in a univocal chant. In this model, students are led to the one correct answer by teachers, who often pose factual, rote-memorization, or instant recall questions. Teachers also sometimes say the first syllable of the answer, so that students, all together, sound out the end of that word or sentence. Rather than testing comprehension, it serves as an exercise in locating aural contours. The goal for students is to sound exactly like their peers; otherwise, their different response will be immediately audible and apparent to the rest of the class. Rarely are students asked to interpret texts, to give their own impression or opinion, or even asked to answer individually (rather than in a group-chant format). In daily class life, teachers often have little

time to give individualized feedback.[25] For the Literacy Boost assessment, students were separated from their classmates and asked to sit one-on-one with an examiner. For some students, this alone may have been intimidating. When we consider how students were expected to conduct themselves in classrooms—answering through choral recitation—the dissonance with the Literacy Boost assessment becomes apparent. In the assessment, students were asked questions alone, and did not receive any guiding onset syllables as their teacher might normally supply.

Like Maynard and Marlaire (1992), who far from criticizing examiners for "uncontrolled" testing environment resulting from the interactional substrate actually praised them for their professionalism, I was also impressed by the examiners' resourcefulness and professionalism. They immediately began to consider how they should organize themselves for the next day, working out how to make up different teams with the 12 other examiners, based on their linguistic repertoires and what languages they thought the students would speak in the schools they were to visit. They worked on-the-spot to troubleshoot a difficult situation, working to make students feel as comfortable as possible and to give students the best chance of being able to answer questions correctly. In other words, the examiners provided absolutely necessary scaffolding to the students in order to obtain those accountable test scores (Maynard and Marlaire, 1992, p. 196). The reason to highlight the interactional substrate, then, is not to criticize the examiners or Save the Children for imperfect test conditions. Rather, attending to the interactional substrate gives us a sense of how testing context—and in particular in Belu, where more often than not students spoke a language other than Indonesian at home—conditions students' results. It shows us that students' ability to learn during the test may also be connected to how unfamiliar the testing situation is to them.

Comparing two assessment sessions by the same examiner in North Jakarta allows us to see how the interactional substrate is central to the assessment experience for students. The photos are stills from two videos, which were widely used at Literacy Boost training sessions for examiners. Student A was held up as an example of a fluent reader, while student B was an example of a non-fluent reader. In both sessions, the examiner and student were in a room with another few sets of examiners and students, who exit and enter throughout the session. Beyond the sound of other examiner-student pairs, there was also the constant din emanating from the schoolyard and hallways.

Figure 10. *Student A - the fluent reader*

Note: From Literacy Boost enumerator training video (2016)

[25] In the course of my classroom observations, I saw harried teachers with stacks of notebooks in front of them, or more often, thronged by students holding notebooks. They quickly skimmed the page, offered a 100% if all appeared to be correct, and asked the students to work on the task again if not. In my observations, I found that teachers did have a good sense of which students were thriving and which ones were struggling, despite the little individual attention allotted to students.

Student A sat side-by-side with the examiner. This may have been idiosyncratic, but it was more likely that gender was a determining factor in the differences in bodily positioning between Student A (a boy) and Student B (a girl). Student A read quickly, buzzing through the lines. The examiner looked at the student and the laminated handout, rather than the tablet. After finishing the reading passage (at :46), the student looked expectantly at the examiner's tablet, which the examiner then tilted away view. When it came to reading comprehension, the student answered each question without hesitation, with the examiner repeating the student's answers in a lowered tone, drawing out the response. This tone was often used by adults when speaking with children. It both humored the child and also indicated implicit agreement. There was a steady rhythm between the examiner and the student, neither missing a beat. The examiner also smiled while saying *oh gitu* ("is that so"), another form of vocal assent.

Figure 11. *Student B: the non-fluent reader*

Note: From Literacy Boost enumerator training video (2016)

Student B sat across from the examiner. This student—the non-fluent reader—spelled out each word, saying the letter-names, before stringing together the letters to say the word. It was a laborious process but one that seemed to work for her; she made it through most of the passage without asking for assistance. On two occasions she looked up at the examiner for help. The two words were multisyllabic, and she could not manage to string them together. Throughout the task, the examiner looked at the tablet, following along word by word. The student answered all of the reading comprehension questions, using words from the text, but hesitated and answered quietly (almost inaudibly), and sometimes incorrectly. The examiner also repeated all of Student B's answers, but when they were incorrect the examiner did not draw out his echo and there was a hint of questioning in his tone, alerting the student that the answer may be incorrect. The whole interaction for Student A is much shorter (2:43) than for Student B (6:27). Student A showed a lot of interest in the tablet throughout the interaction, while student B did not seek to see what the examiner typed in. The tablet mediated the interaction between student and examiner, shaping the flow of question and response, the interpersonal dynamic, and the pacing and rhythm of the assessment.

Meanwhile in Belu, SD Wamea's facilities were basic: classrooms with wooden benches and desks, a blackboard, and little else. The students did not have their own textbooks, but rather they copied what their teacher wrote on the board into their notebooks. The tablets that the examiners used was striking in that context. The students at SD Wamea may have had some familiarity with tablet technology, but they had no interaction with it in their daily school lives. Even in North Jakarta where the tablet and screen technology were ubiquitous, the primary schools where Literacy Boost intervened did not have computers for students' use. The students in Jakarta, however, likely had more experience with screen technology than their Belu counterparts; most (though not all) parents used smartphones and teachers often relied on WhatsApp to disseminate information to them.

These factors—the testing environment, the language of assessment, the interactional structure of the assessment, and the technology used by the enumerators—all exert some

influence in the experience and outcome of a student's literacy assessment, and the factors themselves vary across sites. All of this raises the question of standardizability and neat, quantitative results of the Literacy Boost assessment. Students' failure to perform well may have just as much to do with the assessment's different interactional structure, or of course the language that it is administered in, as the actual difficulty of the assessment or the student's literacy capabilities.

Discussion and concluding thoughts

I have examined the meanings and operationalizations of "literacy" within the context of the Literacy Boost program. The first part focused on how literacy was officially defined in the program: in spite of broader rhetoric, given the centrality of the CWPM metric, within Literacy Boost, literacy meant reading fluency. For the program to have succeeded, a certain percentage of students needed to become fluent by the end of intervention, meaning that they could read 35 words correctly per minute. All the other program activities (which took up the bulk of the program's efforts)—whether the Community Action Cycle involving parents and teachers, teacher training sessions, or reading camps—counted less than that single indicator. The second part of the chapter focused on the content of the assessment. I examined each test item within current debates in literacy and assessment research. I ended the section by suggesting ways in which the test may be improved for future iterations of the intervention. The third and final part of the chapter focused on contexts of testing—the physical, cultural, and linguistic environments in which the assessments took place. I suggested that test results, even on a broad scale, should be contextualized within understandings of the vast variability in environment, even within single program areas, like Belu and North Jakarta. I want to conclude with a discussion about the *purposes* of the Literacy Boost assessment: who uses the results, and to what ends?

On some level, the Literacy Boost assessment was just one arm of the intervention, linked to the other program activities in ways that were not explicit. In other words, from the perspective of my interlocutors at schools, the tests were just part of what "Save" did. They came in and gave the tests, just like they came in to run a Community Action Cycle meeting. The teachers experienced this disconnect between the assessment and their pedagogy because there was indeed no connection. Their students' results were never shared with them, nor even school headmasters. Instead, the data were immediately aggregated and analyzed, shared among the monitoring and evaluation staffers, the education officers, and eventually, donors and other external stakeholders.

Many education scholars advocate for stronger links between assessment, curriculum, and instruction. If in earlier scholarship, assessments should help determine individual students' capabilities, more recently there has been a shift toward designing authentic assessments that connect to learning processes and daily instructional activities (Campione, 1989; Shepard, 2000; Valencia et al., 1989).[26] Connecting the results to daily classroom life was not the objective for Literacy Boost, however. In fact, in their efforts to deemphasize the assessment—and thereby reduce the stress levels of participating teachers and students—the Literacy Boost staffers routinely maintained that the tests did not have high stakes attached to them. The results would not be released to teachers or headmasters, and individual students would not be singled out. By the same token, because student test results were not shared, teachers could not make meaningful changes to their teaching practice to address the specific literacy skills that their students struggled with.

From the Literacy Boost program side, it was nearly the same. Organizing the assessment was a big endeavor for the Literacy Boost staffers: it entailed recruiting and

[26] There are of course instances in which determining individual capabilities is important. Rathvon (2004) outlines how assessments can lead to early intervention for students experiencing reading difficulties.

training examiners, reaching out to all the schools to make sure their teachers and students would be ready, preparing the technology and other requisite equipment, and coordinating with MEAL staffers. However, the Literacy Boost program staff did not discuss the assessment results at length, nor did the results impact their programming. Whether students got higher or lower scores on reading fluency, the staffers still had to go forward with their Community Action Cycle programming, their parent outreach sessions, their Reading Camps. In fact, the program logframe was drawn up before the baseline results were issued. In that way, the assessment was disconnected from teachers' daily pedagogy, *and* the Literacy Boost programming. It did not comment on, or even drastically impact, the intervention; it was simply one part of the intervention.

From these patterns, we can conclude that the assessment was a mechanism for the following: 1. To construct literacy through measurable definitions; 2. To secure a connection to donors, who needed such quantitative evidence that the intervention was working; and 3. To bolster Save the Children's legitimacy among international development of education actors.

The assessment results were a sort of language used between Save the Children and its donors. The assessment allowed Save the Children to, on a regular basis, run rigorous statistical analyses drawing from relatively large sample sizes (e.g., in the 2013 Endline Report, 581 students were assessed at 35 schools in Belu). No other activity in the Literacy Boost intervention could be represented through such quantification, statistical analysis and rhetorical flourish. As I will describe in Chapter 4, donors like DFAT *only* looked at assessment results to either continue or discontinue support of the program. As such, the Literacy Boost assessment, divorced as it was from instruction, individual students, and even the intervention's other activities, actually did carry high-stakes. Assessment scores (and in particular, the percentage of fluent readers) constituted the intervention's bottom line—with results affecting its very existence. The Endline Reports (Brown, 2013; Pisani et al., 2014; Prusinksi et al., 2012) were only effective communication tools if they highlighted how much better students from Literacy Boost schools did on the literacy assessment than their counterparts at non-intervention schools. The reports were used to secure, placate, and maintain donors, to show the Indonesian government the results of Save the Children's work, and to communicate with other Save the Children branches, as well as with staffers at other international development organizations.

The assessment results were frequently also the subject of presentations by Save the Children staff at conferences like the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Annual Meeting, the most prominent conference for international education researchers and development actors. In 2018 at the CIES Annual Meeting, I was on a panel called "Literacy in Practice" with two groups of presenters from Save the Children, who discussed the results of Endline Reports from South Africa and Laos. The points of debate were about the quantitative analyses, sampling issues, and the interpretation of the statistics. There was no discussion on the purpose of the assessment, its format, or how the assessment functioned within the larger intervention—those were all taken-for-granted, and it was only the assessment results that were questioned. Presenting at such conferences, of course, further bolstered Literacy Boost's legitimacy among international development of education researchers and practitioners. In that way, the assessment was the mechanism that allowed for continuing funding, support and influence.

In this chapter, I asked whether the Literacy Boost assessment actually measures the right things, whether it tell us (and incidentally, who does it tell?) meaningful things about children's literacy abilities. If we conclude that the assessment is *solely* used to appease donors, as test scores are the common language of international NGOs, then there is no need for recommendations on how to improve the assessment, or how to better evaluate the

intervention's impact. However, in many discussions with Literacy Boost staffers in North Jakarta and in Belu, and with Save the Children national education officers and international advisors in the country office, I was asked time and again to give recommendations on how to improve the assessment instrument and the intervention more broadly. Thus, rather than taking the cynical view, I write the following from the perspective that Save the Children is interested in carrying out assessments that are responsive to research, and from those assessment results developing site-specific curriculum and programming.

Aside from tweaking the assessment measures as suggested earlier (including a letter-sound measure and changing the format of the vocabulary measure, for example), Save the Children could lead the way among international development practitioners in using different measures for literacy, and different measures of program impact. That would entail moving away from CWPM (Correct Words Per Minute) fluency rates as the single most literacy indicator, and toward more holistic evaluations of the intervention. On that CIES panel, I presented on the limitations of quantitative research methodologies for understanding the impacts of Literacy Boost. If the Endline Reports focus narrowly on assessment results, the majority of the intervention activities are left out of view—or at least left without any outcomes that directly assess their worth and potential added value. What the Literacy Boost intervention did at SD Wamea, for example, could not be accounted for in these foundational literacy assessments. There were other aspects of school life that were profoundly impacted, including "child-friendly classrooms" (i.e., the drastic reduction of corporal punishment) and increased parental and caretaker involvement at school. These larger, more complicated shifts simply could not be neatly captured in any currently available quantitative assessment. The rest of this dissertation explores those other, unaccounted-for effects of the Literacy Boost intervention.

Chapter 2. Speaking up: Literacy Boost's attempt to democratize participation

In 1982, the founder of SD Sarjana, a garbage picker from the provinces, built the school with the help of his community of fellow garbage pickers. A feat of *gotong royong* (mutual collaboration) and pick-yourself-up-by-your bootstraps mentality, the school allowed the children of garbage pickers to receive a primary level education during an era when the vision of universal primary education was far from actualized. The school's story was rapturously spotlighted in national media and was a source of pride in this neglected corner of peripheral Jakarta. SD Sarjana had a playful name that connotes academic success: *sarjana* means university graduate. The hope was that its students will reach the heights of post-secondary education, when many of their parents only finished primary school, if that.

Thirty-four years after its founding, when I conducted my research in 2016-2017, it was immediately apparent that SD Sarjana was facing many challenges. There were challenges related to infrastructure and space (Chifos & Suselo, 2000). Located at the end of a narrow, unpaved alley, the school site consisted of a tiny schoolyard, four classrooms, one toilet that served 400 students, and a small, cramped room that functioned simultaneously as the principal's office, the teachers' lounge, and the school library. The problems at the school did not end with the facilities. There was widespread dissatisfaction among teachers and consequently a high teacher turnover, a high student-teacher ratio, and a paucity of reading materials—few textbooks and library books were available. In the second grade, a student with a learning disability and speech impairment roamed the classroom as his classmates and teachers studiously avoided him. It was his third year of the second grade. Meanwhile, the family foundation that operated this school seemed to be reaping from the school rather than contributing to it. The most visible sign of this was that the outgoing foundation head, one of the five adult children of the school's founder, drove a car despite having no other sources of income. Owning a car was an unbelievable luxury in this urban *kampung*. [27] Pak Asda, the school supervisor from the district Department of Education office who was in charge of monitoring the school, was aware of the situation but nothing changed. The school continued to operate, recruiting students and often new teachers as well each year. What happened, such that the school transformed from a model of *gotong royong* to this situation of self-enrichment, stratification, and exploitation?

Teachers, the headmaster, and parents at the school were concerned about and often quite critical of the situation at SD Sarjana. Their critiques of the school directed a shift in my research. I entered the field with a different research question: how did the Literacy Boost program, an International Non-governmental Organization's literacy intervention, get adapted and taken up at SD Sarjana? What I found surprised me. Instead of narrowly focusing on literacy, the Literacy Boost program at the school touched on democratization and decentralization, corruption, river normalization, and changing rules for the Indonesian teacher workforce. It also brought to the fore, in very human terms, how issues like land rights affected parents' decision-making about their children's education. This chapter elucidates how Literacy Boost intersects with political and economic processes of post-authoritarianism, democratization, decentralization and neoliberalism in Indonesia. In short, the possibilities for school improvement through the Literacy Boost program were differentially conditioned by these larger forces of change.

[27] *Kampung* is most frequently translated as "village", but scholars of Jakarta urbanism often use the term "urban *kampung*" in lieu of "slums" or "squatter settlements." In doing so, they both highlight the interconnectedness of people within these communities (like relationships in rural villages) and also use a neutral term to describe the communities that house people from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

The chapter underscores the particular relationships and institutional legacies that allowed SD Sarjana to operate in its current, seemingly inefficient and inequitable form. These factors include: the ways in which labor is gendered and respect is classed, entrenched power hierarchies in schools, prevalent uncertainty about land, belonging, and even existence in Jakarta, and ambiguity of the responsibilities of the state for the provision of high-quality educational services and facilities. The chapter is composed of three sections.

In the first section, I consider how SD Sarjana's spatial and historical contexts touch upon and shape lived educational experiences today. By examining Cilincing's shifts over time—from a sparsely populated beachside escape to a densely populated port area that encompasses the neighborhood of Kampung Sawah—I highlight how land tenure insecurity is central to understanding both the school's operations and parents' choices to send their children to the school, and indeed, how those processes are interrelated. The very reason for SD Sarjana's existence has to do with space, and those reasons persist to the present day even as the landscape around the school has transformed dramatically.

In the second section of the chapter, I explore the impacts of decentralization on the school, and most significantly in financial ways. I chart the shift from the *gotong royong* (mutual collaboration) spirit of the school's early days, to the windfall that the school became after the implementation of World Bank interventions that were meant to support schools. I also highlight how non-bureaucrat "honor" teachers were faced with making difficult, constrained choices about whether to stay and teach at SD Sarjana.

In the final section of the chapter, I show how Literacy Boost steps outside its literacy mandate with technical, good governance solutions in hopes of dealing with highly personal and indeed often political problems. At SD Sarjana and other Jakarta schools, Literacy Boost's largest educational impact was at best tangentially related to literacy. It implemented a participatory planning process called the Community Action Cycle (CAC), which aimed to bring stakeholders together to articulate a set of priorities for the school budget. This section explores how such a democratically-oriented intervention was *both* a tokenistic process that drew on current trends in international development, and one that provided openings for democratic change, agency, and mobilization.

Taken together, I argue that while the Literacy Boost intervention reproduced several long-duration processes that have systematically disempowered the most marginalized groups and systematically benefitted those with marginal increments of power within the urban poor, the intervention also made possible certain, otherwise precarious modes of participation and empowerment. In the process of *formally* democratizing schools, the Literacy Boost intervention and its unforeseen outcomes certainly remain within longstanding idioms of hierarchical power. Yet the impacts of the Literacy Boost intervention demonstrate that schools are sites where social reproduction of society happens, is experienced, and also contested.

A sense of place

Until the middle of the twentieth century, Tjilintjing (as it was spelled then in Van Ophuijsen Spelling System[28]), on the coastline in North Jakarta, was a fashionable resort for Dutch colonialists, *Indos* (children of Dutch and Indonesian parents), and middle-class Indonesians. Though not far in distance from the old city center, Tjilintjing nevertheless was a seaside escape from the urban hustle and bustle. In Usmar Ismail's celebrated 1956 film *Tiga Dara*, the youngest of the three daughters sneaks away to Tjilintjing with her older sister's paramour. The ruggedness, the *nature*, the frontier-space aspect of Tjilintjing is underscored by the fact that they drove a Jeep there, rather than a regular sedan. Photographs

[28] The Van Ophuijsen Spelling System was in use until 1947. In present-day Indonesian orthography, *c* replaces the *tj*.

of Tjilintjing from the Netherlands' Tropenmuseum show blonde teenagers in swimsuits against a backdrop of palm trees, sandy coastline, and clean water. Though there was a resort at Palm Beach, as it was called, it was still a public beach that did not require an entrance fee (Kusno, 2013).

Figure 12. *Scenes from Cilincing*

Note: Stillshot from the 1956 film Tiga Dara (Lathief, 2016) and Image of beachgoers in Tjilitjing taken in 1949 (Tropenmuseum)

Today's Cilincing evokes a different set of associations: industry, shipping, and crime. The national oil company, Pertamina, is a prominent presence on the coastline in Cilincing, as is the Port of Tanjung Priok, one of the largest in all of Indonesia. Along with the port there are a bevy of warehouses to store the goods entering and leaving Jakarta, large shipping trucks on Cilincing's congested roads, and a long strip of bars that cater to sailors, with names like Bunaken (a resort island off the coast of North Sulawesi), Paris, Mexico, and even Batavia (North Jakarta, but in Dutch colonial times): bars that connote luxury and escape while being firmly rooted in Cilincing. In between all of this activity, many urban poor eke out a living as fishermen, an increasingly difficult livelihood to maintain, as fish stocks are depleted from industrial pollution, destructive land reclamation projects, and overfishing.

The transformation of Cilincing, from seaside resort to industrial port, was long in the making. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, envisioned Ancol and Pluit, theretofore undeveloped areas just to the west of Cilincing, as jewels of Jakarta's north coast that could cater to Indonesia's middle and upper classes. Ancol's Dreamland Project, first envisioned in 1962, was actually developed into the theme park complex (complete with aquarium, beachfront, waterpark, and hotels) that it is today, overseen by Suharto, the ruler of Indonesia during the New Order (1965-1998). According to Kusno (2013, p. 109), "Ancol destroyed Palm Beach forever." In order to build up Ancol, then mangrove forest and swampland, sand was dredged from Palm Beach (now Cilincing), causing it to sink away. What was billed as "land reclamation" was really just a land transfer: from Cilincing to Ancol, from a public and free space to a privatized one that required entrance fees, thereby limiting its use to those who could afford it. Suharto was inspired by the successful redevelopment, and commissioned the reclamation in Pantai Indah Kapuk in 1991, taking more sand from Cilincing to fill Pantai Indah Kapuk. The transfer of land was again a transfer of fortunes: Pantai Indah Kapuk is a playground of the rich, featuring several golf courses, high end shopping, and gated housing estates.

With its public beach swept away, Cilincing and much of the rest of the North Coast (aside from Ancol and Pluit) became a forgotten "backyard" for the rest of Jakarta (Kusno, 2013, 104). Featured in horror films as a haunted place, Cilincing was the home for urban poor, especially fishermen, but also new migrants to the city in the 1960s and 1970s—significant for our story of SD Sarjana. The Export Processing Zones (EPZs) of Suharto's New Order further transformed Jakarta's North Coast, both environmentally and demographically (Warr, 1983). Development policies of the New Order elevated economic production for the global market, in a marked pivot away from Sukarno's vision of economic nationalism, and EPZs—which neither garnered tax income (as they fell outside of typical customs agreements) nor products for the Indonesian market—exemplified this trend. The EPZs exacerbated socioeconomic disparities along the North Coast, as whole areas in Tanjung Priok and Cakung were evicted to make way for factories, ports, and warehouses, and a new precarious urban population was formed by Javanese migrants lured by the opportunity for factory work. Pockets of wealth—primarily those who nominally owned and operated sub-contracting factories, for example—were interspersed (Warr, 1983; Winters, 1996).

Cilincing's transformation also has resonances in contemporary debates over land-reclamation projects, which have been hailed, and then abandoned, as key to preventing flooding in Jakarta. Jakarta's shoreline has been the site of ambitious projects that pair environmental concerns—flood prevention, storm surges, rising sea levels—with opportunistic real estate schemes. What used to be mangrove forests have been slated to become a Garuda (Indonesia's national symbol—a mythical bird): an array of 17 man-made islands complete with luxury condominiums, shopping centers, restaurants, and other lifestyle amenities (Guest, 2019). Huge concrete reinforcements dot the shore in Cilincing, and an ongoing project to build a Great Sea Wall is quipped to make Jakarta into "the world's largest toilet bowl," as one urban researcher described it to me (N. Mahtani, personal communication, July 7, 2017). Cilincing, low-lying, is particularly susceptible to flooding—not only because of storm surges, high tides, and perennial heavy rainfall, but also rising sea levels due to climate change.

Cilincing often feels remote –from Central Jakarta it takes going on a big toll road, often congested with port traffic – trucks that appear even bigger from the back of a motorcycle taxi – and disconnected "culturally" from the rest of Jakarta. And yet, as its history shows, the connection between Cilincing and luxury areas like Pantai Indah Kapuk couldn't be stronger. And the connections between Cilincing and the rest of Jakarta, and even Java, are manifold as petrol, goods, and people flow in and out from Cilincing. At a Literacy Boost-sponsored Parent Outreach session at SD Roro in January 2017, parents were encouraged by the teacher-facilitator to take their children out on the weekends:

> If you have time for recreation, it doesn't have to be expensive. You don't have to go to those parks, like the safari in Bogor or a waterpark in Ancol, with those expensive tickets. Instead, take them and tour around (*keliling-keliling*) Jakarta. Here, we only have middle schools and high schools, but in Central Jakarta there are many university campuses. Your children don't know the shapes, forms of these campuses. Show them and say *This* is where you can study later. And then point out all the places they can work.

The facilitator's recommendation underscored the distinct spatial separation not only between Cilincing and Central Jakarta—the urban *kampung* and the business district—but also between the *spatial* dimensions of now and the future, as hoped for, imagined. If we are *here* now, hopefully you will be *there* in the future, as a university student, as a professional in a gleaming glass tower in Central Jakarta.

The parenting outreach facilitator's remarks also underscore the spatial segregation of Jakarta, in which malls serve as the most common and accessible public space, and which are relatively uncommon in the poor parts of North Jakarta like Cilincing. As Kusumawijaya (2014) notes, in Jakarta malls and food courts serve as the most accessible and comfortable public spaces, but are also owned, planned and controlled by private entities.[29] These "private spaces-public places" are relatively rare in the poor areas of North Jakarta, and for Cilincing residents to share in them, they have to go the distance, both geographically and socioeconomically: the closest mall to SD Sarjana was the elite Mall of Indonesia in Kelapa Gading.

The schools I discuss in this chapter, including SD Sarjana, are located in an area of Cilincing called Kampung Sawah, or the Rice Field Village. The name derives the fact that, up until the 1970s, paddies filled the area. "Kampung," in this context, is also indicative – both of its distance from Central Jakarta and a more general pattern of urban sprawl in Jakarta. State planning and service delivery (of sewage systems, paved roads, and trash collection) lag in Kampung Sawah. There are also no state primary schools in the Kampung Sawah neighborhood, but within a few hundred meters of SD Sarjana there are three other foundation schools.

Cilincing, aside from its distance from Jakarta's center, is also widely regarded as a dangerous place. My contacts at Save the Children warned me to not spend too much time in Cilincing. They told me that they would not be able to guarantee my safety if I were to stay with a family there. Specifically of concern—related to the heated 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, was my "Chinese face." The incumbent, commonly known as Ahok, was a prominent Indonesian politician of Chinese descent and very polarizing. My contacts worried I might be targeted if crowds in Cilincing erupted in anti-Ahok (and relatedly, anti-Chinese) rage.[30] Others also warned me against staying in Cilincing, saying that there are a lot of "robbers and bandits" there. Even a veteran teacher from a school located within walking distance from SD Sarjana told me a harrowing story: that a few years ago, while on *Cacing* (*Cakung Cilincing* – the shoulder road to the large toll that birfurcates Cilincing), her car was held up by a gang of young men. Only when one of the men recognized her as his former teacher did the gang let her go without paying. The teacher laughed as she told her story, but ended by warning me against traveling on *Cacing* after dark. Thankfully, my experiences in Cilincing were safe, and interactions with men and women there felt much like they did in the neighborhood in Central Jakarta where I rented a room. I highlight these stories to underscore Cilincing's reputation, in the imaginations of the greater city and nation.

In Cilincing there was sparse NGO presence, along with some half-hearted Corporate Social Responsibility projects by Pertamina and the large textiles factories located in the area. Everyone I talked to told me that Save the Children was the organization with the longest history in the area. For the Literacy Boost project, at the time of my research, that meant four years.

Uncertainty

Cilincing residents experienced a pervasive sense of uncertainty in their everyday lives, particularly about their futures in the area and in Jakarta. There was a sense of difficulty in pinning down hard facts: exactly what benefits they were owed by the state and how to acquire them, exactly how much longer they could expect to stay in their rented home, and

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[29] Notably, part of SC's Early Childhood Education program was to advocate for more child-friendly public spaces (RPTRA) to be scattered equitably around Jakarta, and not just clustered in wealthy areas. This was a hallmark program of Governor Ahok.

[30] The unspoken incident that animated their warnings was likely the 1998 protests, which devolved into rioting and mass rapes of Chinese-Indonesian women (Strassler, 2004).

exactly what was being planned for their neighborhood—whether infrastructural upgrades, partial eviction, or perhaps total demolition. This sense of uncertainty permeated all aspects of life, including where to send children to school. SD Sarjana both benefited, in terms of school enrollment, and also faced a precarious future as a result of such uncertainty.

The story of Ibu Nur, the head of SD Sarjana's new school parent committee—which, in 2017, was a committee comprised of her as the sole member—illustrates how space, land, and city benefits directly impacted schooling choices of Cilincing residents, and how the specter of uncertain futures both clouded and drove decision-making. Ibu Nur grew up poor in Cirebon, a city on the northern coast of Java, a four-hour train ride to the east from Jakarta. Her mother worked in the rice fields and her father was a day laborer. She attended school through the sixth grade— "we called that lucky!" (*kami bilang untung!*)— and because of her family's poverty, there was no possibility of continuing her education beyond primary school. At the age of 22, Ibu Nur moved to Jakarta from Cirebon with her new husband, who had been invited to Jakarta by someone else from Cirebon. By 2017, she had lived in Kampung Sawah for 25 years, moving from rented home (*kontrakan)* to rented home.

One day she and her youngest child, a third grader at SD Sarjana, took me on a walking tour of Kampung Sawah. We met in the schoolyard and took several narrow lanes to the larger, also unpaved road, walking past many homes, food stalls and little kiosks, chickens in and outside of their cages, and scattered in between, small plots of paddy (*sawah*)— the last remaining bits of the area's namesake. We then took a small raft for 2,000 IDR each, one of several along this stretch of the Cakung Drain, alongside a man on his motorbike. Once we reached the other side, above the river bank was a wide, paved road, with huge trucks ferrying containers between the port and the many warehouses in North Jakarta. We then crossed the road and entered the Kirana Estate.

The Kirana Estate had a security guard, though the gate was quite porous. As I obviously appeared to be from outside the area due to my Chinese face and my distinct clothing, Ibu Nur asked the security guard for permission to walk around the development. The estate's main road linked two densely populated neighborhoods, Kampung Sawah and Rorotan, but the development itself was sparsely populated with some "townhouse" structures set apart from each other. There was more open space than I had seen anywhere else in Jakarta, and there were none of the street vendors that were ubiquitous across the rest of the city. Near the river, there were a series of large steps, where people could sit in relative quiet, children could play, and all one could see were reeds and water. It was appealing, but also unsettling.

Figure 13. *Photographs of Kampung Sawah and the Kirana Estate*

Note: Images by the author (2016, 2017)

Ibu Nur had lived on this side of the river—where Kirana Estate is now located—for 20 years, and she and her family took the little ferries across the river every day. They moved when eviction seemed imminent; their home was close to the Kirana Estate. Sure enough, that home was demolished and its owners received the compensation.

The strangeness lies in the juxtaposition between Kampung Sawah and the Kirana Estate, the "intense contiguities" of Jakarta city life (Simone, 2014): the very crammed-in and precarious, where everyone made-do, found space, auto-constructed homes *and* schools, all right next to the spacious and planned, where wealth and wellness were palpable. Yet Ibu Nur expressed only pleasure at being able to go to the Estate in the mornings or on the weekends with her children. My sense was that she did not actually go that frequently (and certainly not every morning), but that her pleasure partly came from the *possibility* of going, of letting her children play in such a beautiful, safe, and clean place. Ibu Nur and other Kampung Sawah residents told me that the Estate's main thoroughfare was bustling, *ramai*, with Kampung Sawah residents every morning from 3-6 am, jogging and exercising.

The Kirana Estate was not, of course, carved from open, unoccupied land. There were residents like Ibu Nur who were displaced, either with payouts or without, depending on the strength of their claims to the land and their history there. The proximity between Kampung Sawah and the Estate underscored the ever-present possibility that Kampung Sawah too could be razed, grasses could again grow high, and single-family townhomes erected where currently thousands live.

Evictions for new private developments such as the Kirana Estate were not the only threat, nor even the most pressing one, in most residents' minds. In the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, by all accounts one of the most contentious and polarizing in Indonesia's 20-year-old return to democracy, a central issue was that of "river normalization." Pitched as one solution to alleviate the annual floods that wreaked destruction across huge swaths of Jakarta, river normalization encompassed razing homes on the banks of the Ciliwung River, and expanding the width of the river so that more water would be absorbed instead of spilling over the banks (Guest, 2019). A signature policy of Governor Ahok, protestors from poor areas of the city, particularly Bukit Duri and Kampung Pulo in South Jakarta and Kampung Akuarium in North Jakarta, rallied against the mass evictions, which often entailed brutal, sudden demolition of whole neighborhoods. As an area that experienced frequent flooding, not only due to rainfall but high tides, Kampung Sawah

residents expressed vulnerability to the possibility that their homes may be razed under the rubric of flood-mitigation.

Besides for "river normalization," mass evictions of poor people have been carried out in Jakarta for other reasons over the decades, often for large infrastructure projects during Suharto's New Order regime and also in the post-Reformation Era, particularly during Governor Sutiyoso's term (1997-2007) (HRW, 2006). Eliminating iniquity has been a common and widely-supported rationale for mass evictions. Two sites exemplify this rationale. Near the Pertamina plant, the neighborhood of Koja has undergone an extreme transformation. Kramat Tunggak, a state-condoned red-light district built in 1972, was seen to have infected the neighborhood of Koja with bad morals: it was often described as a neighborhood where there was rampant drug use and where "naughty women" roamed. In 1999, an estimated 9,000 people were evicted from Koja to make room for the massive Jakarta Islamic Center (AGFE, 2005). The area of Kalijodo went under a similar "purification." In one of his last actions as Governor, Ahok unveiled a new recreation center and skate park in Kalijodo, which was supposedly then Jakarta's largest red-light district and center of drug use after the destruction of Koja. Given the widespread moral panic about prostitution and drug use, authoritarian actions in response—such as mass evictions of poor people—are widely-sanctioned by the public. Kampung Sawah, like Koja and Kalijodo in earlier eras, is often talked about in similar terms: as a dangerous area, populated by migrants from the provinces, and a place where drug use is common. Even Pak Asda, the school supervisor for the Kampung Sawah area talked about primary school students—children under the age of 12—as probably future drug users, if they were not already using (personal communication, July 17, 2017). The specter of demolition due to any number of reasons—river normalization, private development, infrastructure projects, or the moral hygiene of the city—always loomed over Kampung Sawah.

When I asked Pak Asda, the school supervisor, about the possibility of evictions in Kampung Sawah, he confirmed "Yes, there is a strong chance." He went on to explain that Kampung Sawah residents are aware of the possibility of evictions, because they know they themselves are in the wrong, by living on land that they do not hold formal rights to. Pak Asda's description of Kampung Sawah residents—as knowing they are in the wrong—draws upon widespread notions that Jakarta's urban poor are "squatters." A related belief is that such "squatters", when and if they face eviction, do not have justifiable claims to their housing or the land they live on.

Uncertainty about land rights and the future extended beyond students' homes. Such uncertainty also permeated discussions about the schools in Kampung Sawah. SD Sarjana sits on contested land. The school's foundation head, Ibu Ayu, explained,

> When we arrived here, it was all empty. Just paddy. It was the country's land, and no one was using it. We were the first to settle here. It was still very rural at that time. There was a small mosque, and we decided to build a school. Everything was cheap, we could buy materials from the garbage scraps, and the same for furniture. We took the wood and built it up ourselves, with people from the community. *Gotong royong.*

During this conversation and in several conversations on other occasions, I asked her to elaborate: "So was there anything on this land before the school was built? Did you have to buy the land from anyone, or pay to use it?" Ibu Ayu responded evasively, repeating that it was empty, unclaimed land. Finally, one day, she told me, "Later the police tried to evict us, and we told them they had no right. This is state land. It is not owned by anyone. And we have the documents to prove it. But if you look at SD Al-Mahaba, their letters would not be able to pass close inspection (*surat mereka tidak bisa diuji*)" (personal communication, February 5, 2017). I never found out who was behind the police's eviction attempt. I took her

statement to mean that they have some documents that show their right to use the land, but not all of the documents that certify land ownership or lease. As noncommittal as Ibu Ayu was about land rights, her insistence that they had a right to be there invokes a first-come, first-served logic, as well as a logic of land-use; if they are using the land productively, and for a long time, then they deserve continued access to the land.

Hassan, a Save the Children staffer, confirmed that SD Al-Mahaba, the school mentioned above as having "letters [that] would not be able to pass close inspection", was built atop land that it did not own outright. In fact, in 2017 the school had just built a second site, a few lanes over from the original building. This new building was a big investment, boasting a computer lab that set SD Al-Mahaba apart from the other local, foundation-led schools. According to Hassan, SD Al-Mahaba may eventually be evicted from their school sites; he characterized the land as owned by a corporation, while not naming any particular entity (personal communication, November 16, 2016). In the explanations of both Hassan and Ibu Ayu, SD Sarjana's foundation head, the details about land ownership are vague: "state land", or "owned by a corporation." Though I initially thought, especially of Ibu Ayu, that such wording masked the truth, I eventually came to understand that land rights in Cilincing were essentially indeterminate; either the land had not been registered by the Jakarta city government, or multiple individuals and/or corporations had various, legitimate claims to the land, which were in competition with each other.

Rather than see Ibu Ayu's explanation of settling the empty land as aberrant, or Kampung Sawah residents as "squatters", in Jakarta (and many cities across the Global South) we should understand informal urban settlements as the norm. As much of Jakarta's land is not officially registered, especially land upon which the urban poor live in settlements like Kampung Sawah (HRW, 2006), living on land that *is* theirs is not possible. An estimated 30-60% of Jakarta residents live in informal settlements, in which "the buying and selling of land takes place primarily outside of the capitalist land/housing market, formal planning and land registration systems" (Leitner & Shepard, 2018, p. 438). Beyond any individual's or individual institution's land rights, as in the case of SD Sarjana, whole informal settlements, or *kampung*, have only been designated "legal" or "illegal" starting in 1988, and moreover, many *kampung* do have legal recognition by the state (Leitner & Shepard, 2018.). When Ibu Ayu's father came to Kampung Sawah in the early 1980s, there was no notion of "illegal settlement" or "squatting", much less a designation of it.

In this way, "informal" and "illegal" only became possible categories with the formation of "formal" and "legal" land rights. Organizations like the UN and the World Bank have pushed formal land rights—including for the urban poor—through undertaking cadastral surveys and better managing the land registration system (Leitner & Shepard, 2018). In Independent Indonesia, land registration has been in the legal books since the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960, which stipulated that all land should be registered. Urbanism scholars (Kusno, 2013; Leaf, 1993; Leitner & Shepard, 2018) have noted that even within the "official" land registration system, there are two parallel systems: land that is registered to the National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional) and land that is registered with the *kelurahan*, or the local municipal office. A land right claim registered with the *kelurahan* "is based on letters, receipts, and documents issued by kelurahan officials and witnessed by kelurahan officials. This kind of land right claim is legal, but it is not recognized as legitimate by the BPN" (Kusno, 2013, p.145). Indeed, civil society groups have noted the legal ambiguity surrounding "state" land in Jakarta and across Indonesia. A report by UN-HABITAT on forced evictions worldwide notes that many so-called squatters living on Government-owned land in Jakarta have some form of official documentation of their right to live on that land, whether it be an official residential permit from the subdistrict (*Lurah*) government, utility bills in their names, or property taxes paid, sometimes for decades (AGFE, 2005, p. 54).

There are degrees of legality and illegality in land that is registered with the *lurah,* and this is an issue not limited to *kampung* settlements.[31]

Scholars in other urban contexts have noted how multiple, sometimes competing, types of documents can add up to ownership. In Brazil's *São Paulo*, Holston (2008) found that competing documentary regimes led migrants from the provinces, living in auto-constructed homes in the cities' peripheries, to advocate for their rights to the city, and their rightful claim to exist on that land. Tracing the reverberations of the 1850 land statute into the modern era, Holston documents how duplicitous grabbers would "immerse the property in a web of legitimate transactions" (2008, p. 139), underscoring the incredible authority of ledgers and written documents, both in the public and within official governmental channels. For example, land transactions would accumulate legitimacy as it was successively recorded in local parish records, land that was given as part of a dowry and paid taxes on, etc., serving as proof that the transactions had been sanctioned by the church and the state—official entities, in other words. In fact, what is now considered to be legitimate land ownership actually, through the paper trail, or the "land game", uncovers layered and successive land-grabs and other "illegal" actions by all involved actors. Yet each actor claimed legitimate ownership, holding up notarized documents as evidence when expedient.

In a way, Ibu Ayu's strategy to keep holding on, would probably produce results. Like in Holston's story in Brazil, in which "usurpation, if maintained, usually produced legalization" (122), protestations of rightful land use (and ownership) would usually prevail. Importantly, Holston notes that these tactics to claim land ownership have been appropriated by the urban poor, dwellers of peripheral favelas, who also employ strategies of quasi-legality (paying taxes, doing anything to further link their names with the land in official documents) to bolster their claims to the land. And while private developers manipulate the legal contradictions in order to achieve invisibility and obfuscation, "insurgent citizens" aim to establish recognition and legal clarity.

China's rapid urbanization also gave rise to a plethora of documentary regimes surrounding land ownership. Hsing (2010) describes how, in struggles to control land, various state entities— at different levels and across territories— strove to assert control over land, conducting land grabs and mass evictions, and also employing more subtle territorialization techniques like creating township development plans. Like in Holston's story of Sao Paolo, these textual strategies were then appropriated at the grassroots level, by individuals seeking to bolster their land claims. For example, some *chaiqianhu* (residents whose homes were demolished) insisted on using their old addresses on their new ID cards. In this case, even though the demolition already happened, the residents had been assigned new homes in the city's peripheries, and a new urban landscape has emerged in the place of their old homes, the *chaiqianhu* attempted to maintain their connection to their old addresses through the form of official documents.

The text, in its official form, conveys some authority, and from this authority there springs the possibility to stake a claim to land. The combination of the "official" text and

[31] Indeed, I write this section in the house that I am currently renting in Jakarta. It sits on the banks of the Ciliwung River, across from a small patch of customary forest—a rare patch of green in Jakarta's concrete jungle. Just 200 meters down the river, the banks are clad in a tall metal fence, replacing the houses that were razed just a few years ago during Governor Ahok's regime. By all accounts, this house should have been razed as well, only Ahok lost his bid for reelection and his successor, Anies Baswedan, having run on a platform opposing river normalization, ceased all home demolitions immediately upon taking office. In fact, this house should have never been built, given the city's regulations about maintaining a natural buffer around river banks. Yet the owners of the house do possess a land certificate from the *lurah.* They concede, however, that this was likely a mistake as it was in contravention to city-level and national laws. Yet it is this tenuous right, this one "official" document, that has enabled homeowners on this street to repeatedly and collectively protest river normalization efforts that would result in the demolition of their homes.

legal ambiguity surrounding land rights allow various actors to lay claims to land. In another twist, even new apartment buyers in China were not immune to the confusing, tangled claims to land ownership. Prospective apartment buyers were advised by property agents to secure "the five certificates", in order to conclusively prove that they have purchased the apartment and stave off future competing property claims (Hsing, 2010).

Such pervasive ambiguity in the land registration system leads to both opportunities and to deep injustice in Jakarta. For example, in the case of SD Al-Mahaba, the rival school of SD Sarjana, the school strategically exploited the ambiguity of land tenure rights. In SC staffer Hassan's reading of the situation, the Al-Mahaba foundation took a calculated risk in building their school addition. With the new addition, the school could accommodate more students, thus expanding its dominance among schools in the area. In Hassan's telling, the more people who are served by the school, the harder it will be to evict the school without opposition from the community. Building, even in the face of uncertainty, is a strategy to bolster legitimacy and strengthen their claim to the land. Of course, these glimmers of opportunity, of taking advantage of the ambiguity are overshadowed by the overwhelming injustice that most urban poor in Jakarta face, particularly in the face of mass evictions. Depending on the particular form of one's land rights, the payoffs after eviction vary greatly. Of course, renters like Bu Nur, the head of SD Sarjana school committee, are excluded from payments altogether.

There was implicit (and sometimes explicit) blame laid upon these communities for living in and building upon these peripheral settlements, outside of the public order. Pak Asda's conviction that people *know* they are in the wrong by building on unregistered land is a sentiment shared by many. But uncertainty does not solely affect the foundation-led schools and their communities in Cilincing: it was embalmed within the state's formal calculus and operations, too. Communication within the state was murky, and rumors circulated, provoking more uncertainty, blending the lines between the official and the unofficial. Pak Asda, the school supervisor, recounted the story of another primary school in Cilincing—this time a state school—that was ordered to stop accepting new students. In the official communication to Pak Asda and to the school's headmaster, the school would be razed as part of river normalization efforts. The teachers and community were anxious not only about the school, but their own homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. Then nothing happened, and the school was allowed to begin to accept new students again. Whether this was a strategic move on the part of the state or simply due to ineffective administration is unclear. It shows, however, that the uncertainty that characterized marginal living in Cilincing also pervaded "official", formal, government institutions and discourse. In fact, in the case of this state primary school, uncertainty originated within the state. That the school remains standing, and is again receiving new students, does not completely negate the effect of the original order. The rumors about the school's pending demolition worked its effects on Cilincing residents, and such rumors are incorporated into many people's decision calculus about the future: whether to stay, to invest more, to move, to attempt to strengthen their claim to the land on which they live, or perhaps to abandon the area altogether.

When I asked Save the Children staffers and Pak Asda about how they thought people in Cilincing handled uncertainty, the common response was that there, people were too focused on urgent problems, the here and now. According to Pak Asda, "*Takut? Mereka takut apa? Mereka takut lapar"*—Scared? What are they worried about? They are scared of hunger. His remarks unscored the perceived urgency of residents' needs. In this formulation, Cilincing residents are incapable of planning for the future, as they are consumed with surviving today.

Two observations underscored how Cilincing residents' attachment *and* precarity in the face of uncertainty. Pak Ferry, the headmaster of SD Sarjana and a former math teacher

there, and Ibu Rina, his wife and a teacher at a different foundation school, were big figures in the community. Both being long-time teachers, whenever I walked around the neighborhood with either of them, it was a constant symphony of "Halo Pak" and waves from former students and their families. Not to mention, they both volunteered and took up positions: Ibu Rina as a volunteer with *posyandu,* the maternal and child health center. Pak Ferry, for his part, was not in the governing structure of the neighborhood committee, but often did tasks in organizing his neighborhood: distributing letters and getting people registered for this or that. They were straight with me about the many issues plaguing the school and indeed the whole area, and often joked self-deprecatingly about their neighborhood and home, while at the same time proud of both: investing in upgrades to their home, and saying that Cilincing was a multicultural place, with residents migrating to live here from all over Indonesia, and indeed, the world.

In another episode, I attended a parenting session at SD Sarjana. An activity organized under the auspices of Literacy Boost to encourage parental engagement in their children's literacy and educational progress, the icebreaker/opening exercise was to draw their homes. The group of mothers, 14 in total, giggled in a way that was recognizable to me; it signaled embarrassment and reluctance, and also good-natured compliance. Eventually they all did the task, and presented their drawings. One mother said: "This is my new *kontrakan*, the water below is filled with fish, we can fish right from the door when it floods!" Everybody laughed. Another pointed out the plants in her picture: "We have a medicine garden. That way, if anyone gets sick, we can pick the medicinal plants from right in front of our house."

The *place* and *space* of SD Sarjana is significant for contextualizing the school, and in particular, how spatial uncertainties stretch out into the future, impacting all present-day calculations of its residents. Uncertainty was one crucial factor that enabled Cilincing's foundation schools, like SD Sarjana, to continue operating. Because its population of largely urban poor did deal with many other day-to-day issues stemming from uncertainty about their land tenure, *and* there were few state schools (like other state services) in the area, SD Sarjana both filled a need for the community *and* exploited that need to recruit more students, lining the pockets of the family foundation in the process. In the next section, I place SD Sarjana within a longer process of decentralization in Indonesia, examining how dictates from the World Bank and International Monetary Foundation wound their way the crowded classrooms and schoolyard of SD Sarjana.

Decentralization, corruption, and notions of choice

When Save the Children's Literacy Boost program entered SD Sarjana in 2012, Indonesia's education sector had recently undergone significant transformation. Democratization, decentralization and neoliberalization—interrelated but distinct processes—were each in motion, moving through the school and the community at different speeds to different intensities. This section elucidates the preconditions of the Literacy Boost program in Cilincing: it examines how the notion of personal choice—about where to send a child to school, about whether to teach for low wages—came to obscure larger educational inequalities. These trends have been identified around the world under the rubric of neoliberalism (Brown, 2019; Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010), and though not often mentioned as such by my interlocutors in Jakarta, terms like choice, good governance, and local control were key concepts and new additions to the lexicon.

In this section, I set the story of SD Sarjana within the larger context of changing governance and funding structures in Indonesia. Within the twin realms of decentralization and democratization, SD Sarjana was both suddenly an income generator, but without much in the way of oversight—much less democratic participation. I end the section by highlighting how teachers at schools like SD Sarjana made the constrained choice to continue

teaching at a school that underpays them. This section shows how the context of implementation highly conditions the possibilities for the Literacy Boost intervention: the directions it can go in, as well as the prospects for successful uptake.

Decentralization and schooling

Changes in funding structure transformed the ways all schools were run, and SD Sarjana was no exception. In the years after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which precipitated the fall of Suharto and Indonesia's Reform (*Reformasi*) era, Indonesia underwent intensified neoliberalization. High-level negotiations about mechanisms for how to decentralize were happening in Jakarta, Washington D.C. and beyond, and no one was left untouched, not even the teachers at SD Sarjana, a tiny foundation school in Jakarta.

Donors like the World Bank encouraged decentralization long before the 1997 financial crisis, and indeed, Suharto's regime had already begun implementing aspects of decentralized governance as early as the 1970s (Silver et al., 2001). What was hoped for, but unclear, was that decentralized governance would be accompanied by more democratic, participatory governance as well. In turn, many international donors paired decentralized governance structures with democratic governance. In Indonesia, early efforts to decentralize included more transfers from central government to local municipalities and regional governments, which were sometimes accompanied by more local decision making and financial discretion, and sometimes not. This depended on the type of grant (earmarked or not), and the ministry tasked with dispensing the grant (Silver et al., 2001).[32]

For schools, decentralization a shift from centrally-directed funds, such as Presidential Instruction grants, for the rehabilitation and construction of school facilities, to direct transfers not only to the local level—municipal departments of education (Dinas Pendidikan)—but to individual schools. In 2005, the World Bank recommendations on school funding took effect across Indonesia, leading to widespread changes in school financing. Suddenly, small private schools like SD Sarjana were transformed from places with shoestring budgets to sources of income for the foundations that run them.

As Ibu Ayu explained, in the early years SD Sarjana was a grassroots effort and operated in a *gotong royong* (mutual collaboration) spirit. At its founding, teachers were volunteers, receiving only food and sometimes housing for their efforts. In those lean, upstart years, the school received virtually no material or monetary support from the state, and relied instead on small donations from community members and on tuition payments. In recent years, the school stopped charging tuition payments (SPP) and also decreased its reliance on donations.

What heralded the transformation in 2005 was *danabos*, which is short for *dana Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (School Operation Assistance Funds). It is also an effective pun: the boss's money. A key World Bank policy intervention and part of its push for decentralization after the financial crisis, *danabos* injected sudden streams of income to schools. In the most recent set of regulations, primary schools—whether state schools or foundation-run schools like SD Sarjana—receive 800,000 IDR per student, per year through the *danabos* program.[33] Meant to supplement the existing school budget, *danabos* at state schools was often used to buy books and other learning materials, for facility upgrades, extracurricular activities, and when necessary, to pay the honoraria for *guru honorer* and contract teachers. At state schools, the biggest budgetary outlays—teacher salaries—are

[32] Programs like *Inpres* (Presidential Instruction), which funded school facilities rehabilitation and road construction, among other projects, were examples of simultaneous decentralization *and* centralization. Funds were transferred to localities for specific projects, and were closely monitored and often even carried out by the relevant central Ministries. Even as localities received more funds, it was central government Ministries that actually made the significant decisions and carried out oversight of the projects (Silver et al., 2001).

[33] Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 (2019).

covered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which directly employs civil servant teachers.

At many foundation-run schools like SD Sarjana, however, *danabos* became the entire school budget. All of the teachers at these schools were *guru honorer* (honorary teachers), as the state is not obligated to send any civil servant teachers to private schools. However, in the new system, *guru honorer* salaries came from the *danabos*, rather than funds raised by the foundation. As *guru honorer*, teachers at SD Sarjana were subject to hiring and firing at will by the principal and by the foundation. *Guru honorer* had neither job security nor transparent pay that was proportionate to their workload, function, or educational background. During my research period, the figure that was most frequently cited was 600,000 IDR (about $50) per month salary for *guru honorer* (Pak Ferry, personal communication, July 10, 2017; Pak Asda, personal communication, June 5, 2017).[34] Civil servant teachers, on the other hand, had both tenure and higher pay that was determined in accordance to a standardized pay-scale that was calibrated to years of experience, education level, and number of certifications. As a point of comparison, the minimum wage for Jakarta in 2016 was 3,300,000 IDR per month, and civil servant teachers earned up to 9,000,000 IDR per month, or 15 times what the *guru honorer* earned at SD Sarjana.

Schools like SD Sarjana, which were truly charitable endeavors at the start, were thus transformed into sources of income for their foundations. Because *danabos* was allocated on a per-student basis, in order to raise more funds, the foundation simply recruited more students. The more students the school could attract, the more funds that would pour into the school coffers. SD Sarjana was the first school in the area, but in recent years many more have sprung up, both to fill the void that the state has left, in its neglect of the area, and to get in on the employment-generating vehicle that school funding had become. If before schools like SD Sarjana relied on volunteer labor from community members and parents, now there were funds to pay salaries—and not only teachers' salaries, but also for other positions. For example, at SD Sarjana, the ex-husband of Ibu Ayu, the current foundation head, was employed as a janitor at the school. According to several teachers I spoke to, he did a poor job of it, barely cleaning the classrooms and the school yard. And yet he was paid a relatively good salary, at least as much as the teachers. I later found out that he was in prison for several years (people nodded toward him as evidence of Cilincing's endemic crime problem), and found it difficult to integrate and to find steady work. His ex-wife, now remarried and pregnant, was in a position to provide him with a source of livelihood.[35]

In the race to attract students—and thus increase the *danabos* payments, which were both greater than what the foundation raised from donations and also required less effort on the part of the foundation—most foundation-run schools slashed their tuition fees, attempted to boost extracurricular offerings, and in the case of SD Al-Mahaba (the rival school), built new facilities. There was a competition among the many foundation-run schools in Kampung Sawah for students.

As Pak Asda, Paul and the other Literacy Boost staff, and the headmaster and teachers of SD Sarjana all explained in separate interviews and in casual conversations, the vast majority of the *danabos* allocated to SD Sarjana went directly into the pockets of the

[34] That the figure was the same in two separate conversations is significant; it seems that there was a standard going rate for guru honor in Cilincing at the time.

[35] Robertson-Snape (1999, p. 597) uses a cultural explanation to contextualize nepotism in Indonesia: " In a traditional culture where family loyalties are stronger than state loyalties, a public official's duty to his office is secondary to that towards his family or community. Any opportunities to further the economic or employment opportunities of that family will therefore be considered legitimate in terms of the official's priorities." This may or may not be true in Ibu Ayu's case, but what is important to consider is how through instances of what first appear to be simply financial mismanagement, webs of relationships are sustained. What seems like corruption, not only to "outsiders" but to people like teacher Ibu Yati, is also a way of living in community.

foundation head. This highly-lucrative post rotated among the five children of the school's founder, and lasted for five years. SD Sarjana was not the only place where this happened. As Paul, the Literacy Boost program manager remarked, "Some of these [foundation] schools, they actually keep two sets of books. One to show the school supervisor and us and anyone else who asks about the school budget. And another one that is the real budget" (personal communication, March 6, 2017).

Ibu Yati was a beloved teacher at SD Sarjana, and had taught in Kampung Sawah area for 15 years when I met her in 2016 and began observing her lessons for first graders. The year before, parents of her students lobbied the headmaster to transfer her to the second grade, so that their children could continue studying with her. Parents of incoming first grade students counter-protested, demanding that she stay in the first grade. She and several other teachers were most aggrieved about the fact that the outgoing foundation head had never worked, in any capacity at the school *or* elsewhere, and yet, as mentioned several times in interviews, he owned a car—an incredible luxury in the area. She told me: "He doesn't know the work of a teacher, what we have to give every day. He doesn't know what it means to sweat and make money. *Dibayar* (He's been bought)" (personal communication, July 10, 2017). Ibu Yati's candid remarks hinted at the deep well of resentment that teachers felt about the financial mismanagement at the school.

Pak Ferry, the headmaster of SD Sarjana, estimated that a full 80% of the *danabos* went directly into the foundation family's account, used for personal expenses, like the car. With the meager 20% of the *danabos* that remained, Pak Ferry had to pay teacher salaries, as well as for books and other learning materials, for activities and extracurricular clubs to attract more students (so as to increase the *danabos* income from the state), and facility costs. The unfairness of the situation was striking. It was Paul, the Literacy Boost program manager that first named it corruption to me: "The corruption levels, and chances for corruption, are high. Well they [the foundation] built the school, so the school belongs to them, and so they think that they can take part of the money from the school, that that is their right" (personal communication, March 6, 2017).

When I asked Ibu Ayu about the school's funding, she responded vaguely, repeating that the foundation would *bagi-bagi* (share) with the school. The revenues that came in to the school, in the form of *danabos* and other, smaller sources, would be split in the school budget. Part would be kept by the foundation, as Paul suggested, and part would be used for teachers' salaries.

The financial situation at SD Sarjana was the undercurrent that ran through all the conversations I had with teachers. The school, in order to continue functioning, needed teachers. It seemed like a paradox: well-educated teachers continued to work in grinding conditions with insultingly low pay. Why? I argue that the nexus of gender, class and religious morality influenced teachers in their decision-making to teach at SD Sarjana. What appeared to be straightforward personal choice was strongly conditioned, and indeed circumscribed, by social context.

The choice to teach

Ibu Yati, the highly praised teacher, said that for her teaching was a calling, interweaving her explanation with religious references. In Ibu Yati's case, then, teaching could be equated with other vocations that require personal sacrifice, in the service of greater purposes, such as nuns, priests, Muslim *imam*. For those with more prosaic motivations, I got a sense of female teachers' obligations across many spheres by observing them in their work and home lives. Teaching allowed for flexibility, spatial mobility, social standing, and a way to contribute to their family's economic circumstances. In the micro-economies of many teachers' families, husbands are still expected to be the primary earners and teacher wives to provide supplementary income. After all, as Pak Asda, the school supervisor remarked,

600,000 IDR was "so very little… A grown man with a wife and children could never take that job or that salary. Most of these teachers who earn 600,000 a month have a husband who is a civil servant or a driver, or has some other higher paying job."

Built into the micro-economy of families is also the opportunity (and obligation) for women to supplement their teaching salaries with other income. Several teachers gave private lessons in the afternoons to students from their own classes and as well as other children from the neighborhood. Others operated *warung* (food stands) and yet others opened small stores, clothing businesses, or other entrepreneurial outposts (e.g., catering) from their homes. Their flexible teaching schedules allowed them to operate these businesses, and at the same time, their teacher salaries obliged them to find other sources of income.

In addition to their jobs as teachers and often small entrepreneurs, many were also full-time housewives who took care of the cleaning, washing, cooking, and most of the childcare. Some female teachers with young children left them in the care of their mothers or mothers-in-law for the few hours they taught each day. Others simply brought their children to school. Most teachers lived within walking distance from the school, and those who traveled longer farther distances (at most, a couple of kilometers) used a motorbike or motorbike taxi. On a moment's notice, they may be called to go home to tend to a sick child, or to deliver lunch to her husband, or to attend to the many other tasks calling for her attention—all of which I observed during my time at SD Sarjana.

The constant movement between the social spheres of home (and alleyway) and school contributed to the "mothering" image of female teachers – even for those who are not mothers. Like the teaching profession in many places, Indonesia's teachers, especially in the lower grades and early childhood education, are often women (nearly 70% at the primary level in Indonesia).[36] I frequently heard from teachers themselves that, especially in the early primary grades, female teachers are expected to play the dual role of teacher and mother, Meanwhile, male teachers are rarely placed in the early primary grades, as they are often considered to be *emosi* (though directly translated as "emotional", *emosi* often means prone to anger, outbursts, and violence), an inappropriate trait for a teacher of young children.

Yet, the contrast between the largely female teachers and parents (mostly mothers) who came to school was striking. Mothers who brought their children to school and waited around often wore muumuus, pajamas, t-shirts with short sleeves, capri pants. Some covered their hair. In contrast, teachers wore uniforms – a different outfit for each day of the week – but always consisting of perfectly pressed items: a floor-length skirt, a jacket top, and a scarf carefully arranged and pinned atop her head. Of course, it was not only the cosmetic differences that were stark between the mothers and female teachers. The teachers had *some* form of higher education, while mothers who hung around school certainly had not, and perhaps not even reached middle or secondary school. Teachers, for this reason and others are indeed accorded high social standing and respect in their communities in Indonesia.

Other explanations for teaching at SD Sarjana are related to the circumscribed conditions in which to choose. Even if Ibu Yati and the other female *guru honorer* found their salaries to be insufficient, they had limited options for other employment. The obvious alternative would be to find employment as a teacher at a state school, as a civil servant (*PNS*) teacher. Despite the chronic teacher shortages across Indonesia (according the Ministry of Education and Culture's own figures) and the fact that state schools also routinely employed contract and honor teachers (*guru honorer*), there were limited opportunities for teacher candidates to convert their status to *PNS.* The examinations were held infrequently,

[36] See Arsendy et al. (2020), who cite data from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Nearly 1 million of Indonesia's 1.43 million primary school teachers are women, but only one third of primary school headmasters are women.

and the failure rate was high.[37] Another employment possibility in Cilincing was at the large textile factory, where workers were paid the minimum wage, or about six times the teachers' salaries. In fact, this is where the incoming foundation head, Ibu Ayu, was employed until her most recent pregnancy. Factory jobs were indeed coveted, but often also have maximum age requirements. Furthermore, going "away" to a job—one that may have offered higher wages and benefits, but would also demand a stricter adherence to time tables and a clearer differentiation between home and work lives—simply was not possible for many of these female teachers. And finally, of course, the social standing of a factory employee is not the same as that of the *guru.* The women and men who taught at SD Sarjana were college-educated, and teaching was an appropriate position given their educational pedigree. And though there were increasing numbers of women participating in the gig economy as Grab and Gojek drivers, in 2016 female drivers were relatively rare for reasons of personal safety and propriety. Thus, their choices were circumscribed, in a "context of context"[38] of patriarchal gender norms, changing financial burdens in households, and the meeting point where moral and class expectations play out. Educational attainment served purposes far beyond monetary prospects; they also indexed social capital, prestige, and social standing.

Given these factors, we can better understand the choice of teachers to continue working under such precarious conditions. At the same time, because of the availability of these teachers, the school foundation leadership had little incentive to reform their hiring and firing practices, pay structure, or school budget. This form of corruption, operating on a small scale yet with big consequences for students and teachers, continued unabated because it was allowed to. Foundations were allowed to pilfer the *danabos* funds as long as students continued to choose their school, and as long as teachers were willing to work there. Foundations also got the go-ahead, implicitly or explicitly, from the Department of Education.

Choosing a school

The Department of Education, whose school supervisors were responsible for monitoring schools, had to perform elaborate mental contortions to reconcile its mandates with the reality at schools like SD Sarjana. Pak Asda, the school supervisor, told me in an interview:

> Well, we know the foundation is taking money from the school. We have to fix that, but it's hard. We already called them in and scolded them. They signed agreements saying they wouldn't do that anymore. So we know. But on the other hand, we have to be grateful for the schools. They provide a service for the students and this area. They keep the kids off the streets and out of trouble. So what can we expect from the schools and someone like Pak Ferry [the headmaster]? They don't have resources, just to keep the kids in class during class hours, the kids don't make too much noise, and they keep the kids from fighting (personal communication, June 5, 2017).

Pak Asda's explanation shows that there is limited capacity (and somewhat limited interest) from Departments of Education and the Ministry of Education to fix the problem. Part of this has to do with how *danabos* is allocated. As one of a myriad of good governance solutions instituted as a result of the International Monetary Fund reforms after Indonesia's 1998 financial crisis, *danabos* were solutions for eliminating an existing channel for corruption: the

[37] Part of this has to do with inadequate pre-service teacher training, and the lack of standards across teacher training institutes nationally. Furthermore, *guru honor* like those at SD Kampus struggled to even conform to the changing rules about teacher education. The 2005 Teacher Law mandated that by 2015, all primary school teachers should have a four-year degree in their subject area, whereas previous generations of teachers usually graduated from three-year teacher training institutes commonly referred to as *SPG*, or Sekolah Pendidikan Guru.
[38] See Brenner, Madden and Wachsmuth (2011).

school supervisors themselves, who often dipped into funds allocated for the schools they were in charge of monitoring. By using direct transfers to schools, it was expected that the funds would reach the intended recipients: the schools. At the same time, this mechanism of direct transfers actually limited the ability of school supervisors to monitor at schools: when money is squandered or pilfered by school level officials, such as the foundations heads, school supervisors have little opportunity to intervene (Widoyoko, 2011, p. 181). As Pak Asda remarked, there is little recourse at the Department of Education, aside from scolding and having the foundation sign non-binding agreements to not steal any more money. Thus, the technical solution to corruption simply begat another problem, namely, corruption at the school level.

At the same time, Pak Asda's reference to "this area" reveals another facet of the issue: that because this is so-called bad area, the students somehow deserve less. By channeling common, discriminatory perceptions about people in Cilincing—that these kids were bound to end up on the streets, sniffing glue at intersections (another story he relayed in the interview) or worse—Pak Asda can frame the schools as perfectly fine for their purpose: to simply delay the criminalization of the children by keeping them off the streets for some time.

Another way to justify the poor schooling for the children of Cilincing was to prevaricate on the residency status of SD Sarjana families. In Pak Asda's account, the vast majority of families who sent their children to SD Sarjana were not Jakarta residents, meaning their *kartu keluarga* (family identity cards) were still registered to their home provinces. Pak Asda, being aware of and acknowledging the difference between foundation schools and state schools, reasoned that parents would only send their children to SD Sarjana if there were no other choice, i.e., they were not Jakarta residents and thus were not able to send their children to the better local state school. Despite the fact that he was the school supervisor of these schools and could easily access school data on residency statuses, he claimed uncertainty about the parents' residency status as a way to justify the educational disparity between the foundation schools in his charge, and the state schools.

However, this line of reasoning was flawed. However, the veil of uncertainty—this time about parents' residency—allowed state officials and state offices, like the district Department of Education, to pass off responsibility with some measure of good faith. I found that estimates of the percentage of Jakarta residents at SD Sarjana varied wildly. For Pak Asda, "most" students were migrants, while Ibu Ayu, the foundation head, said about 50% were migrants and the other half were Jakarta residents. If Pak Asda's justification for providing little help or supervision for SD Sarjana rested upon the argument that most students were non-Jakarta residents, Ibu Ayu also inflated the percentage of non-Jakarta residents, thereby minimizing the contribution of state funds for the school and also thereby highlighting the altruism of the foundation.

In reality, the vast majority of SD Sarjana students were Jakarta residents. Pak Ferry, the headmaster, estimated 90% while Ibu Yati estimated 300 out of 350 students (or 86%) held Jakarta resident cards.[39] After all, the incentives to hold Jakarta residency were substantial, particularly for schooling: the *Kartu Jakarta Pintar* (KJP, or the Jakarta Smart Card) was a significant lifeline for poor families in Cilincing. A conditional cash transfer to families, in 2016 the KJP provided 210,000 IDR per month for primary school students, which could be used to pay for school uniforms, shoes, bookbags, school supplies, nutritious food, extracurricular activities, transportation costs, and in the case of private schools, school fees (Dinas Pendidikan, 2016). Throughout my research, I often heard people say, "Now

[39] The remaining few who did not claim Jakarta residency had a specific reason to remain residents of their provinces. (e.g., desire for children to go to middle and secondary school in their home provinces). Ibu Yati also estimated the total enrollment to be 350, while in reality for that school year there were 400 students enrolled.

parents are being paid to send their children to school!" The implication was that parents have no excuse to withhold their children from school. If before they were unable to afford sending their children to school, now they were actually being rewarded for doing so.

Using the "they're all migrants" excuse is just one way to shirk responsibility—not necessarily by Pak Asda, as an individual school supervisor in charge of SD Sarjana and surrounding foundation schools—but by the City of Jakarta. The bottom line is that families in Kampung Sawah, though registered as Jakarta residents, simply did not receive the same level of services—in terms of availability, quality, and continuity—as residents who lived in other parts of Jakarta. State schools were notably absent in Kampung Sawah, but there is a myriad of other lacks, including paved roads in the neighborhoods of this historically underserved area. Ultimately, there was no possibility of absorbing all of the students that attended foundation-run schools into the state school system. Though students at SD Sarjana were Jakarta residents, entitled to a state education, the offerings were scarce in their immediate area. Interventions from NGOs, such as the Literacy Boost program, were like godsends for bureaucrats like Pak Asda, who had no budget to allocate for the building of a new school, to pay the salaries of civil servant teachers, nor the power to discipline the school foundation for corrupt practices. At the end of the day, he could only be "grateful" (*bersyukur*) that the foundation-run schools existed at all. Thus, inequality was calcified within the greater schooling system: some students received subpar education, and educational officials at various levels of government acknowledged it. As evident in Pak Asda's explanations, it takes several layers of denial to enable this inequality to persist.

Pak Kris sat one rung higher than Pak Asda on the North Jakarta educational bureaucracy ladder. He told me that schools like SD Sarjana were clearly under the mandate of the Department of Education, but in the next breath, he said that they operated as independent entities and were outside the purview of Department of Education.[40] In his remarks, Pak Kris immediately brought up Penabur, a large network of private Christian middle and high schools, widely regarded as some of the best schools in Indonesia.[41] Equating SD Sarjana and other foundation-run schools in Cilincing with Penabur schools was disingenuous; they not only served different grade levels, they also differed on all other measures, like facilities, teacher quality and teacher pay, tuition, student outcomes. In making the equivalence, however, Pak Kris could frame the existence of foundation-schools within a neoliberal logic: parents *choose* to send their children to those private schools, and those private schools are independent from the state because they *choose* to be. In this way, SD Sarjana is subject to the same level of monitoring and support as Penabur, the elite network of Christian schools, because they both fall into the category of foundation/private school. For Pak Kris, just as parents choose to send their children to Penabur, other parents choose to send their children to SD Sarjana, rather than a state school.

By employing a logic of choice, the Department of Education was able to wash its hands of the dysfunctions of the foundation-run schools. Though Pak Kris was more distant

[40] The distance between school and various officials mattered, as the decentralization efforts shifted power towards District Education offices. See for example, The World Bank's 2010 report: "This decentralization process both transferred substantial policy-making and planning authority -- and resources -- from the central level down to the district level and moved implementation processes (and resources) from the sub-district level up to the district level; this resulted in much larger and much more powerful district-level offices. But the unclear and incomplete division of labor among the different levels of the system and the lack of management and technical skills in planning, budgeting, procurement, and accounting needed at lower levels of the system to take on more authority (and the willingness of the upper level to give up its authority) made decentralisation a problematic process. Also, by taking away most of the center's carrots and sticks which can be used to ensure that decentralised entities still work within some kind of central framework, the pressure for district offices to do much more than merely send the reform messages downward is limited" (p. 31).

[41] Christian and Catholic schools have a special cachet in Indonesia. a

from the schools, insofar as he did not regularly visit them, he acknowledged that most of the students at SD Sarjana were Jakarta residents. Thus, he did not use the excuse that the students were migrants, excluded from state schools on the basis of their residency status. Pak Asda, closer to the schools as he regularly conducted monitoring visits at each of them, used the excuse of residency, describing Cilincing residents as migrants, because he knew that "choice" could not explain parents' decisions to send their children to SD Sarjana. Just the opposite: in Pak Asda's explanation, SD Sarjana was the *only* choice available to the parents, reasoning that the parents must not be Jakarta residents.

Choice became the default logic for explaining away the issues at SD Sarjana. Teachers *chose* to work there, with its low salary. Parents *chose* to send their children to school there, over a state school. These are ways in which neoliberal logics of choice obscured the reality: that in fact choices were extremely limited for both teachers and parents. Teachers had little workplace protection. Many of the teachers at SD Sarjana came from another local foundation school, where there had been a mass firing of nine teachers after they banded together to demand their delayed pay (Pak Ferry, personal communication, July 10, 2017).[42]

Nor could district officials intervene. As was evident in the hands-off approach of both Pak Asda and Pak Kris from the district Department of Education, there was little external oversight at the school. Pak Asda said of these failing schools, "The government cannot be silent, so we send the *danabos*" (June 5, 2017). In this statement, there is recognition that the government, which includes Pak Asda himself, was to some extent responsible for foundation schools like SD Sarjana. At the same time, there was limited engagement, in terms of monitoring and teacher mentoring. *Guru honorer* were not invited to participate in district Department of Education teacher training sessions, and were excluded from other professional development opportunities offered by the Department of Education.

Corruption *was* a problem at SD Sarjana, and not only identified as such from the external gaze of Save the Children.[43] Teachers and the headmaster also complained of financial mismanagement at the school. What was less clear, however, was whether they thought the foundation was wrong for taking *any* money from the school coffers, or that they were simply pushed beyond their limits. That the outgoing foundation head had flaunted his ill-gotten wealth was an obnoxious violation of ethics of *gotong royong*. The teachers complained of their low salary always *in relation* to the foundation head's wealth. When the janitor—who seemed to get the job through nepotistic connections—did not do a good job cleaning the school, it was seen as emblematic of how the foundation took advantage. The complaints about the janitor were couched again in terms of the broader inequity of the foundation taking advantage—specifically, taking money from school coffers and not doing the work—and not in terms of nepotistic hiring, per se.

In their introduction to a volume on corruption in Indonesia, Aspinall and Van Klinken (2011) note that the misuse of state funds is part of the state's very logic, rather than an aberration. And though illegal, it is important to note mismatches between what is illegal and what is an everyday practice, or local notions of justice, care, and living in community. Other scholars write that many forms of financial misuse such as "photocopy fees" charged by teachers have long been widely tolerated, and indeed regarded sympathetically (Robertson-Snape, 1999; Widoyoko, 2011). Without romanticizing such financial exchanges, it is also important to situate these exchanges within the social: they are elements in

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[42] In fact, this was another case in which *danabos* was explicitly mentioned: Pak Ferry said that the teachers' pay had been delayed for months, because the foundation decided to the "prioritize personal needs over school needs" (personal communication, July 10, 2017).

[43] In 1998, Transparency International ranked Indonesia 80th out of 85 countries; meaning it was near the top in terms of *most* corrupt (Robertson-Snape, 1999, p. 589).

relationships between teachers and parents, even if flawed and burdensome for some. In paying "photocopy fees" that should have already been covered by tuition payments, parents acknowledge the precarity and needs of teachers.

The local relevance, then, of the foundation head owning a car while his teachers earned a paltry 600,000 IDR a month, had everything to do with local notions of fairness. Paul, the Jakarta Literacy Boost manager, compared SD Sarjana with a nearby foundation school: "At SD Al-Amin, they ask for monthly tuition payments (SPP). It's also a private school, so that's allowed. They use it for some extracurricular activities and the foundation takes part of that. That seems much fairer to me than taking from the *danabos*, which is supposed to be used only for school purposes" (personal communication, March 6, 2017). Everyone acknowledged that foundations took from schools, but there were moral gradients according to how much and from what pot of money.

The sums were small, especially in comparison with the corruption scandals that were in the headlines in 2016-2017. For example, with 400 students, the total *danabos* going into SD Sarjana each year was 320,000,000 IDR, while the electronic identification card (*e-KTP*) scandal was estimated to cost the Indonesian public 2.3 trillion IDR (Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2017). However, if we take Pak Ferry's estimate that the foundation took 80% of the *danabos* each year, that would amount to 256,000,000 IDR. Meanwhile, a teacher could expect to earn 7,200,000 IDR in a year. The utter inequality was what grated. What started in a spirit of *gotong royong*, where everyone chipped in with labor, time, effort for the benefit of the community, had morphed into a veritable business[44] that largely benefited a select few.

The situation at SD Sarjana was by no means an isolated case, or the result of individual unethical behavior. Decentralization of the education sector meant that there was supposed to be local control over budgets, rather than central direction. But there was a logjam in the process. Widoyoko's (2011) study of corruption in Indonesia's education sector provides examples of how good governance solutions—such as transferring *danabos* directly to schools in an effort to circumvent district officials—are always temporary and partial. If now district officials like Pak Kris and Pak Asda are prevented from dipping into school funds, they have also been stripped of the power over school-level officials. In the ideal decentralized scenario, local communities would have power over the school budget. But that vision has fallen short, as school committees, parents, and teachers have little power in relation to headmasters and foundations, and thus there is little oversight from either above or below.

Widoyoko's ultimate recommendation—to strengthen school committees—is precisely what Literacy Boost attempted to do in North Jakarta through the Community Action Cycle process. In the next section, I explore how the CAC process was constrained in the face of durable political and power dynamics at schools.

Literacy Boost's entry into SD Sarjana and the Community Action Cycle (CAC)

Schools are often conceived of as a central institution of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977), and indeed, it is possible to see Cilincing schools as reflecting social patterns in North Jakarta. And yet, schools are places of potential transformation (Horvat & Davis, 2011), as institutions rooted in imaginations of the future. In international development schemes, schools can often serve as laboratories of democratic experimentation and citizen participation. School-based management (SBM), which "is a form of education governance that grants responsibilities and authority for individual school academic operations to principals, teachers, and other local community-based stakeholders" (Marshal et

[44] Pak Ferry, the headmaster, thought that the foundation saw the school as a business: "Perhaps the founder had an honest intention in building the school, but now that the school gets funding from the government, it is more like a business. Now, a lot of schools maintain their conditions to attract more funding. But they don't want to develop or to improve, they just want to keep getting the money" (personal communication, July 10, 2017).

al., 2012), is one such experiment. At the focal schools, the Community Action Cycle (CAC) process unfolded as not only an outcomes-driven project in which literacy would remain the goal, but an experiment in *process*. My research in North Jakarta revealed instances of empowerment and possibility for change, and also replications of long-standing power dynamics.

Increasingly in the final year of the intervention from 2016 to 2017, Literacy Boost staff spent much of their time and energy organizing participatory planning sessions in North Jakarta, under the rubric of the Community Action Cycle (CAC). Save the Children's CAC approach has been used around the world to advance a number of development priorities, most often related to its health programs. According to its own materials, "The *CAC* approach fosters a *community-led* process through which those most affected by and interested organize, explore, set priorities, plan and act collectively" (emphasis in original), and first among its stated goals is to "Increase community level decision-making required by decentralization and democratization" (Save the Children, 2003).

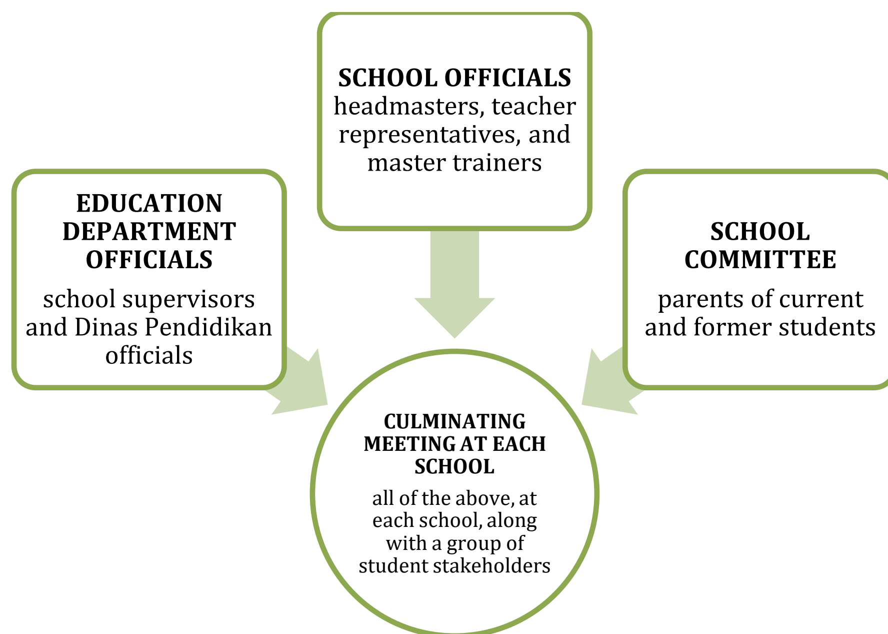
The impetus to pivot toward participatory planning—and seemingly away from straightforward literacy programming—was the result of several factors. First, as a Literacy Boost staffer from Belu pointed out, achieving functional literacy for early grades students in Jakarta was not an urgent goal; children in Jakarta, even in Cilincing, managed to learn to read *without* the Literacy Boost intervention, unlike children in Belu he contended (Yosua, personal communication, April 29, 2017). Second, a major trend in education development, supported by the World Bank and USAID, was school-based management, or *managemen berbasis sekolah.* Taken up by the Ministry of Education and Culture, school-based management was also in the law: as a result of Law 22 of 1999, education and other functions were transferred to Districts and Municipalities (Silver, 2005).[45] If *danabos* represented financial decentralization, in which funds were directly allocated to schools, then school-based management represented political decentralization. Firmly within the movement toward decentralization, Literacy Boost's CAC aimed to produce systemic change in school management processes by empowering local stakeholders, so that they may take part in decision-making at the school level.

The premise of the CAC was to open feedback channels between all of the educational stakeholders of the Literacy Boost program. The stakeholders included school headmasters, school supervisors, District Department of Education (*DINAS Pendidikan*) officials, parents, teachers, and students (see Figure 14 below). Though convened by the Literacy Boost program, the CAC process did not have an explicit literacy-focused agenda. Instead, according to Literacy Boost staffers, the goal was to help stakeholder groups establish and articulate their priorities for their schools. Meetings with different stakeholders, and the culminating meeting at each school with all stakeholders, took on different formats. Most commonly, though, after an introduction by the highest-ranking person present and some remarks by a Literacy Boost staff member acting as a facilitator, there was small group work in which participants wrote down their feedback and ideas for the school. At the end of each session, there was time for each group to present their ideas, usually in the form of a poster, and time for a discussion.

[45] According to Silver (2005, p. 100-101): "Probably the most significant change was the transfer of sectoral ministry personnel to local offices (a move anticipated in the DAPP) and the conversion of all local personnel, including schoolteachers, from central government to local employees... Clearly, the links between government employees and the continued dominance of Suharto's Golkar party was an obvious factor in earlier rejection of administrative reform. So long as all government employees were controlled from the center, then Golkar could be assured of a consistent voter base at the central, provincial and local levels." Similarly, local officials were now appointed by local parliaments, rather than the provincial governor, making them accountable (indirectly, still) to the local electorate.

Each group of the education hierarchy met separately at first, always with Literacy Boost staffers as facilitators. I attended a meeting at the North Jakarta district office with school supervisors and District Department of Education bureaucrats, and then later another one with high-ranking people from partner schools, including school principals, teacher representatives, and master trainers who worked with the teacher working groups (KKGs). Then, there was a CAC meeting-cum-training for parent representatives on school committees; several schools, including SD Sarjana, cobbled together their school committees just in time for the CAC meeting. Finally, the CAC process culminated with a large meeting at each of the partner schools, which included the school principal, 6-8 teacher representatives, parents from the school committee (as well as those who were not on the committee), and 6-8 student representatives.[46]

Figure 14. *Community Action Cycle (CAC) stakeholders*



A school-level CAC meeting held at SD Maru in February 2017 highlighted the unexpected and sometimes discordant outcomes of the participatory planning process. Like at our visits to many other schools, the headmaster of SD Maru greeted us— "friends from Save" was usually how we were called, and I almost always being lumped into the same group of Save the Children staffers—as our car approached the school, a two-story building with a tidy schoolyard. The building technically housed two separate elementary schools, with two sets of teachers, headmasters, and administrators, and the student population had skyrocketed in recent years. SD Maru was half a kilometer from the ocean, and when I stepped out of the car, I immediately smelled the sea. Unlike SD Sarjana and other schools that I normally visited in Cilincing, there was an immense sense of space around SD Maru: open fields, large fish ponds, and empty roads. The population spike at the school came from the two incongruously placed high-rise apartment buildings (*rumah susun*) near the school,

[46] Literacy Boost donors, notably, are not included as stakeholders. In Ghertner's (2011) study of how New Delhi's planning bureaucracy recruited residential associations in the participatory planning process, the process of designating stakeholders was more consequential than the outcomes of the planning meetings. By selecting the residential associations—which represented and were comprised solely of private property owners—for the role of "public", the vast majority of Dehli residents (who live upon public land) are excluded from the "democratic" participatory meetings. In an inverse, the exclusion of donors and Literacy Boost staff in the CAC meetings—themselves devised and organized by donors and Literacy Boost staff—shows the limited scope of "democratic participation," i.e. within the school.

which housed *pengusi*, residents who had been evicted from their homes in Pasar Ikan, Kalijodo, Pluit, and other parts of Jakarta. According to SD Maru's headmaster, who ushered us into his air-conditioned office for an official welcome to the school, the student population had risen from 700 to over 1200 students. And though the high number of students remained stable at the moment, the actual student population cycled each year as some families moved away from the apartments in search of housing located closer to job opportunities, and new families moved in.

As special guests, the headmaster took the time to greet us and to accompany us to the actual CAC meeting. In what was evidently a biology classroom, parents, students, and teachers were already assembled for the meeting. The seating arrangement seemed as if it were according to status. The headmaster settled in at the front, facing the classroom. In the first row sat the teachers and the School Committee[47], then other parents who were not on the School Committee, and then finally, a representative group of students from the upper grades. The headmaster exhorted me to sit in the front, "You are a special guest from Save!" Eventually I found a seat in the back of the room.

The headmaster gave a long, rambling, and sometimes funny speech. "Well at least you get to eat some cake while you are here!"—a joke that I had heard at other meetings too. He admonished parents to limit their children's screen time and to read more at home, and noted the many activities and initiatives at SD Maru, including the special education program and the "literacy culture": "Here, we have a reading culture and kids *want* to learn, not like at SD Utara 12, where kids run here and there and everywhere." The headmaster told the audience of how he applied for a grant from Save the Children for 8,000,000 IDR (a relatively large sum) and used that money to buy a bookshelf—evidence of his commitment to a "literacy culture." He went on to talk about the school infirmary, the trash bank, and the healthy canteen, part of the Healthy Schools program (another Save the Children initiative): "Now we serve rice, bread, juice, milk—no preservatives or anything. And everything is checked by a health officer who comes regularly and samples are brought to a laboratory for testing." The officialness of the school's programs, and of the CAC meeting with its 42 participants—a number that was proudly announced, was heralded by the headmaster's speech.

Then he left. This was the first sign that perhaps the CAC meeting would not result in much change at SD Maru. After all, if the idea is that stakeholders could have their voices be heard, someone in power—the headmaster—would have to actually be in the room to listen.

Toba, the Literacy Boost staffer who acted as the CAC meeting facilitator, spoke next:

> Perhaps the mothers here already know this, but reading can make you rich. Not just rich in knowledge, but actually rich. In Solo, there is a student who did so well in reading that he got a scholarship to university, free tuition, and stipend for living expenses and food. And there's the story of *anak singkong*[48] who loved to read so much, and now he owns Carrefour and TransTV. Yes, Carrefour and TransTV are owned by this guy, because he liked to read and learn. Here's another story. At SD Al-Amin, there was a grandmother who would accompany her grandchild to [Save the Children's] Reading Camp. She would sit outside of the circle of children and teachers, and after attending 10 or 12 times, she could also read! Even though she was illiterate her whole life.

[47] According to Toba, the committee was fairly new at SD Maru. The rules for tenure on the school committee varied by school. At some, parents can stay on for as long as they have children enrolled, for others, for a limit of 2-3 years, for others, could include community members.

[48] A very poor child—someone could not afford rice and had to eat taro instead.

After sharing these stories, Toba encouraged the parents in the room—especially those who were not members of the School Committee—to become more involved. This, after all, was one of the central aims of the CAC process. A class dimension ran through Toba's remarks: as if to counter the assumption that parents (many with limited education themselves) had little to offer the school, he said, "Parents can help, not just with money and donations, but with your efforts, ideas… fathers who are construction workers, volunteer math tutors… there are a lot of ways to contribute to your children's school!" Socio-economic advancement, though perhaps not to degree of the owner of TransTV and Carrefour, was held up as an incentive for helping to improve the school. After Toba's remarks, the audience assembled in their small groups and were tasked with discussing the prompt, "Does the School Committee's programs benefit the students and mothers at SD Maru, and what are the benefits?"

I sat in with a group of parents, which was quickly dominated by the mother sitting next to me, who spoke of her family's struggles.

> I live in Rorotan and I come here by public transportation, by motorcycle taxi and microbus. It is 25,000 each way, 50,000 rupiah round trip. I want to take the public school bus with my child. She is ABK [*anak berkebutuhan khusus* – a special needs child], and I am worried that she won't get off at school. Last year, in August 2016, I was so grateful that she was accepted to the school by the headmaster, this is an inclusive school. Yes, supposedly all schools are inclusive, that there are protections and services for kids with disabilities but that's not true.

When the meeting convened as a whole again, this mother quickly raised her hand and asked, "Can we ask questions outside the scope of Reading Camp?" and proceeded to ask about the issue of accompanying children on the school bus, in order to ensure their children's safety. The headmaster, who had just returned to the meeting (in time to officially close it), prevaricated: "Well, it depends on your child's condition. Can she pee on her own? Can she navigate the same route every day? If not, we're not too strict, perhaps you could join on the bus." This became a bigger discussion, with nearly all the mothers not on the School Committee chiming in, saying that they felt it was not fair for them to be barred from riding the school bus.[49] At this point, Toba and the headmaster tried to get the conversation back on track. Indeed, some parents praised the School Committee's programs like Healthy Canteen and Reading Camp, but then added their advice: "Parents should be able to accompany their disabled children to school. The cost of separate transportation is too burdensome."

Later, I asked Toba, the Literacy Boost staffer, how he thought the meeting went, and whether this was a successful CAC session compared to meetings at other schools. Toba said, "*lumayan berhasil, lancar*" (relatively successful, smooth). He went on:

> The thing is, our program has to do with literacy, so it's not like we can directly intervene in a lot of areas, but what is good is to make these meetings more normal so that parents are used to giving suggestions. There are some parents who don't care about their own roles in their children's education, like those who think that education is the job of the school and teachers, and those who do care but have never been involved in the planning or execution of school activities. The thing is, once we can activate the second group, the first group will naturally join; they are all in the same environment, circle of friends. Some parents may

[49] Special needs children were still in the minority at SD Maru, but had a sort of critical mass; the headmaster was known to be accepting of ABK students. The school even had a special education teacher, which was unusual among the schools I visited in Jakarta. As for why participants at this CAC meeting were overwhelmingly mothers of ABK students, my guess is that these mothers seized the chance to meet with teachers, the headmaster, to present their case. And in this case, the CAC meeting was indeed a success, in a way.

> just have never been asked to think about how to improve their children's schools, or specific steps. Or they might not feel like it's their place to give suggestions. Or some others may look at the schools and think, hey, this is all going pretty well and the quality of education is pretty high. So what we can do is enter through literacy, and then go into these other areas. We give a forum for parents to be involved, and if they can take it in other directions, to issues they care about, that's great. For example, the school bus issue, that is not something we prepared the parents to speak out about, but they were moved to agitate for it on their own. And that's great.

According to Toba, then, the CAC mechanism is a way to empower the parents, or at least normalize their presence and their voices in school affairs. And he splits the difference between two commonly-articulated positions: one, that parents—particularly poor parents of children in schools in Cilincing—are indifferent about their children's educations, and two, that parents are not able to participate in their children's educations due to a lack of education themselves, overwork and thus not enough time to participate, or simply because there is no avenue for them to participate given the hierarchical nature of schools. If, as Toba says, Literacy Boost can "enter through literacy, and then go into these other areas", it speaks to how Save the Children is aware of the systemic issues in contemporary schooling that extend beyond literacy issues, as well as how literacy is a legitimate entry point for these larger discussions. Talking about the bigger issues from the start—teacher pay, petty corruption and budgetary mismanagement of school finances, for example—would likely be a nonstarter for headmasters and educational officials, while literacy is a benign-enough issue, one that everyone nominally supports, from donors at the top to parents and students at the bottom. Given the Ministry of Education and Culture's push for literacy as a national education goal, it is also an issue that education officials and headmasters alike were compelled to support, at least publicly.

For parents, gaining a voice and a vote in school affairs came with some blowback. At a CAC meeting at a small, foundation-run school in Cilincing, the discussion seemed to be the richest and most productive of all the CAC meetings yet, at least initially. During the small group work session, when groups of parents—significantly, all mothers, teachers, and students huddled among themselves to draw up a list of priorities for the school, the headmaster, Ibu Vero, circulated and encouraged people to chime in with their ideas. When the groups each presented their posters marked up with school-improvement ideas, the two groups of students were roundly applauded by the adults in the room. Here, then, was a case when children's voices were, if not taken wholly seriously, at least warmly welcomed.

A group of mothers went next, and issued more pointed critiques of the school. They asked for better communication between school officials and parents (though careful to never pointedly name Ibu Vero or any of the teachers) and for more meetings between the School Committee and parents. They also complained of missing desks and dark classrooms, and suggested that the school officials needed to cultivate stronger pride in the school and its property. The parents then offered to help raise funds to clean the school, and perhaps to hire a janitor.

The teachers, who presented next, both echoed and critiqued the parents. One said, "Yes, it's true, we need to build a culture of cleanliness, and that starts with personal practices. Why is our school dirty? Because there is no awareness right now, and people throw garbage everywhere. A culture of cleanliness is the same as the culture of politeness." While echoing the parents' suggestion about cleanliness and hiring a janitor, the teacher subtly pivoted towards a different solution: changing personal habits. And of course, she meant the personal habits of students and parents. The teacher spokeswoman continued: "When coming to school, please do not wear a muumuu, unless you are pregnant. Or please

at least wear a longer-length muumuu to drop your children off." She continued in this vein for a while, before Ibu Vero, the headmaster, took the mic again. After thanking the parents for their suggestions, she said that she was speaking on behalf of all of the teachers by asking mothers to please dress more respectfully and modestly when visiting school grounds, going beyond just muumuus by calling out low necklines, hair wrapped up in towels, and ripped clothes. Ibu Vero said, "How can children be good and polite if they see mothers dress like this, behave in this way?"

Like the parents in their presentation earlier, Ibu Vero was careful to not directly accuse any of the parents in the room of such behavior. The contrast between the two groups—Ibu Vero and the teachers, and the mothers—was stark; Ibu Vero and the teachers wore matching outfits of floor length skirts, polished black leather shoes, a jacket, and significantly, head covered in perfectly pinned scarves. None of the mothers wore ripped clothes or muumuus, but a couple wore tee shirts and several did not cover their hair. But one mother broke down any pretense that the two groups were not talking directly to each other: "But Ibu Vero, excuse me, all of us mothers change clothes before praying" – in a way saying, we *are* respectable and do not imply that we are not religious. Ibu Vero shut the discussion down, "Well, some mothers wear muumuus with really low-cut necklines, muumuus that are old and fraying." The social difference between the teachers and the mothers of students was vividly enunciated and then rebuffed in this exchange—an exchange not of ideas about how to improve the school, but of moralizing discourse aimed towards women (Hefner, 2017; Sears, 1996).

At a meeting that was supposed to usher in more communication and collaboration between the school's stakeholders, parents came out of the meeting with a clear message: if you think there are problems at the school, they start from you. It was clear to me why many parents would want to avoid school meetings and interactions with teachers and the headmaster. The teachers' and Ibu Vero's pointed shaming of parents called out "impolite" (or in perhaps a better translation of "*tidak sopan*" in this case, improper) behavior, behavior that is also associated with being poor and less educated. Thus, the politics of respectability was gendered and delineated by social class, even within the confines of an urban kampung. Save the Children's CAC process was meant to facilitate democratic debate and the inclusion of more viewpoints, and according to their own metrics, it both failed and succeeded. The meetings *did* bring marginalized voices to the table and there were arguably moments of empowerment, when mothers felt emboldened to speak up. In this way, the CAC meeting was a demonstration of formal democracy that allowed different discourses and conversations to emerge. At the same time, the meetings were held amidst longstanding conflict between teachers and mothers, between those with some degree of power and those with less—and often the power dynamics were reinforced, rather than reordered, at the meetings.

There were two dimensions to the conflict between the teachers and the mothers. First, there was an intimacy to the antagonism: of woman speaking to woman, of mother chiding another mother. Instead of coming together to recognize that the problems at the school were at least partly due to the lack of state support, the two groups instead blamed the problems on each other, pointing to the others' moral deficiencies. The logic of personal choice and responsibility, in this instance, again eclipsed recognition of both the possibility of mutual solidarity *and* the abnegation of state responsibility.

A second, unstated dimension to the conflict was related to how teachers and parents perceived each other as the cause of children's educational difficulties. During the course of my research, parents often grumbled that teachers were lazy. Teacher absenteeism was indeed a problem across Indonesia, particularly in rural areas (and Literacy Boost's teacher training schedule perversely drew teachers out of classrooms even more). But what seemed to animate parents' complaints had less to do with outright teacher absenteeism and more to do with who

was responsible for teaching their children. Parents often saw their children's learning struggles as evidence of teachers' failures.

Of course, it was the inverse from the perspective of teachers. Even Ibu Yati, who was beloved by students and parents alike, spoke of inattentive parents. Their inattention, in Ibu Yati's understanding, fell into two categories: inattention due to a lack of understanding or capacity, and inattention due to a lack of caring. And though teachers acknowledged that most parents belonged to the former—one estimated that only 10% of parents at SD Sarjana had finished primary school—there was often slippage between the two categories. Another teacher suggested that parents are greedy:

> When we call a meeting to talk about KJP (Jakarta Smart Card), parents can be here within 15 minutes. If we call parents in to talk about their kid's behavior or learning, they won't show up. They just don't care. I write report books that parents never look at. I even still have some report books for students who have finished second grade and are starting third grade now. Some parents say they'll take a look when their kids finish the year, but some not even then. Even if the parents say they care that their kids get a good education, they do not invest energy in their schooling (Ibu Yati, personal communication, August 24, 2017).

In this account, parents care about their children's schooling only insofar as it brings an income to the family, in the form of the KJP payments. For this teacher and others that I spoke with, with parents like this, children were bound to have trouble learning.

The antagonism between the mothers and teachers was deep-rooted, tangled in complicated knots of female morality and personal responsibility, of differing social statuses amid shared economic realities. If the CAC meeting was meant to foster cooperation, the two "sides" saw themselves as fundamentally opposed to the other.

At SD Sarjana, Ibu Ayu, the school foundation head, was conspicuously absent at the CAC meeting. Ibu Yati, the beloved first grade teacher, spoke for the teachers when it was their turn to present. They had two requests: first, they wanted their classroom ceilings to be covered in drywall, to better insulate classrooms from the heat; and second, they asked for a fence around the two ends of the school yard, to better insulate students and teachers from wandering parents, food vendors, and other distractions. The teachers often complained about parents (always mothers) hanging around the classrooms, often peeking into from the windows and whispering to their children—admonishing them to sit up straight, to pay attention to the teacher (while of course they commanded their children's attention), and sometimes feeding answers to their children. "Babying" and "spoiling" were the most frequently-used terms to describe these parents' behavior, and to the teachers' minds, an actual, physical barrier in the form of a fence was the only way to stop it. For Ibu Yati and other teachers, having drywall in classroom ceilings and a school fence were absolute minimal standards for functional schools, and they were aghast that SD Sarjana was still without these basic provisions. During the course of the 2016-2017 academic year, drywall was installed in one of the classrooms. When I left at the end of August 2017, there was no fence and mothers still congregated in the schoolyard in the morning hours.

Figure 15. *First day of school*

Note: Photo taken by author (2017)

I found it remarkable that the teachers did not openly agitate for increased pay, at least not at the CAC meeting—where their voices should be most amplified, and where they *might* have found allies in the parents. Instead, the teachers presented demands for infrastructural upgrades that were framed as being integral to learning and teaching. Despite the fact that teacher pay was a ubiquitous topic raised by teachers in interviews and informal conversations, it did not enter into the broader dialogue of how to improve the school. This constraint underscores the limited possibilities for open speech at the CAC meetings, even if that is what the meetings are meant to facilitate.

In a separate conversation with Ibu Yati, she spoke again of the need for a fence around the school yard. I asked her when she thought a fence might be erected, she replied, "*ngomongin saja*", which can be roughly translated as "you should say something." In other words, she asked me to help place the request, either because she felt that it was not her place, as a teacher, to ask, or because she felt the request had a stronger chance of being fulfilled if it came from me. Using backchannels was a common and perhaps more socially-acceptable strategy than asking outright. Pak Ferry, the headmaster, told me that he had a "trick" to secure resources for the school. After the foundation head turned down his request to purchase a computer and printer for the teachers' lounge and to install a wifi connection, Pak Ferry approached Pak Asda, the school supervisor. Then Pak Asda spoke to the foundation head, and the purchases were made. In each of these two cases, the success of a demand depended on the status of the person making the request. In the CAC meetings, everyone was supposed to be on the same level, to occupy the same status of *stakeholder*.

Power imbalances between participants also emerged at CAC meetings at higher levels. At a CAC meeting of education officials from DINAS Pendidikan, school supervisors, headmasters, and master trainers (those teachers and school supervisors that were deemed to be expert by Save the Children, and who facilitated sessions at teacher trainings), several spoke up about the differences between civil servant teachers and honor teachers. Beyond the

drastic pay inequality, which I reviewed earlier in this chapter, the two sets of teachers also had different rights and reputations.

At the CAC meeting, a school supervisor raised his hand, "Well, for honor teachers, it is hard for them to speak up. People will say 'oh *she's* speaking' and there is a lot of miscommunication as a result. There are status issues." The "miscommunication" that the school supervisor mentioned could also be understood as "resistance": civil servant teachers *resisted* listening to honor teachers because of differences in status. His recommendation for Save the Children was pointed: choose only civil servant teachers to join Literacy Boost teacher trainings and other activities. Ibu Yuni, a master trainer and an honor teacher from SD Maru, agreed: "If we talk about power, I, for example, have little of it. My power, even as a master trainer, cannot be seen. Others say, who is an honor teacher to be speaking up about teaching and learning methods? The best thing to do is to invite civil servant teachers to Save the Children trainings." Coming from Ibu Yuni, someone who Save the Children had invested a lot of time and trust in, the critique seemed sharper. Paul, the Literacy Boost project manager who was facilitating this meeting noted that, "We like to have new and younger teachers join, so that they have more time to practice what they learn at the trainings, and they are not so close to retirement." If Paul's implication was that most young teachers were honor teachers and teachers on short-term contracts, Ibu Yuni had a response ready: "Yes, but at SD Maru there are young civil servant teachers too."

Ibu Yuni was not trying to weasel out of her obligations as a master trainer; if anything, she was one of the most enthusiastic master trainers from any of the schools in North Jakarta. She consistently tried out ideas from Literacy Boost trainings at her school, such as setting up a Reading Buddies program, putting out racks of books in hallways, and making a reading corner. Her complaints at the CAC meetings came after months of feeling defeated; she told me in an interview that whenever she tried to recruit other teachers for these literacy projects, only other honor teachers would join in. Civil servant teachers, she thought, would not join in her efforts precisely because she was an honor teacher (and a young woman, at that), and occupied a much lower rung in the school hierarchy.

Her comments sparked a debate. An older school supervisor objected, echoing Paul's worry that if only civil servant teachers were invited to Literacy Boost teacher trainings, there would not be enough teachers. These remarks again highlighted the paradox that though it was widely acknowledged that there were not enough civil servant teachers to fully staff schools, there were few opportunities for honor teachers to upgrade their status. An older master trainer attempted to discredit Ibu Yuni's account: "Well at our school, we don't distinguish between younger and older teachers, and we also don't distinguish between civil servant and honor teachers." Of course, here was a case precisely in which Ibu Yuni's testimony and suggestions were discounted by teachers who were both older and had civil servant status, just as she and the school supervisor had suggested often happened. This exchange underscored the deep resistance to democratizing participation and the durability of established systems of power and decision-making in schools. It also highlights the ultimate limitations of Save the Children in disrupting these systems through the CAC process. At its heart, the CAC was a democratic process, deployed in deeply undemocratic school systems.

The seeming failures of the CAC process were anticipated by the Literacy Boost staff. No one naively expected educational bureaucrats, headmasters, or even teachers to fully consider the feedback of parents and students, much less reallocate budgets to accommodate those desires. Returning to Toba's remarks after the CAC meeting at SD Maru, the point was not to actually get permission for parents to ride the bus with their special-needs children, or at SD Al Mahaba, to hire a janitor. Rather, Save the Children's goal was to empower honor teachers, parents, and students, even if incrementally. According to Toba's logic, the simple act of holding these CAC meetings elevated previously-disempowered actors like parents to

the level of stakeholders. For one, students, like (adult) teachers and parents, were expected to brainstorm, draw up, and present a list of goals for the coming year. Given the few opportunities for parents to meet with teachers, much less headmasters and administrators, the CAC meeting represented the only chance for all to meet on even footing.

At its best, the CAC process temporarily subverted existing hierarchies at school within the context of the meeting, by ensuring that that certain groups of people who were predictably excluded from decision-making were represented in the planning and implementation of school activities. At its worst, the CAC process resulted in a clarification, and indeed a deepening, of roles and ranks in schools. As in the case of SD Al-Mahaba, when parents challenged the headmaster's authority, they were quickly put into (their lower) place. Similarly, even as most parents and teachers treated the students indulgently in these meetings, I had the sense that few were taking notes on how to incorporate the students' ideas. Furthermore, the CAC process also authorized *certain* people as the official representatives in each stakeholder group. Students who were chosen to participate in the CAC meetings were favored students. Parents were summoned by teachers and headmasters to join the School Committee, often with little understanding of the function of the committee or the obligations this entailed.

Save the Children's advocacy initiatives—some of their most high-profile work—served to reinforce existing political structures and power hierarchies. In April 2017, the organization hosted a "Village Talk Show" in Kupang to spotlight their work in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province (NTT), and which culminated in the public signing of a contract to support and fund early childhood education. A panel discussion featured high-ranking education bureaucrats, including a Vice Minister of Education and Culture, national and international Save the Children officers, NTT Regent's representative, and NTT Provincial Representatives. Alongside these powerful figures on stage were two village heads, one of whom hailed from the village where I conducted my research. Like at SD Al-Mahaba, the contrast between the participants was stark.

Even as Save the Children disrupted power hierarchies, by putting village heads on the same stage as high-ranking education officials and experts, it also reinforced it. The seating arrangement, in which the village heads were off to one side, and the limited amount of speaking time afforded to them, belied their relative insignificance at the event. And yet without the village heads, there would be no representation from "the people"—those who Save the Children and the Ministers from Jakarta aimed to serve. So, the village heads had a certain, limited role: to say how their own villages benefit from early childhood education initiatives. As the event's florid capstone—the public signing of the contract to support early childhood education—showed, getting work done means securing commitment form the highest levels of government, and the people at the top still get a place of honor. In some ways, this mirrored the CAC process, in which students, teachers, parents and administrators all had the chance to speak, before the powerful reasserted their authority. Thus, there are subtle ways in which Save the Children disrupted the distribution of power through its participatory planning work, and others in which it bolstered the standings of the powerful.

Conclusion

The Literacy Boost program does not descend upon blank spaces. Indeed, in each implementation site worldwide, there exists a similarly complex history and social world. Perhaps in response to critiques of an overly narrow focus, and recognizing that children's literacy learning is always embedded within larger societal forces, the Save the Children widened its focus with its Literacy Boost programming. But suddenly this broader view encompassed concerns such as whether mothers of special needs children could accompany them on the school bus, the simmering antagonism between mothers and teachers, and the uncertain status of the land upon which everyone stood and spoke to one another.

The Literacy Boost staff members were not oblivious to how uncertainty enabled schools like SD Sarjana to putter along, shortchanging teachers and students alike. They acknowledged commonplace practices like taking from the school's *danabos*, and the difficulty of changing these practices. I came to understand how Literacy Boost staffers were neither out of touch with reality, nor idealistically bent on changing it within a short period of time. However, by putting the CAC meetings at the center of their activities in the last year of the intervention in Jakarta, Literacy Boost insisted on interrogating the way things were done, thus shining a light on what previously seemed normal and recasting it as aberrant, or at the very least, up for debate.

The foundation-run school system operated through uncertainty, capitalizing on its quasi-legal status. Layers of uncertainty—about land rights, about residency statuses of families—also enabled the Department of Education to give its stamp of approval to such schools. The Literacy Boost's CAC process precisely promoted the opposite value: transparency. In Jakarta, the Literacy Boost program did less to realize particular beneficial literacy outcomes; rather, the program focused on changing the process of debate and decision-making of school management. In many ways, this was a much more ambitious goal, for it wasn't simply a matter of reallocating budgets for certain priorities (e.g. for literacy-related ones, such as a reading corner). Rather, the CAC process nudged people towards engaging in a different mode of negotiation, a more open debate. In the process, it recast not only who should have the authority to make decisions, but also who was eligible to have a voice as a stakeholder.

Though the word *stakeholder* is a basic entry in the international development lexicon, Literacy Boost's CAC process showed that determining stakeholders is a fraught and inconsistent process. In all of Save the Children's projects in Indonesia, including the Literacy Boost programs in Belu and Jakarta, local stakeholder buy-in was conceived of as a critical step in the program implementation. And in order to secure stakeholder buy-in, it was first necessary to define first the categories of stakeholders, and then select the actual people who should join—in the roles of "district education official" or "community member," for example. Following these determinations, there remained the question of whether each stakeholder's voice should be weighted equally. This final point was fiercely contested at the CAC meetings, where parents, teachers, and headmaster, not to mention students, strove to speak and be heard. But beyond bringing stakeholder groups together, the Literacy Boost program had limited power in compelling any person to listen to another.

Literacy Boost's search for the appropriate stakeholders at schools in some ways mirrors the most basic challenge faced by the urban poor in Jakarta: the struggle to be counted, to be designated a Jakarta citizen with full rights. Through programs like the KJP, formal recognitions accrue, a set of benefits that are conferred to all who are officially residents: "stakeholders" in Jakarta, or those who deserve voice, and who are owed services. In this way, the question of space, belonging, and educational futures are bound up tightly through programs like the KJP.

Given this knot of uncertainty, the right to occupy space is key to understanding the educational prospects for children at SD Sarjana, and ultimately, why the Literacy Boost program took the form that it did in North Jakarta. Housing and land were intimately connected to education. Arjun Appadurai writes of the urban poor in Mumbai that, "In a city where ration cards, electricity bills, and rent receipts guarantee other rights to the benefits of citizenship, the inability to secure claims to proper housing and other political handicaps reinforce one another" (2004, p. 72). It is precisely this mechanism of mutual reinforcement—between uncertainty about land and about schooling benefits—that requires any study of educational interventions also address the larger social environment.

The uncertainty plays out in the drama of recruiting students to SD Sarjana each year, of competition between the schools for enrollment, but also the underpayment of teachers and their lack of political power at schools. The CAC process exposed the larger historical and social forces behind the current reality at schools like SD Sarjana, but then could do little to ameliorate the problems that manifested at schools. Even so, it was an important exercise in cultivating voice and participation.

I have read the central phenomena at SD Sarjana as uncertainty: that uncertainty clouds decision-making and action at all levels; uncertainty about land rights for both families and the school, uncertainty about student recruitment, uncertainty about even state schools and whether they would be evicted, uncertainty about flooding and what the next governor of Jakarta would do to their neighborhood. Another way—perhaps more clear-eyed and certainly more cynical—is to read this thread as ambiguity. If uncertainty connotes a lack of agency, ambiguity implies an intentionality: certain institutions and their representatives intentionally make things unclear in order to further particular goals, a tactic commonly used in contested situations. This chapter has demonstrated that uncertainty and ambiguity are not mutually exclusive phenomena. The Literacy Boost intervention generated the possibility for a form of educational advocacy within these challenging conditions, but could not ensure their dissipation.

There is an epilogue to the story of SD Sarjana. By 2020, Pak Ferry, the headmaster, and most of the teachers have migrated to another foundation school in the area. The new school's foundation was started by a teacher-couple that switches roles every few years: when one is the headmaster, the other runs the foundation. I have heard, in informal conversations, that the teachers there are guaranteed minimally 1,000,000 IDR per month in pay, a 400,000 IDR raise from SD Sarjana. Perhaps most importantly, the teachers can again feel a sense of *gotong royong*, of building a school from the ground up together, in mutual collaboration and with mutual sacrifice. It remains to be seen whether most students will choose to follow in an exodus from SD Sarjana.

Chapter 3. Positive discipline and corporal punishment

In the many official evaluation reports and program documents on Literacy Boost in Indonesia, there is scant mention of positive discipline. Positive discipline, however, repeatedly came up in my conversations with teachers, headmasters, and community members about Literacy Boost. In Belu, the uptake of positive discipline, and concomitant move away from corporal punishment, was frequently cited as the most significant impact of the Literacy Boost intervention at their schools. The focus on reforming disciplinary practices (and discourses) is an indirect but central facet of the Literacy Boost intervention. It did not fall into any of the three explicitly-defined intervention areas—literacy assessment, teacher training, and community engagement—but rather became a significant element of the literacy intervention. At the same time, the exact domain and contours of the discipline reform were nebulous. What Literacy Boost promoted was both a stricter and laxer practice of discipline than what previously existed at schools. This chapter examines the conditions and logics that drove the shifts in classroom discipline over the course of the intervention, and elucidates how these transformations were conceptualized and experienced by development workers and stakeholders in both Belu and Jakarta. I analyze the tensions that arose from this push for positive self-discipline. I show how discipline became the most salient aspect of the intervention for many community members and teachers in both Belu and Jakarta. Notions of discipline permeated all aspects of the intervention.

Positive discipline was variously defined in Literacy Boost program materials, but at the very core, it is "about long term solutions that develop your child's own self-discipline" (Save the Children, 2015). *Self*-discipline was the main principle: an emphasis on self-control, self-monitoring, self-regulation. In this formulation of positive discipline, discipline should be something that happens *within* the self—between bad and good desires, between the disciplined self and the undisciplined one—rather than something that happens between an elder and novice, teacher and student, or parent and child.

My aim in this chapter is not to depict corporal punishment as a durable, local cultural practice, nor to depict Literacy Boost's efforts to promote positive discipline as misguided or culturally insensitive. Rather, I argue that the "positive discipline" was not simply about better classroom management. At its center, positive discipline was based on a particular conception of the roles and rights of the child and of the adult, and of particular beliefs about the conflictual nature of authority in the relationship between children and adults.

While Literacy Boost's disciplinary reform worked at both sites of the intervention analyzed in this dissertation, the form and content of its engagement varied dramatically between the two sites. In Belu, the focus was on stopping teachers from using corporal punishment in classrooms, and promoting positive discipline. In Jakarta, the focus was on promoting self-discipline among teachers and school administrators. In the terms Michel Foucault used in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), the Belu disciplinary reform focused overwhelmingly on the body, while in Jakarta the focus was predominantly on the soul. While the distinction between body and soul—and the forms of discipline enacted upon each—does not exhaustively locate the differences between the programs of disciplinary reform in Belu and Jakarta, it provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding the consistency and variations of Literacy Boost's disciplinary reforms. As I have discussed in other chapters, the Literacy Boost program varied dramatically in its scope, activities, and foci within each site, and this was also true of the disciplinary reforms. Yet such an analytic distinction—between the body and the soul, between corporal punishment and time logs—allows for a direct comparison between the Jakarta and Belu sites, in how the intervention was experienced by stakeholders in each place.

At various points throughout my research, Literacy Boost program officers reminded me that Save the Children is, at its core, a child protection organization.[50] In Indonesia and across Save the Children's operations globally, there are child protection officers who focus on preventing harm to children, whether the particular funded intervention is about early childhood education, disaster relief, or sanitation; children's safety was the baseline condition for any work in any programmatic area to proceed. Thus, in order to implement the Literacy Boost program, there first needed to be an assurance of overall child safety. The issue, then, is how child safety was defined. In its varying definitions, divergent understandings and applications of classroom discipline techniques arose.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. In the first, I outline the theoretical grounding of school as a disciplinary institution more broadly. I show how schools as a general institution, and then as a specifically Indonesian one, enforce disciplinary order upon bodies and minds. In the second section, I examine how the Literacy Boost positive discipline campaign was received, interpreted, and negotiated by people in Belu, outlining how ambivalence about positive discipline stemmed from nostalgia for times past, as well as from anxiety about changes in social hierarchy—in particular, in the relative positions and behaviors of children and adults. In the third and final section, I show how the Literacy Boost program in Jakarta amplified trends toward self-discipline and transparency in Indonesian education in Jakarta.

Theoretical grounding and background

The different scales and methods of Literacy Boost's disciplinary reform follow the arc that Foucault (1977) describes in *Discipline and Punish*. Punishment regimes have evolved over centuries, from punishment that was enacted directly upon the body to diffused disciplinary regimes that exerted indirect control over the body. In the paradigmatic example of punishment for Foucault flogging entailed public humiliation and acute pain, but was time-bound and finite in its scope. Foucault details how punishment evolved from flogging (and worse) to imprisonment; in daily life, timetables and other techniques of self-control proliferated. Discipline is thus a qualitative transformation of punishment: from the spectacle of public and physically painful punishment, to the individuated control of movement, which did not directly hurt the body, but whose horizon of efficacy could stretch out for days, years, or even a lifetime. In Foucault's terms, such disciplinary techniques are enacted on the soul.

The qualitative change in disciplinary techniques entailed other changes: increasing attention to and control over spatial layout as a way to pacify populations, and to bring about increasing order and discipline; an increasing focus on (or differentiation of) each individual; and eventually, the constant comparison between and norming of individual action within disciplinary institutions, like factory floors, schools, and prisons (Foucault, 1977).

Scholars have commented widely on the disciplining function of schools. Many (Ferguson, 2000; Willis, 1977) have convincingly argued that school is primarily a disciplinary institution. Schooling occupies a significant position of Foucault's study. The increasing partitioning of time stems from experiments in school settings (Foucault, 1977, pp. 154-160) like mutual improvement schools. The imperative to fit in more while wasting less time—increasing "efficiency" in today's parlance—was fine-tuned at these schools, where "each passing moment was filled with many different, but ordered activities; and, on the other hand, the rhythm imposed by signals, whistles, orders imposed on everyone temporal norms that were intended both to accelerate the process of learning and to teach speed as a virtue" (Foucault, 1977, p. 154). It was also at schools where the links between time management, timetables and self-discipline were made durable; and where assessment and norms-making through comparison became standard expectations and practices.

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50 See background on Save the Children, in Introduction.

Significantly, the shift from punishment enacted upon the body (in the form of corporeal beatings, for example), toward a more sanitized discipline (in the form of strict timetables and self-regulation), did not occur because of considerations of human rights, realizing the 'barbarity' of the old methods, nor was it a self-conscious effort to modernize. Rather, Foucault argues that the most important consideration driving the shift was that sanitized discipline was patently more *effective* at subduing, controlling, and pacifying populations than rowdy displays of hangings, lashings, and the like. In short, there was an evolution of punishment, not its banishment. If the populace were self-controlled in space and time, the need for corporal punishment—a less effective and more labor-intensive form of punishment—would be greatly reduced.

There is a strong parallel between Foucault's study and the present one. The Literacy Boost intervention aimed to bring about transformation, by inducing teachers, parents, and school administrators to move away from the spectacle of corporal punishment and toward something more sanitized and distanced, in the form of teachers' work logs and self-control. Ultimately, the aim was to instill self-discipline in students and teachers, and in fact, in each person in the school system.

Corporal control in Indonesian schools

Stories of severe discipline at school abound in accounts of Indonesian schooling, particularly under Dutch colonial rule (Hoskins, 1997; Mrazek, 2010). What was school, after all, if not learning to sit, wearing shoes, training the eye and the hand? In the late 1990s, Mrazek conducted longform interviews with aging elites in Jakarta, who shared recollections of growing up and attending school during Dutch colonial rule. Mrazek wrote, "Like one's upper body, hands and fingers, for table manners, one's vocal cords, mouth, tongue, and teeth were trained to stretch and relax, to construct sentences, to make one thus think and define oneself as become human..." (2010, p. 156), echoing Bourdieu's notion of bodily hexis, or the unconscious, embodied tendencies, calcifying into "a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (1977, p. 94).

Schooling in Indonesia has, from Dutch times to the present day, emphasized bodily control, precision, and cleanliness. In her ethnographic study of time and temporality in Sumba, anthropologist Janet Hoskins (1997) details how Catholic and Protestant missionaries relied on different training techniques and pedagogies, but both emphasized timetables—a 'strict' temporality. At a Catholic school for natives, students abided by strict schedules set forth by the nuns and priests, who were "convinced that temporal discipline would instill a sense of responsibility and orderliness, [and who] believed that they were encouraging young people to think for themselves and become free of the constraints of custom and tradition" (Hoskins, 1997, p. 295). She continues, writing that "[t]he missionaries valued promptness, cleanliness, hourly routines, and schedules as ends in themselves, not only as preconditions for wage-earning employment", and that this strict time regimentation was perceived of "as ways of 'opening up' their inhabitants to a wider world of historical forces", rather than "as confinements and enclosures" (1997, p. 296). As Sumba natives were taught to adhere to, value, and eventually internalize missionaries' ideas about order and organization, they trained not only their bodies to sit in chairs for long stretches, to clean the schoolhouse, but also their minds—to expect and indeed demand certain routines, to define progress in particular ways.

Literacy Boost was not a new actor in debates about discipline in Indonesian schools; as Hoskins' and Mrazek's studies show, discipline has been a longstanding concern of missionary educators, government teachers, Indonesian nation-builders, and indeed, the educators, parents, and administrators at the focal schools in my own investigation. Like many early grade teachers who I interviewed, Ibu Rita thought of schooling as a process of training the body.

When I met Ibu Rita, first in 2015 and then in more extended encounters in 2016 and 2017, she was considered a senior teacher, having taught at SD Bose in Belu for nearly 30 years. She was deeply embedded in the school and the community, and her daughter was also employed at SD Bose as a secretary and the unofficial school librarian. For most of her decades at SD Bose, Ibu Rita taught the 1st grade, but like many other teachers, has spent a few years here and there teaching other primary school grades. However, she spoke of herself as a specialist of first grade teaching. SD Bose was a "model school" for Save the Children. It had undergone four years of Literacy Boost programming, and it was often featured in its publications and was also the site for visits by Literacy Boost delegations from other countries. Similarly, Ibu Rita was one of the success stories for Literacy Boost; she participated in many of its teacher-training workshops, helped to disseminate information to other teachers through teacher working groups, and was a mentor to new teachers in the area.

Ibu Rita said that the most important skill that she imparted to her first-grade students was the ability to "*mengentrol diri,*" or to control oneself, then elaborating that her role was "to control them so they are good, control them so they can write well, read well" (personal communication, July 11, 2017). The tasks that Ibu Rita assigned to her students, such as to copy sentences from the board or to write the alphabet 20 times, were designed precisely to help students achieve control over their bodies: their hands, their eyes, their posture in the desks, their focus and attention span. Ibu Rita's pedagogy for her first graders was oriented towards two goals: first, to promote bodily control such that students could properly hold a pencil and make smooth marks on the page, to write from left to right and from up to down, and to control their bodies within the spaces of the school; and second, to socialize students to the roles in relationships with each other and with their teachers. Indeed, some of the most tender moments that I witnessed in Ibu Rita's class were of her guiding her students towards the first goal: Ibu Rita holding a student in her lap, her arm wrapped around the student's, her hand cupping the student's, guiding the pencil held both by the child and herself.

Bodily control began before entering the classroom. Wearing the right uniform—students in Indonesia all wear uniforms, and they have several sets to rotate through the week—and the right shoes was a basic requirement of students. It was also a test for parents (especially mothers): to dress one's children well, with pressed and clean clothes, provided for most teachers a simple barometer of how much a parent cared about their child's education. In interviews, teachers repeatedly emphasized that providing neat uniforms was a basic task for parents to support their children's education.[51] The inverse—sending a child to school with a wrinkled or dirty uniform, or the wrong uniform for the day—signaled a lack of attention and care, not just towards the child's physical appearance but also their minds. The other was to make sure that the child was well-fed, though teachers allowed that poor parents could not always meet this objective.

The family who hosted me in Belu had three children. The youngest of the three, Roger, was in preschool at the time of my fieldwork. Preschool met for just over an hour each day, and it was located just across the street, a mere 200 meters from the family's house. To attend preschool, Roger had to wear shoes. Immediately after coming home from preschool, Roger would promptly kick off his shoes in favor of sandals, and sometimes leaving those behind too as he ran off with friends to visit their houses or to the beach. Shoes, in Mrazek's telling, were the first civilizing technology that acted upon the bodies of young people. Most of his interlocutors brought up shoes when they talked about going to school (2010, p. 149):

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51 Clean uniforms, however, were a necessity, and clothing remains an obstacle to enrollment. In Kampung Sawah in Jakarta, the head of the foundation spoke of distributing free uniforms for preschoolers, to entice parents to send their children to preschool rather than skipping preschool altogether (Ibu Ayu, personal communication, May 6, 2017). The cost of uniforms was often enough to tip the balance for parents, forcing them to keep their young children at home rather than sending them to preschool, even if that preschool is free.

> To set out on the road, one usually changes clothes. Shoes, first of all, were mentioned by the old Indonesians who talked to me. Putting on shoes was repeatedly recalled as the first move, an initiating gesture, on the road to school... Shoes *were* the road to school. Shoes, at the moment one stepped onto the modern road, measured all the significant distances in the colony.

By making their feet conform, shoes were a hallmark of schools just as schools were a hallmark of civilization. Roger's mother constantly called after him to *pakai sandal!*, or "put your sandals on!," as he ran away barefoot.

Body control and time discipline were instilled in tandem through schooling. In my observations, I was often impressed by young students' sense of temporal precision. At the start and end of each school day, a student leader guided all students in a series of exercises featuring militaristic undertones. The students lined up in perfect columns in the schoolyard, according to their class, and moved their arms in straight lines, connecting to the student in front of them, releasing at the exact moment that the student leader issued their command. The student leader yelled out commands as if he were a military commander, and students all responded kinetically in step with each other, in perfect synchrony. In the cadence of their movements, the range and length of their movements, the students, some as young as six, all proceeded in unison. Foucault's description of the types of steps for marching troops—the precise length of each step, angle of the bend of the knee, the time allotted for each movement—also aptly describes the schoolchildren: "…a new set of restraints had been brought into play, another degree of precision in the breakdown of gestures and movements, another way of adjusting the body to temporal imperatives" (Foucault, 1977, p. 151).

Like Foucault's example of soldiers lining up before the king in a neat arrangement that allowed for any aberration to be immediately visible, so too did the students at SD Bose, and indeed, at schools all around Indonesia, line up before their teachers. The tightly-coordinated routine was a reminder of how school was a place to be disciplined—in every sense of the word—even if the school bell rang at irregular intervals and teachers were sometimes absent. An important lesson for each student was how to adjust "the body to temporal imperatives," not only during the school opening and closing exercises, but in their classrooms too. Clocks were one of the common classroom decorations that teachers learned to make at Save the Children trainings. I first noticed them, made of construction paper and cardboard, when I visited a classroom on July 30, 2015, in a remote village in Belu about 3 kilometers from the border with East Timor. There, the first-grade teacher noted that for many of her students, "they did not grow up knowing what is 7:05 am." For this teacher, it was not simply about teaching her students how to read a clock or conceptions of lateness, but also about teaching their parents. The implicit critique, was a lack of discipline by parents, sending their children to school in the morning, at approximately the right time, but not precisely at 7:05 am. At another classroom observation that same week in Belu, a child came late to his second-grade class and apologized, saying he had to *mandi* (bathe) in the morning. His teacher made an example of him, scolding him in front of the class: "All other children had time to *mandi*, but before school started. Why couldn't you do the same?" The teacher's method, of publicly shaming the student, was one form of the "negative" discipline that the Literacy Boost program aimed to replace with positive discipline. In the next section, I turn to Literacy Boost's attempts to promote positive discipline in Belu.

Corporal punishment and classroom discipline in Belu

Ibu Rita's first graders were boisterous, as six-year-old children are generally prone to be. I experienced the challenges of managing her class firsthand when she asked me to fill in once. Imagining an engaging story hour, I attempted to read a large picture book to the students but was quickly thwarted by several children who ran laps around the diminishing circle of seated students.

One day, early in the 2016-2017 school year, Ibu Rita signaled that she had had enough of the noise. After commanding her students to be quiet several times, she began to speak in low, hushed tones. She asked the students whether they had heard that a fellow student's grandmother had passed away. Most students nodded. On my way to school that morning on the back of a motorbike taxi, I had seen plastic chairs assembled in the front yard of a home. That usually meant a wedding or a funeral, and it turned out to be the latter. With all the students now paying full attention, Ibu Rita continued with her line of questioning: "Did you know that the dead woman's mouth was sewn shut? Who sewed it shut?" The students all fell silent, as Ibu Rita told them it was she who sewed it shut, and that she would do the same to them if they did not stay silent for the rest of the class period. Despite the bright sunlight streaming in through the windows and the early hour, the mood in the classroom shifted and the students were subdued and watchful.

This episode exemplified the type of classroom discipline that Literacy Boost attempted to eradicate in favor of a softer, kinder positive discipline regime. In teacher training workshops and monitoring sessions with teachers in classrooms, Literacy Boost staffers continually emphasized how students should not be cowed or intimidated in the classroom, through physical or verbal threats or punishment. Though the lesson did not seem to take hold for Ibu Rita, other teachers in Belu Regency talked at length about how their teaching changed once they eliminated corporal punishment (and the threat of it) and embraced positive discipline in their classrooms. In their stories, though, there was always a note of ambivalence, a contradiction between beliefs about discipline and respect. Parents also issued contradictory and often emotional statements on disciplinary tactics and their meanings.

In a focus group discussion about the Literacy Boost teacher training sessions at SD Wamea, I expected that the five teachers present would talk about the literacy curricula and pedagogical techniques that they had gleaned. Instead, one teacher immediately started talking about how he learned to be "less emotional," i.e., to exhibit less anger at students. In his telling, in his teaching career he would often become irate when students stayed silent or seemed to not comprehend a lesson. In those moments, he either physically punished or verbally reprimanded his students. Through Literacy Boost, he said, he learned to "control" himself and to use positive discipline to compel the students to follow his commands (personal communication, July 14, 2015). Other teachers chimed in, echoing the male teacher's experiences with positive discipline. A senior female teacher explained that her positive discipline toolbox included asking students to applaud when a classmate correctly answered a question; it influenced student behavior, as more students were eager to raise their hands and participate, reducing the amount of cajoling and threats she had to issue. Another teacher spoke of feeling closer (*lebih akrab*) with her students, and that there was a mutual contentedness between them that replaced previously held antagonism. This feeling of closeness, or *akrab*, stood in stark juxtaposition with traditional, hierarchical classroom structures, which I explore in the following section. This teacher mentioned that her students now preferred to spend recess time in the classroom chatting with her, whereas they used to sprint outside into the yard as soon as they were dismissed.

Figure 16. *Ibu Rita demonstrating positive discipline techniques*

Note: Image by author (2016)

Back at SD Bose, Ibu Rita was also eager to demonstrate her positive discipline techniques. Some mornings, Ibu Rita had the students stand in a circle and sing songs together. When one student or another was selected to perform, the whole class would clap to encourage her. This, according to Ibu Rita, was positive discipline, and it was not incompatible with threatening to sew the students' mouths shut. For Ibu Rita, the two disciplinary regimes functioned towards different ends. Threats could quiet the students, and instill fear and respect, while positive discipline could motivate and engage the students. In Ibu Rita's view, both kinds of discipline were indispensable tools that promoted effective teaching and learning.

Positive discipline and the rights of the child

From Ibu Rita's and the SD Wamea teachers' remarks, it is clear that positive discipline had multiple meanings for each person. For some, it was solely defined as discipline without corporal punishment, while for others, it connoted something like a closer connection with students. Like with other phenomena, there was a gap between the Literacy Boost program plans and what unfolded in schools and communities. In this section I examine Save the Children's arguments in favor of positive discipline. Briefly, they are the following: 1. Corporal punishment violates children's human rights, and thus should be banned in schools; and 2. The use of corporal punishment results in worse learning outcomes. In this section, I elucidate how these particular forms of reasoning were interpreted by my interlocutors in Belu. I then examine how these logics were interpreted—and then variously accepted, rejected, and hybridized—by Literacy Boost stakeholders in Belu.

Children as holders of human rights

The first line of reasoning was a moral and legal one: "prohibition of corporal punishment in schools is best understood as a human rights obligation… research is not needed in order to 'prove' that corporal punishment should be prohibited in schools: the issue is one of human rights" (Global Initiative, 2017b, p. 8).[52] Children are humans, and thus have human rights. Save the Children invokes universalistic principles of rights: no matter where

52 See the following Save the Children documents (Barbaglia, et al., 2018; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2017; Save the Children Sweden, 2018; Save the Children, 2016).

one lives, their culture, their circumstances, each is afforded the same baseline set of rights. Moreover, Save the Children (Global Initiative, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) directly links the banning of corporal punishment in schools with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter "the Convention"). States like Indonesia, as signatories of the Convention, are in formal agreement that children are holders of human rights, and thus corporal punishment—a violation of their rights—is in contravention of the Convention.

Indonesia ratified the Convention in 1990, but also issued a significant reservation: "Provisions of the Convention shall be interpreted in the light of the principles of Islamic laws and values" (UN General Assembly, 1989). Though the reservation was later withdrawn in 2005, the tussle over what is binding, what takes precedence in Indonesia illuminates one tension about positive discipline, namely between universal standards and local culture.[53] At the same time that Indonesia signed on to the universal standards in the Convention, it also asserted its sovereign right to interpret the Convention in line with national values.

A similar tension could be found in debates about positive discipline in Belu, where many teachers, school administrators, and community members registered ambivalence about changes to classroom discipline. The contours of their arguments resembled the tussle over how to interpret the Convention. Many interlocutors both acknowledged the universal standard (of banning corporal discipline) and the significance of local standards and ways of doing things, which may be misapprehended by outsiders—whether from outside Indonesia or from outside Nusa Tenggara Timur Province.

Scholars of human rights (Destrooper, 2018; Goodale, 2007; Merry, 2006, 2007, 2016; Vandenhole, 2018) note that for global norms like human rights to work, there must be an international standard whose strength is precisely its invariability in the face of diverse local circumstances and traditions. Yet, even if there were a formula for ironing out the tension between the global and local scales, the question arises to who the local is. As Tine Destrooper, a social scientist studying transitional justice, conflict, and human rights, notes, there is often "a debate over what constitutes 'the most relevant local' for human rights decision-making and who has access to 'the people' to better represent their voices" (2018, p. 11).[54] In this case, then, who is the right "local" representative to convey local ideas about authority, punishment, and proper forms of discipline for children?

In fact, "the east" was frequently deployed as an explanation for why it was so difficult to eradicate corporal punishment in classrooms. Many people I interviewed—both from Belu and from Java—often described eastern Indonesians as more direct, less refined, and more prone to use violence to settle conflicts, including in schools. Like many stereotypes, this one was perpetuated through mass media, in particular in widely-viewed soap opera television programs and in movies, in which dark-skinned eastern Indonesians

53 "Local" in this case would refer to the national level, though even that is a stretch; although Indonesia is a Muslim-majority nation, it is not a Muslim nation. Thus, Islamic laws and values only apply to some, not all, Indonesians.

54 This was a recurring question during the course of my research, and one that Literacy Boost staffers also grappled with. One staffer, Paul, who had worked in Belu for four years and was in the process of joining its next project site, spoke hopefully about the new project's participatory planning processes. In addition to consulting the usual education officials, he had also spoke to religious leaders, village officials, and other representatives of the community. These "stakeholders" were chosen by virtue of their position, and often had high social standing. Thus, these planning meetings, like the Community Action Cycle meetings, tended to reify existing power structures. Paul noted that truly marginalized people may never have the chance to speak up, but that "we may be able to meet with them one on one, in settings where they feel comfortable speaking their true feelings", and barring that, that "we have to imagine ourselves in their positions, imagine what they want, in this way we can be their tongue" (personal communication, August 12, 2016).

play the role of gangster or enforcer.[55] These attitudes were espoused by a range of interlocutors, including a professor, Ibu Juli, in Kupang, NTT, who explained, "Compared to Javanese, here, sometimes we need to knock heads. In the east, we have a different way of connecting to people, reading, their understanding and their mindset" (personal communication, April 12, 2017).

In invoking human rights discourse to advocate against corporal punishment, Save the Children inevitably raises the concern of the civilizing project, in which outside moralizers use the discourses and edicts of human rights to reform "backward societies." As the anthropologist Talal Asad (2000) notes that, "States are essential to the protection they offer. This means that states can and do use human rights discourse against their citizens – as colonial empires used it against their subjects – to realize their civilizing project." Some of Save the Children's language confirms this suspicion; one publication notes that (2017, p. 18):

> But times change and societies move on… for the majority, once corporal punishment is no longer an option and when teachers are skilled in a range of positive approaches to classroom management, the days when beating children for not doing homework will seem arcane and barbaric.

In taking a strongly moralizing stance on disciplinary tactics, here Save the Children also openly depicts those who employ corporal punishment as uncivilized ("barbaric") and lagging behind ("arcane").

In my research in Belu, I found that many interlocutors openly questioned, and indeed scoffed at, the notion that children are holders of human rights. These were people who cared deeply about the welfare of children in their communities, yet could not brook the link between lofty "human rights" and schoolchildren. Perhaps most surprising of all, the head of the SD Bose School Committee held such views.[56] I met Pak Felix several times in 2015, 2016, and 2017, whenever I was in Belu. He was an influential person in the community, so he was at virtually every public event in SD Bose's town. In addition to his role as head of the School Committee, he was the church treasurer, second in command at the local branch of the National Democratic Party, and also held a quasi-official position in the local village government.

In 2017, I asked him to meet for a recorded interview, and he invited me to his home, which was a few houses down from the school. When I arrived on foot, Pak Felix was in his yard, moving lumber—one of his many jobs included sourcing building materials for buyers in the town. We sat down in the living room of his home, which was adorned with portraits of family members in graduation gowns –from his adult children proudly holding their college diplomas, to his granddaughter, who had recently graduated kindergarten. I asked Pak Felix to tell me about what he felt was happening in schools today, which could include shifts in pedagogy, curriculum, or administration. Rather than talk about any issues related to shifts in pedagogy, curriculum, or administration, he spoke of corporal punishment.

Interview with Pak Felix (August 3, 2017):

1 It's nothing like when I was younger… they were really *keras*. But we learned a lot,

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55 One Literacy Boost staffer, Heri, from eastern Indonesia talked about what it was like for him to visit Jakarta, which he did frequently to attend various training sessions and strategy meetings. Once on a Sunday morning, Heri went to *Monas*, the national monument that also serves as a park in the center of Jakarta, to spend some time outdoors. Sunday mornings are a busy time at *Monas*, when many families go for outings together. There are few benches and many signs warning people to not sit on the grass (for fear that the lawns would be ruined). Heri noticed that every other bench was crammed with people, yet no one would sit with him on his. He told this story with a laugh, ending it by saying that looking like a *preman* (gangster) could have its benefits—that you could enjoy a lot of personal space.

56 As discussed in Chapter 2, the School Committee is a body that functions like a Parent Teacher Association.

2 you know… and if the teacher was over there, we immediately said 'good morning
3 Sir, good day Sir,' nothing like today. They had sticks and branches, and rulers. We
4 didn't have notebooks, we wrote on slates of blackboard. The teacher would have us
5 turn in our writing, and ask if we understood. If we said yes, she could ask us to go
6 to the front and explain to our friends from the front of the classroom. And if we
7 couldn't do it, here…until we had a wound. But we learned. Now, there's *HAM*. If a
8 teacher hits a student like that, the student will report the teacher to the police - it's
9 happened at the middle school, and at the primary school too. The teacher gets in
10 trouble, so now the teachers are afraid to discipline their students, get reported, all
11 for what? So they don't do anything, they just look at the book and collect their
12 money. Now there's no way to force students, ensure that they learn. So that's the
13 problem with today, our kids, and thus they turn out mediocre results.

Several aspects of Pak Felix's response are striking. First, I did not ask about discipline, yet it was the first thing he brought up. Perhaps of even more significance, though I was closely affiliated with Save the Children in Pak Felix's eyes, he spoke nostalgically of the days of classroom corporal punishment. Indeed, he describes being punished in visceral detail. In line 3, as he says "They had sticks and branches, and rulers," he gestures: to the back of his calves and shoulders, where he was presumably hit with the wood, slaps at his own cheeks, and pulls his earlobe. In line 7, when he says teachers would hit him "here" until a wound appeared, he gestured at his calf. Together, the descriptions and gestures conjured a visceral image of adults hitting schoolchildren, precisely the target of Literacy Boost's positive discipline campaign. Despite knowing that Literacy Boost was promoting positive discipline at SD Bose and other schools in Belu, Pak Felix bemoaned the waning use of corporal punishment. Given how much my interlocutors seemed to play up Literacy Boost's positive impacts in interviews, Pak Felix's pointed critique of schools without corporal discipline was notable.

Second, Pak Felix notably did not bring up changes in curriculum, student body composition, teachers' certifications, pedagogical changes, or shifts in school administration. Instead, he linked (corporal) discipline with learning, and in fact, implied that learning was predicated on being hit, or threatened to be hit.

Finally, Pak Felix pinpoints human rights (which he glosses as *HAM,* short for *hak asasi manusia,* in line 7) as the reason why students are doing poorly in school. In his view, the notion of human rights was not used to protect vulnerable students, but instead was exploited by students to get out of studying. Consequently, in his view, teachers have become lazy, less demanding of their students. Without directly referring to Literacy Boost or Save the Children, Pak Felix seemed to reject the idea that children should not be hit on the basis of possessing human rights.

Understanding Save the Children's push for a human-rights based drive for positive discipline in Belu is all the more significant when situated historically. Though it was because of the Timor war that Save the Children ended up in Belu, their work in helping children was framed as an apolitical, neutral way to engage. The legal historian Samuel Moyn (2010, p. 213) writes that"...human rights could break through [in the 1970s]… because the ideological climate was ripe for claims to make a difference not through political vision but by transcending politics," and indeed, banning corporal punishment was framed as an apolitical, purely moral issue.

Belu was not a place where people were ignorant about the concept of human rights. Perhaps it was due to its recent history that made human rights discourse, in the context of schooling and classroom discipline, appear illogical for people like Pak Felix. In his community, human rights discourse was linked with war refugees fleeing roving militias and extrajudicial killings. To invoke human rights for children, who were well-cared for, as a way

to reform teacher behavior—in teachers who cared for the children—felt out of place, which Pak Felix emphasized in his remarks.

As Pak Felix's remarks show, part of the resistance to banning corporal punishment in Belu—at least on the basis of human rights—had to do with questions about who knows best, and who should decide how things are done. Rather than counterpose donors from Nordic countries with Indonesian beneficiaries, in this case, the outsiders were Javanese (or Jakartans, more specifically) working in Belu. As such, human rights discourse was mobilized at different levels *within* Indonesia.

The logic of learning more

It is as though Save the Children anticipated that people, like Pak Felix, would object to the human rights argument, and thus provided a second line of reasoning as to why corporal punishment should be banned in schools: research has produced evidence about the inefficacy of corporal punishment, showing that students learn more when their teachers and parents use positive discipline. Some people in Belu embraced this logic. At a monthly meeting with Secangkir Kopi, a group of grassroots literacy activists, many wondered if children in Belu and across Nusa Tenggara Timur Province struggle with reading because they are hit too much by their teachers and parents. They reasoned that if children are scared, "their minds are closed" (personal communication, March 6, 2017); in this view, children are anxious about satisfying the teacher and unable to focus on the task at hand, namely, learning to read.

Most frequently, people were ambivalent about positive discipline. Namely, many seemed unsure which form of discipline—whether corporal punishment (or the threat of it) or positive discipline—yielded better learning outcomes. In addition to interviewing teachers, administrators, and parents, I spent much of my time in conversation with Literacy Boost staff. This was especially true in Belu, where I had completed previous fieldwork as a Save the Children graduate researcher and where I had become well-acquainted with staff members as the result of long days spent together visiting remote schools. One such staffer was Pak Johanes, who had worked for Save the Children for the majority of five years. A resettled Timorese himself, Pak Johanes was in his late forties, and his youngest son was enrolled at SD Bose in the 5th grade. Though a loyal and hardworking staffer, Pak Johanes still expressed contradictory stances about the disciplinary reforms:

Interview with Pak Johanes, Part 1 (August 1, 2017):

1 When we were young, we were terrified of the teachers. If they were way over
2 there, we were already like this. Nowadays, kids are not afraid, they think of
3 teachers as normal people – nothing special, nothing to be scared of. The teachers
4 were *keras* but in my opinion, it was a good thing, it meant that we really learned.
5 If they said, this is homework for next week, you need to know how to read and
6 write, that's what we had to do, nothing to do… nothing to resist or argue about.

In this first part of his remarks, Pak Johanes describes his schooling experiences in similar terms to Pak Felix. He describes the fear he felt as a young student, and like Pak Felix, uses gestures to vividly recall his great displays of deference. In line 2, when he says they were way over "there", he points off to the side, and when he says we were "like this", he assumed a hunched position and averted his eyes. For Pak Johanes and Pak Felix, showing respect to teachers meant making oneself small, meek, and humble. Pak Johanes's teachers were *keras* (tough, strict) but he says "it was a good thing" as his fear of and respect for his teachers motivated, and indeed, forced Pak Johanes to learn. He says that he "really learned" (line 4) because there was "nothing to resist or argue about" (line 6)—his fear of his teachers, coupled with his lack of rights to protest, positioned him as a willing learner.

Pak Johanes then spoke about Literacy Boost's impact on target schools, and in particular, highlighting the difference in classroom discipline practices between target schools and control schools.

Interview with Pak Johanes, Part 2 (August 1, 2017):

7 You can really see the difference between schools that Save works with and those
8 that do not get any attention from Save. The difference is really clear. You can see it
9 from the teaching process, pedagogy. And just about all the schools, all the teachers
10 had wood on their desks before we taught them to not use discipline like that. They
11 would use the wood to point to things on the board, but if kids were bad, they would
12 hit the kids with it, the kids knew that and were scared. When they are asked a
13 question, all they think about is not being punished, don't have capacity to think
14 about what they are being asked.

Here, even as Pak Johanes lauds the disciplinary reforms introduced by Literacy Boost (which he refers to as "Save"), saying in lines 7 and 8 that "the difference is really clear" between schools that receive the intervention and those that have not, he also prevaricates on whether having a fear of teachers—and a fear of being punished by teachers—helps students to learn or not. In lines 13 and 14, Pak Johanes explains that the fear of punishment precludes students from thinking clearly and learning. This corresponds to the "learning more" logic advanced by Save the Children, i.e., that students cannot learn well when they feel threatened. There is a tension between his narrative of his own schooling, in which "it was a good thing" that teachers were tough and he feared them, and his narrative of schools today, in which students who are hit "don't have the capacity to think about what they are being asked." In many ways, Pak Johanes articulated a common position. Many people in Belu agreed on some level with the principles of positive discipline, yet they also cast their own experiences with corporal punishment in a positive light, almost nostalgically.

Then there were those who were downright resistant to the assertion that corporal punishment inhibited learning. One SD Bose parent recalled of his primary school teacher: "He would hit you right away if you didn't know the answer. But it was good because we learned more quickly and became smart" (Pak Yosep, personal communication, March 4, 2017). Some people seemed to pine for the old days, when teachers were *keras* and students learned quickly, and a few claimed so forthrightly: "Well the problem is now, schools have let go of violence, they can't hit children, the children have the law now" (Pak Andri, personal communication, May 1, 2017), echoing Pak Felix's complaint that children now have human rights and that is why children are faring poorly in school.

Where the ambivalence lies

If the arguments advanced by Save the Children had to do with human rights, and failing that, about efficacy in learning and teaching, the sticking point for many in Belu lay elsewhere entirely. Many agreed that it was possible, even probable, that students may learn more content if their teachers used positive discipline techniques, but at a cost: the students would miss out on learning important lessons about how to comport themselves in front of elders. It seemed that many resisted positive discipline because of their ideas about the role of discipline in maintaining appropriate relationships between children and adults, both in and out of classrooms. In such formulations, punishment—the fear it inspired, its actual enactment, its public display—was a societal process; it had a key role in maintaining social positions and relations.

For many, there was a sense that the authority of teachers was being eroded. Positive discipline, on a surface level, was easy to accept, even with the ambivalences expressed by many interlocutors. On a deeper level, however, it signaled a pull toward certain conceptions of personhood, and a debate over what constituted legitimate authority. The feminist scholar

Ann Ferguson, in her study of race and discipline in American schools, elucidates the broader, social significance of classroom punishment (2000, p. 41):

> The punishing system is supported by nothing less than the moral order of society—the prevailing ideology—which simultaneously produces and imposes a consensus about a broad spectrum of societal values, manners, presentation of self, including style of dress, ways of standing, sitting, tone of voice, mode of eye contact, range of facial expressions. It is also assumed that the rules, codes, social relations, and behaviors adjudicated by a school's discipline system are about the transmission and enactment of a moral authority from adults, who are empowered to transmit and enact, to children, who are seen as lacking the essential values, social skills, and morality required of citizens.

In this light, what appeared to be a small shift (e.g., removing the wood from a teacher's desk) was, in fact, a significant shift, one that entailed changes in "societal values, manners, presentation of self." When Literacy Boost encouraged teachers and parents to use positive discipline in lieu of corporal punishment, the request went beyond the narrow issue of hitting. It was also about the right way to stand and sit, permissible tones to use with adults, the correct mode of eye contact. This is what Pak Johanes talks about in his remarks, that "Nowadays, kids are not afraid, they think of teachers as normal people – nothing special, nothing to be scared of." When Pak Felix and Pak Johanes each narrated their experiences of being students, their gestures and descriptions of how they held their bodies were remarkably similar: they each made themselves small, meek, and still, and averted their eyes. These were demonstrations of respect, as they understood it, and meant to be in clear contrast to the conduct of students today. They demonstrated their beliefs that teachers were the loci of moral authority, and that as students, they had to act accordingly. They positioned themselves as willing to learn, in contrast to students who are resistant to it today. In other words, obedience was tantamount to learning.

As I noted earlier, many teachers in Belu interpreted positive discipline to mean not only "controlling emotions" and refraining from hitting students, but also to mean that teachers and students should be "close": that the boundaries between teachers and students should, if not dissolve, at least morph into something different, something softer. Recall the teachers at SD Wamea who talked about "being closer" (*lebih akrab*), or more friendly and less rigid, with their students; they themselves expressed surprise at the possibility of students being close—rather than just subordinate—to them. And though some, like Pak Felix, bemoaned the fact that children today do not exercise as much self-discipline around teachers, this was precisely the outcome hoped for by Literacy Boost: for children to play, to act childish, and to be spontaneous and free.

Corporal punishment in daily talk

During the course of my fieldwork in Belu, I saw exactly one instance of corporal punishment—of a teenager hitting a child—but heard many threats of corporal punishment. I heard the mother of one rambunctious boy yell toward their neighbor, "You can hit him! Hit him next time he plays in your tree!" While not discounting the possibility that the boy will be hit by the neighbor in the future, the effects of talking about corporal punishment were telling. When the mother gave the neighbor permission to hit her child, she also reinforced particular social positions: adults as empowered to discipline children, and neighbors as stand-ins for parents. The mother's exhortation, packaged as information for the neighbor, was of course also meant for her child's ears—as a warning, a plea, a request for obedience.

The relationship between discipline of children and social roles has been documented ethnographically in other contexts. Of note is Margery Wolf's (1978) ethnographic study of childhood and discipline in Taiwan, which details the ways in which disciplining children had

as much to do with making *adults* conform to certain behavioral expectations, as a way to reinforce their own status and position, as it did with punishing children's infractions. Wolf observed that the form of discipline meted out by an adult to a child varied based on the gender of each, the generational status of the adult, and the exact relation between the two. With each instantiation of disciplining, social roles were continually defined, enacted, and reproduced for not only children, but in particular ways for fathers, mothers, older siblings, neighbors, bystanders. In Wolf's analysis, threatening to hit children was often for the sake of face-saving. For instance, a parent or another caregiver would loudly proclaim that they would hit the child, largely so that their good caregiving was affirmed in the eyes of bystanders who expected the child to be disciplined in a particular way. In Wolf's study, the discipline of children went beyond family dynamics, encompassing the larger ecosystem of neighbors, grandparents, and other adults, as well as communal norms about the right kind of relationships between adults and children, and how to cultivate morality in children.

In a linguistic anthropological account of "force signs" in the Marshall Islands, Berman (2018) examines the various effects of talking about—but not necessarily enacting—corporal punishment. Finding that talk of corporal punishment was not necessarily, nor even frequently, referential of reality, Berman writes that "Through such speech people perform stances of deference or authority and position themselves as respectful younger kin or respected and responsible older kin" (2018, p. 35). Berman observed that often, when children talked of being hit, they were positioning themselves as docile, respectful and knowing of their social positions—more so than talking about actually occurring instances of corporal punishment.

In my own analysis, Pak Felix and Pak Johanes did not speak about corporal punishment solely to position themselves as respectful pupils. Their gestures, the vividness of their descriptions (e.g., of being hit on the calf until a gash opened up, as in Pak Felix's account) point to the reality of having experienced corporal punishment. But their narratives about being punished, which were imbued with a sense of nostalgia, also do the work of positioning themselves as willing, deferential pupils. Pak Felix also highlighted the contrast between his behavior and that of students today, who, as he says, use human rights as a tool to retaliate against teachers. Following Berman, it is possible that such critiques of children as human rights holders had more to do with the changes in children's social position and the perceived erosion of adults' authority, rather than the issue of human rights per se.

Literacy Boost and parents and teachers in Belu agreed that discipline was essential to cultivating a good learning environment, but ideas about what constituted good discipline varied. Literacy Boost instructed teachers to refrain from disciplining children in the ways that they were accustomed to, the ways that they likely experienced when they were children. In short, Literacy Boost asked teachers to be self-disciplined in their disciplining of children. In the next section, I turn to teachers' programs of self-discipline in Jakarta.

Self-disciplining in Jakarta

In Rudolf Mrazek's (2010) oral history of aging Jakartan elites, their memories of the "big Dutch teacher" and her strictness still reigned large decades after they had gone to school. But if their teachers hit them with sticks, they also showed themselves to be self-disciplined; Mrazek's interlocutors' teachers never left the classroom during school hours. Mrazek (2010, p. 168) writes, "That school-slash-universal discipline, that learning to fly, progressively, gradually, as the school space and time expanded, was to become a way of being for all." In other words, for Mrazek's interlocutors, school-based discipline and its precepts became folded into all aspects of life, such that it became a "way of being for all." That "way of being"—namely, self-disciplined, regimented, adhering to a strict schedule—is an apt description of the discipline reforms I observed in Jakarta. In Jakarta I rarely heard the phrase "positive discipline"; corporal punishment, though not totally unheard of, was not of

central concern there. Rather, in Jakarta, Literacy Boost supported a program of enhancing self-discipline among teachers, administrators, and other education officials.

For the headmaster at SD Sarjana in Jakarta, self-discipline was the key takeaway from the Literacy Boost intervention. When I asked Pak Ferry about Literacy Boost's impact on his school, I thought he would talk about changes in pedagogy as the result of teachers attending training sessions, or perhaps a greater zeal for literacy in parents. Rather, he said,

> We now patrol ourselves. This is what we learned through Save the Children. It's like, before if we were at an intersection and there was a red light, we would look right and left and go through. Now we have learned to be self-disciplined, to wait there at the red light even if there is no oncoming traffic, and go when the lights turned green. And this is a good thing for schools.

For Pak Ferry, the Literacy Boost intervention spurred teachers and headmasters to self-monitor and exercise self-control.[57] If before, they were aware of rules but disregarded them unless the police (in this case, the district education official) were near, now they saw the value in following the rules all of the time, while surveilled or not. Pak Ferry issued these remarks in the context of a conversation about school finances and governance, the focal issues of the Community Action Cycle (see Chapter 2) at his school. In that context, his remarks about being self-disciplined likely meant to be on the straight and narrow when it came to the school budget, to allocate money correctly and fairly—a "good thing for schools."

A model school

The cultivation of such self-discipline was indeed a goal. Literacy Boost program staffers often highlighted SD Roro, which was a "model school" in their words. It was a school that had an extraordinarily disciplined group of teachers, led by a strong headmaster, Ibu Rina, who took on the literacy-aspects of the Literacy Boost intervention with gusto. The hallways of SD Roro were festooned with literacy promotion slogans: "Let's build a culture that is enthusiastic about reading!" and "Visit the library and Reading Camp, and benefit from the Reading Corner in your classroom!" The hallways were also filled with newspaper racks and bookcases with age-appropriate reading materials, a rarity among the schools that I visited.[58]

Ibu Rina also implemented a number of her own literacy programs beyond what the Literacy Boost program suggested. One initiative was to set up a mandatory teachers' book club, which met monthly. At each meeting, one teacher was to give a presentation to the other teachers and Ibu Rina on a book of her choosing, in the manner of a book report. Some teachers used PowerPoint presentations, while others gave oral summaries of their chosen book. Teachers spoke about the book club with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Ibu Rina's strongest allies—teachers who also championed the literacy cause—supported the teachers' book club. One such teacher, Ibu Dewi, reasoned, "How can we expect children to read books for fun, if we ourselves never do the same?" (personal communication, August 11, 2017). Other teachers dreaded performing this task, resembling students who were nervous about giving an in-class presentation. Other teachers showed little enthusiasm for other reasons, mentioning that the book club entailed extra work: the time required to read a book and prepare a presentation, as well as the time added to faculty meetings to accommodate teachers' book presentations. In their comments, I discerned that they were not just

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57 The traffic analogy was apt, though, and one that others have drawn upon to index order and disorder, particularly in traffic-clogged Jakarta (Kartodikromo, 1981; Kusno, 2010).

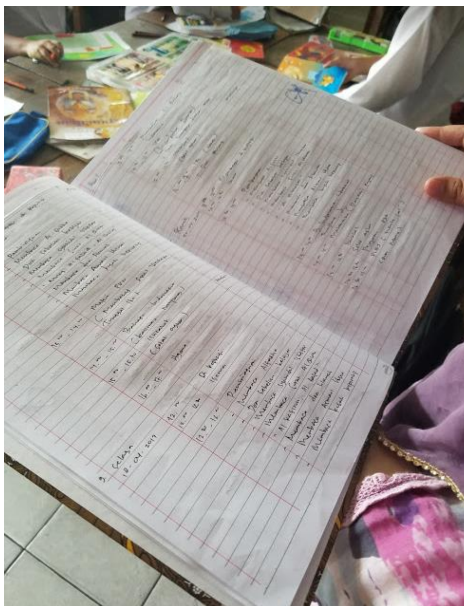
58 This was a matter of intention, but also a matter of funding. Because SD Roro was a public school and nearly all of its teachers were civil servants, Ibu Rina could use her discretionary funds to pay for posters, books, and other educational items in order to build a literacy-rich environment, rather than pay for teachers' salaries.

complaining about the book club, but about Ibu Rina's reforms more broadly—that this was yet another way in which she attempted to organize their time.

Indeed, organizing teachers' time was a hallmark project for Ibu Rina while she was at SD Roro: she instituted a system of surveillance that also fell under the rubric of promoting literacy. Each teacher was required to keep a log of all of her activities during school hours. These meticulous logs were then submitted to Ibu Rina on a weekly basis, which she would check and mark up, just as teachers marked up their students' assignments. This was considered a "literacy activity" because it required teachers to write in their logs, creating literacy artifacts. The subtext was that with better accounting of their time, teachers could find more gaps in their schedules to support students' literacy pursuits, whether that was extra tutoring for struggling readers (such as in Reading Camp, or in small group sessions like the ones that Ibu Marni ran in the school library), helping edit the school newsletter, or volunteering in the school library.

Teachers were also encouraged to do more reading themselves. One of Ibu Rina's tenets was that to build a culture of literacy at the school, teachers also had to read for pleasure, or at very least, to read more frequently in their daily lives. Thus, when I looked at Ibu Marni's daily log for April 18, 2017, in addition to the entries "Patrolling the schoolyard", "Teach Indonesian lesson" and "Teach Religion Class", she also listed several periods of individual reading: "Read Al-Quran." After each reading entry, she listed the verses, with each subentry starting again with the word "read," further highlighting just how much she was reading each day. Ibu Marni was one of the literacy champions at the school, and had an exemplary time log hat was well-organized, neat, complete, and always submitted on time. She filled her time with her own literacy activities and with literacy teaching for students. There was, of course, another end of the spectrum: teachers whose logs were in disarray, were incomplete, full of gaps, and submitted late. There was a possibility of disciplinary action by Ibu Rina: a scolding, public embarrassment, or something more punitive, such as assigning an extra task. But the time log also laid bare how one spent her time, forcing self-reflection and indeed, self-disciplining.

Figure 17. *Ibu Marni's daily activities log*



Note: Photo taken by author (2017)

One of the secrets to success at SD Roro, then, was a regime of surveillance instituted by Ibu Rina, in the form of mandatory activities like the teachers' book club and the teachers' activities logs. By treating the teachers like students, Ibu Rina broadened the population that

needed to be explicitly disciplined at schools from students to include teachers. At the same time, she broadened the scope of *who* does the disciplining. If before all adults could discipline children, now adult teachers were subject to disciplining by the headmaster, but also by themselves. Ultimately, the time log was a technique for inculcating self-discipline: eventually, as teachers became more aware and self-conscious about how they were using their time at school, Ibu Rina would no longer need to carefully check the teachers' logs to ensure maximal performance. The teachers would already be operating at a higher level by abstaining from non-relevant activities during the school day, without external supervision. By making teachers write out their days, hour by hour, Ibu Rina compelled them to make ethical decisions—notably, to either adapt their habits to conform to the "proper" schedule that looked right, or to lie and write down the proper schedule, when in fact they were engaged in other, unsanctioned activities during the school day. Ibu Rina had little enforcement capability. She could not verify whether each teacher had indeed done all the tasks she listed in her log, at those hours, during the preceding week. However, by forcing an ethical dilemma upon each teacher, she made a bet that they would eventually change their behavior, and eventually self-monitor and self-regulate their time.

This sort of disciplinary reform stood in stark contrast with the disciplinary reform in Belu. If in Belu disciplinary reform focused on banning corporal punishment, in Jakarta it focused on better managing time through increasing surveillance. As Foucault (1977) writes, "The disciplines, which analyse space, breakup and rearrange activities, must also be understood as a machinery for adding up and capitalizing time" (p. 157). At SD Roro, not only were certain activities prescribed (e.g., extracurricular reading and book presentations), but teachers' time was increasingly partitioned into discrete chunks and presented for assessment.

Part of the impetus for this disciplinary regime, and of its admiration by Literacy Boost, was chronic teacher absenteeism. Perhaps at SD Roro it was less of an issue; it was a state school, where a majority of the teachers were PNS (civil servants) and there was oversight by the school supervisor. In other words, a state school in Jakarta was firmly within the control structure of the education bureaucracy. Less so were remote schools, which are widely considered to suffer from higher rates of teacher absenteeism (McKenzie, et al., 2014; Suryadarma, et al., 2006). This was the case in Belu, where Pak Felix, as head of the school committee, spoke on behalf of parents (personal communication, August 3, 2017):

> Teachers need to be at school. I get mad at them when I go to school, see the kids are there and the teacher hasn't showed up. They can't just mess with the children like that. Or on Saturdays, they like to go to the market and that's not OK. I go to the market, see the teachers and get mad at them - why are you here and not at school?

The fact was that teachers did skip out on class. When I began my classroom observations in Belu, many teachers thought of me as an extension of Literacy Boost and acted accordingly: they read books with brio, they made sure to say the word "literacy" many times each day, and they certainly never skipped class. As time went on, and my presence in their classrooms became more naturalized, teachers began again to do things their way, including skipping class when the need arose. One Saturday morning, Ibu Lea, the second-grade teacher, asked me to teach her class. She wanted to go to the market, which only came to town once per week, to buy sandals for her son.

Absenteeism was not the sole province of teachers; headmasters and district education officials also had unexcused absences. Pak Asda, a former headmaster and a district education official in Jakarta when I interviewed him in 2017, laughed about how different things were 10 years ago: every Friday morning, during school hours, he played volleyball with other headmasters. He then made sure to note that those days were over, saying that

now, headmasters and teachers must be disciplined. I took Pak Asda's remark about being disciplined to mean two things: one, that teachers and headmasters now are more firmly within the surveillance and control structure of the educational bureaucracy, and two, that they must also exercise increasing self-discipline.

Layers of monitoring

The school supervisor, or *pengawas*, is the link between schools and the greater educational bureaucracy. The word *pengawas* features the stem *awas*, which means to be aware. School supervisors deploy to their designated schools for monitoring, to disseminate information from the Ministry of Education, and to perform other facilitation functions between the various levels in the education hierarchy—*pengawas* report up and down the chain, and are seen by education reformers as key figures to leverage systemic change (World Bank, 2010). [59] The school supervisor also played an important role in the Literacy Boost intervention. They were tapped to be master trainers, which meant that after receiving the full Literacy Boost curriculum they then facilitated teacher training sessions, and also conducted regular monitoring and teacher coaching sessions.

The Literacy Boost program added another layer of surveillance to the teachers' routines, under the rubric of monitoring. In addition to the *pengawas,* teachers were also monitored by their headmasters, parents who were increasingly involved in school affairs, school committees, and now, also the Literacy Boost staffers. These figures of surveillance—the school supervisor, the principle, Literacy Boost staff, school committees, and finally, the self—constituted not just different types of monitoring, each with different demands, but also layers of monitoring that teachers had to keep straight.

The monitoring visits by Literacy Boost program staffers were largely cast as teacher coaching sessions. Even so, I observed how teachers reacted nervously to these visits. It seemed that for teachers, these visits were something to endure, a test to pass, rather than simply a collegial, low-stakes visit. On one such visit in November 2016 with Hassan and Randi, two Literacy Boost staffers, I saw how these visits were full of small-scale pageantry. The headmaster would always greet the visitors, bring them into his office (usually one of the few air-conditioned spaces in the school), and ask his assistant to bring water and snacks. After 15 minutes of exchanging pleasantries, Hassan and Randi went to separate classrooms for observations, accompanied by another teacher. The process was designed to amplify the educational value of the monitoring visit: not only would the classroom teacher receive feedback, but the accompanying teacher would learn by observing. Both the Literacy Boost staffer and the observing teacher used a packet with items to rank (1-5) and space to write in comments.

I went with Randi and the observing teacher to Ibu Narti's second-grade classroom. Ibu Narti had taught at this school for nearly 20 years. She came to the back of the room, where we were stationed, to ask Randi whether she should read a book for the lesson. I noticed how nervous she seemed, much like other teachers I observed when with Literacy Boost staffers. It often seemed like teachers strove to demonstrate the exact skills that they learned in teacher training sessions. For example, at Literacy Boost training sessions, teachers were taught to read expressively by using gestures, changing their voice for different characters in the story, and modulating their pitch and tone. In both Jakarta and Belu, I observed teachers using the same example of roaring like a tiger. Teachers aimed to conform to the training, there was not personal adaptation or interpretation of the methods: they simply wanted to do the exact thing they learned. Ibu Narti commenced reading a storybook called "*Aku yang menang*" (I have won), demonstrating her command of "expressive reading": she read enthusiastically and demonstratively, using dramatic changes in tone and

59 At the same time, they had limited authority to enforce rules (see Chapter 2).

pitch and different voices for the story's characters. At one point, she scurried across the classroom, acting out one of the characters who ran in the story and in the process, inadvertently excluded a row of female students who could no longer see the pages of the book. It seemed to me that Ibu Narti's performance was largely for to satisfy the expectations of the Literacy Boost staffers, rather than for the students.

The monitoring visit concluded with a meeting between Hassan and Randi, Ibu Narti and the other classroom teacher, and the observing teachers. Though Hassan and Randi gave constructive feedback, peppered with compliments, Ibu Narti hung her head as they delivered their assessments and did not take notes or engage in a discussion. It appeared that Ibu Narti treated the exercise as something to endure. On our taxi ride back to the office, Hassan and Randi spoke about how difficult it was for certain pedagogical practices to take hold, and that older teachers felt self-conscious when reading expressively. Each monitoring visit was a nudge, a chance for teachers to display what they have learned at Literacy Boost training sessions, as well as an evaluation of teachers' progress.

Unlike in Belu, Literacy Boost's monitoring visits in Jakarta had nothing to do with eliminating corporal punishment. Rather, they were, following Foucault's observation, attempts to "assure the quality of the time used: constant supervision, the pressure of supervisors, the elimination of anything that might disturb or distract" (1977, p. 150). The shifts in discipline—away from corporal punishment in Belu, and toward a program of self-discipline in Jakarta—were not solely instigated by Literacy Boost; these were long in the making, with many advocates and actors involved. Yet Literacy Boost became closely associated with both shifts, by amplifying and justifying the message, and by focusing on discipline as an area of intervention. In doing so, Literacy Boost became tied to Ibu Rina's time logs in Jakarta, and to removing the wood from teachers' desks in Belu.

Discussion

In advocating a move away from corporal punishment, Save the Children's claim that "times change and societies move on" implies that we are all being inexorably pulled toward a better future. But for Pak Felix in Belu, the idea of societies moving on was, in some ways, unwelcome. In his view, one that was shared by many Belu interlocutors, discipline that was *keras,* strict, and inspired fear was a precondition for effective teaching and learning. The two scenarios were either a classroom in which teachers and students adhered to clearly demarcated and hierarchical positions enforced through force or its threat, or the chaos of today, in which teachers, having been stripped of their enforcement powers by restrictive human rights laws, are lazy and students run wild.

This was, of course, an overly simplistic depiction of past versus present, and points to two important findings. First, for those who blamed human rights discourse (sometimes glossed as "the law") for bad student learning outcomes today, human rights functioned as a sort of bogeyman. It represented over-legality, a concern for conforming to laws rather than a concern for the actual, on-the-ground reality of Belu classrooms. It represented outsiders telling them—Pak Felix, and others who resisted positive discipline reforms—what to do. In his discussion about what human rights do, Asad (2000) aptly summarizes this dynamic:

> It is indeed right to say that cultures are not (and never were) unchanging, that they have always drawn from and been dependent on one another, that they have now (and have always had) internal lines of disagreement. But from this it does not follow that those who contest the dominant values from within will want to live in quite the way that self-styled champions of modernity (from within their society and without) say they should.

I sensed that part of Pak Felix's resistance had to do with the "self-styled champions of modernity," whether they were local literacy activists, Literacy Boost staffers, or the government in Jakarta.

Second, the focus on reforming discipline obscured questions about reforming pedagogy. Pak Felix and others like him conflated pedagogy and discipline: to be *keras* was *the* teaching strategy. Because positive discipline was often defined in the negative by my interlocutors (i.e., positive discipline means teachers cannot have wood on their desks), its connections to effective teaching were less clear. In my analysis, Pak Felix and others did not believe in positive discipline because they could not visualize how their objectives—respect for adults, clearly defined positions for teachers and students, and attentiveness in students—could be achieved without corporal discipline. This is a question of effective messaging. Literacy Boost and other actors working to change such deep-seated cultural practices may do well to reverse the order of their argument: rather than pull the human rights card out first, highlighting the potential and shown outcomes of positive discipline—and how it works—may persuade more hearts and minds.

The disciplinary changes in Belu appeared to be stark. Teachers no longer had wood on their desks, and indeed were afraid of being reported by students. But as is evident from observations in Jakarta, a shift in disciplinary norms does not equal fewer instances of punishment. Rather, the disciplinary processes occur in sites other than the front of the classroom, as Pak Felix described, and through other means. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is not a story of discipline disappearing with time and progress, but of its transformation from something physical, finite, and time-bound into something that is (often) mental, time-expansive, internalized by each individual.

The Literacy Boost program in Indonesia produced a double effect of discipline. While in Belu it discouraged certain forms of discipline—namely, corporal punishment— the Literacy Boost program also introduced its own system of diffused discipline. Teachers in both sites (but especially Jakarta) underwent increased classroom monitoring. With the backing of Literacy Boost, headmasters like Ibu Rina at SD Roro spearheaded ambitious plans to remake their teachers' daily schedules, through mandatory literacy activities and the time log. Perhaps most pointedly, Pak Ferry noted that Literacy Boost taught teachers and headmasters to "stop at the red light", even when no one else was looking—to watch themselves even when no one else was watching.

Chapter 4. One minute, one century: Literacy Boost's temporal horizons

> "What span of time should you consider if you want to know what qualifies as progress?"
>
> - Jenny Erpenbeck, *Go, Went, Gone*, 2017

Development is, in a sense, all about time. It is some measure, whether benchmarks or indicators, compared across various points in time. This chapter deals with the timelines, speeds, and durations –or in another word, the temporalities – of the Literacy Boost intervention in Indonesia. By focusing on the temporal segmentation and speeds that animate the Literacy Boost intervention in Indonesia, I demonstrate that it was often temporal mismatch that hindered project implementation, rather than fundamental cultural or linguistic differences between its various stakeholders.

The speed of development is constantly compared across contexts, even when the very "stuff" of development vary and the durations between points of measurement are arbitrarily determined. Whether it be a hygiene project, a water infrastructure project, or in the case of the Literacy Boost program, an early childhood education intervention, teleological projections are the very foundations of the development project: the very notion of a roadmap, with steps that *must* be taken, in somewhat consecutive order, undergird a sense of orderliness, of advancement toward an improved future, even if that progress proceeds at different speeds. Modernization theories, including Rostow's (1990) influential *The Stages of Economic Growth* first published in 1960, lay out such teleological plans for achieving development. In Rostow's thesis, societies make sequential jumps between the five stages of development, from "the traditional society" and ending with "the age of mass consumption." And indeed, Indonesian official discourse about development has often hewed closely to such thinking. President Suharto, in an address to Indonesia's Parliament in 1990, declared that

> We are presently in the final years of implementing the first 25-Year Period of Long-Term Development and are now completing the basic framework for development. Afterwards, we will begin a new phase in our development, namely the take-off stage… I once made an appeal to make the coming take-off stage the second 'National Awakening,' God willing, in 1993. This makes us realize the long journey we have embarked upon, moving from a backward nation as a result of colonialism to an advanced nation in the realm of independence…The development we are presently carrying out cannot be separated from general global developments… we have resolved not to lag behind in these developments.[60]

In addition to making use of Rostow's term "take-off stage", and the rest of Suharto's remarks also squarely place Indonesia on a global development timeline, in a race against other nations. And on this timeline, Indonesia not only started off "behind" other nations, but was actually facing "backward"—not even oriented toward the same finish line.

Such linear conceptualizations of development have been roundly critiqued by theorists that stress the unevenness of development and highlight the gaps between plans and outcomes (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007; Tsing, 2004). And yet, international development practitioners operate, by necessity, with a set of sequential plans, timed to fit within evaluation and funding cycles. I aim to add to the literature on understanding development, by examining how time is a central component of how a literacy program operated, was measured, valued (or funded), and experienced.

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60 Address given on August 16, 1990, cited in Kusno (2013, p. 104-105).

If we consider time as a measure of the "now," an always transitional, determined relation between the "before" and a "not yet," we can think about how at any given, "objective" moment in time (Heidegger, 2008), the "nows" are shared between all the actors in this story. However, the horizons that span before and into the future are of different timescales, involve different events and moments of rupture, and facilitate different ways of counting time backwards and forwards. The question for this chapter, then, is to think about how various timelines, timescales, and temporalities converged or diverged during the course of this literacy intervention. The "nows" that I consider feature timescales of drastically different proportions, but which were stitched together through Save the Children's Literacy Boost intervention.

Unpacking temporalities of the intervention and their intersections can shed light not only on the experiences of the development process, but is also important because temporal understanding is critical to the "success" (as defined by the intervention itself) or the potential uptake of development programs. Understanding the different calendars in play, the different temporal pressures that drive action and decisions at all levels of the intervention and in the community, and the speeds of change—both real and desired—
can help us disentangle another layer of why the intervention "worked" or not. Indeed, speed was the central indicator in the Literacy Boost program: disconnected from local linguistic and social contexts, reading speed was used to compare literacy levels across vastly disparate contexts. The one-minute segments of reading fluency testing had more impact on the program's evaluation than all other test measures and other activities. Temporality – in this case reading speed – is central to even the most "content"-based analysis of the Literacy Boost program.

I examine three *nows* of the intervention: that of the donor (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, henceforth DFAT), that of Save the Children, and that of the community of a Literacy Boost participating school. In this chapter, I suggest that Save the Children acts as the broker, or translator, of not only culture or content (e.g., adjusting global modules about teaching, literacy, etc. into digestible pieces contextualized to local sites) but also of calendars and temporalities. In my research, I found that donors, Save the Children staff, and those in recipient communities operated on very different timelines, clocks, and even timescales. It is the Save the Children staff in Indonesia that had to work closely with everyone: operating within the donors' deadlines, while also understanding religious calendars and other aspects of the community's schedules. Thus, Save the Children experienced and emitted pressure on both ends: for their target communities to speed up, and for donors to slow down.

Theoretical grounding and methodology

The focus on temporality was not one that I anticipated in planning my research, but it emerged as possibly the most salient factor in discerning how different actors interpreted the successes and failures of the Literacy Boost program. There are different ways to sense the various temporalities at play in the Literacy Boost program. Perhaps most obviously, there was the actual scheduling, day-to-day apportioning of time that added up to a full program implementation period. There was the time of particular activities, with their backward or forward-facing orientations. The Community Action Cycle process, which I reviewed in chapter 3, for example, was a forward-facing process—it was all about planning for the next academic year—yet the process also pulled in past slights, injustices, histories. Meanwhile, Literacy Boost evaluations like the Baseline and Endline Reports look back at progress made over the past intervention period, but with an eye to soliciting future donor and government support.

My own research in Indonesia was marked by changes in speed and temporal horizons. What I thought would take two weeks, let's say processing my research permit,

took a full month. At the first Literacy Boost event I attended, a training session for those to be employed as examiners for the baseline assessment, I was surprised when the session started two hours late. Perhaps even more surprising was how calm the Literacy Boost staffers remained as people trickled in. But this is not a story of learning to be patient, or that people always run late in Indonesia. The story is not that of a rushed, modern outsider and the slow, languid local. There were other times when a process that I expected to take longer instead sped to a tidy conclusion—this was particularly true of gaining access to schools and communities for my ethnographic research. Once I had the official clearance to conduct research, embedding in classrooms often started within the same day that I proposed the idea to school headmasters.

People frequently joke about *jam karet*, or rubber time, in Indonesia. The idea is that time takes on the characteristics of rubber, stretching out longer and longer, but sometimes also contracting at a moment's notice. Meetings that are scheduled for 9 AM sometimes start on time at 9 AM, but more frequently start at 9:30, 10 AM, or even later. Some education scholars (e.g., Fitch & Webb, 1989) and cultural commentators imbue rubber time with deeper meaning—that temporal flexibility, and in particular patience with those who run even hours late to an appointment, is a mark of collectivist culture: individual inconvenience does not outweigh the importance of keeping harmony, acknowledging others' needs that may have caused their delay. Rubber time appears in everyday discourse in Indonesia and also in cultural and travel guides for foreigners, but with less frequency in scholarship about Indonesia. In one rare example, Cribb (2010, p.77) juxtaposes rubber time with the New Order commitment to development: "Although Indonesia is reputed to be a place of 'rubber time' (jam karet), where deadlines drift on the margins of life without ever being met, there was nothing casual about the New Order's commitment to the development effort."

There is a fine line between acknowledging differences in the way that time is experienced and depicting Indonesia (or parts of it) as being out of sync with modernity, temporally dislocated from the modern, developed world. Janet Hoskin's (1977) study of Kodi temporality in eastern Indonesia attempts to tread that very line. While acknowledging how outside observers, and in particular anthropologists, often have depicted remote parts of Indonesia as stuck in an earlier, more primitive time, she also puts forth the argument that Kodi timekeeping is unique and distinct from consecutive, ceaseless calendrical time. In particular, Hoskins focuses on the functions of Kodi rituals and ceremonies within an alternate system of timekeeping, which also structures social life, kinship obligations, and aspirations for the future.

Like Belu, the western end of Sumba, where Hoskins conducted her fieldwork among the Kodi, was the site of multiple waves of Christian missionary conversions. Encounters with Christian missionaries, as well as the growing reach of the state during Suharto's New Order regime, brought in not only new sets of beliefs and new institutions such as schools, but also different temporal frameworks. Hoskins (1977, p. 274) argues that "the triumph of Christianity in Kodi" is linked to

> the appeal of a progressive model of time, a view of 'history' as a global and linear framework for comprehending the evolution of man and society. Instead of defining themselves in relation to a distant past of origins, and a cumulative accumulation of traditional value, Kodinese started to frame their actions and expectations in terms of a model of future progress and achievement.

In this framing, there is a recursive, non-linear traditional Kodi calendar and the objective, universal Christian calendar.[61] In Belu, multiple calendars are indeed at play at all times, but

61 Indeed Arjun Appadurai (2004, p.60) notes how culture and development are often depicted as in opposition: "For more than a century, culture has been viewed as a matter of one or other kind of pastness—the keywords

what I discuss in this chapter is not necessarily outright conflict between the calendars, but how even the same calendar—for example, the universal, Christian calendar—is inflected differently in different instances. While encouraging the march toward "future progress and achievement", this calendar also prompts schools to close for many church holidays and observations. The so-called modern, Christian calendar is thus often recast as a traditional one by outsiders who bemoan the many its interjections to the school and bureaucratic calendars.

Speeds of development

There is a question of the stages and direction of development, as in Rostow's thesis, and yet another one about its speed. In Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1994), it is the *slowing down* of change—and not its prevention—that is significant; the speed with which any 'line of development' is implemented may be more significant to the fate of those affected than the substance of the change. This means giving people time to adjust, to find new sources of subsistence, or in other words, making change "socially bearable." Remarking upon the "exceptional" scale and speed of urbanization in China over the past decades, Hsing (2012) writes of residents who lodged complaints, filed lawsuits, and engaged with bureaucratic agencies even while acknowledging the ultimate futility of their efforts. Change was inevitable, but could be made bearable: "Though uneven, the results of their actions have slowed down inner-city destruction and increased compensation rates" (Hsing, 2012, p. 16).

If the common approach of development is more and faster is better (e.g., more housing built in less time, more children reading in less time), *jam karet* and other, less-rushed approaches stand out for their alternative temporalities. Appadurai (2004) highlights the community development work of the Alliance, a group of poor people's housing activists in Mumbai, India. In rejecting the project-mentality of official work and other outsiders (such as NGOs), the group instead favors self-determined horizons of progress and change. There is a sense of agency in this approach, even given its costs: "This resistance to externally defined time frames (driven by donor schedules, budgets, and economies) is a critical part of the way in which the Alliance cultivates the capacity to aspire among its members" (Appadurai, 2004, p. 73). This "politics of patience" is not the result of ignorance about other approaches to development, but precisely knowledge of them; it is a calculated decision to take things slowly. Thus, the Alliance's toilet and housing exhibitions and other endeavors may wind through a longer, seemingly more inefficient process, but the work truly emerges from the grassroots.

Put another way, Simone and Fauzan (2013) write of the "incremental temporality" favored by many Jakartans. In one example, a group of tempeh producers located in Central Jakarta show little inclination to scale up or expedite production, or to expand their reach. Instead, the producers favor incremental change and progress, in the form of small improvements to their homes and businesses. Even with the potential for a big payoff, the tempeh producers are risk-averse and are against taking on too much debt. Nevertheless, they also move forward in motion, also with their sense of improvement, progress, and change, even if gradual.

The educational project, like international development, is inherently temporal. Through schooling, we collectively (and selectively) summarize the past and orient towards particular visions of the future. Past, present, and future temporal horizons coexist in the classroom, as the adults of tomorrow are taught ways of understanding history, the nation, and their roles as citizens. The very process of learning is also weighted with temporal expectations. The prevalent associations between school success and temporal benchmarks

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here are habit, custom, heritage, tradition. On the other hand, development is always seen in terms of the future—plans, hopes, goals, targets."

come in the form of standardized tests, being able to read grade-level texts, and meeting other grade level standards—and of course, being the right age for the grade (e.g., eight years old in the third grade). In arguing that "Time is not a simple linear sequence. It is not a resource that can be invested and translated into learning," Compton-Lilly (2016, p. 588) makes the case against simplistic approaches that equates more time with more learning.

Literacy Boost brings together the two—education and international development—and indeed, speed and temporality are central to the program's operations and evaluation. The ethnographic data for this chapter were generated through direct observations, interviews, and document analysis. These data sources and research methods allowed me to discern conflicting temporalities that undergirded what seemed otherwise to issues arising from the program's content areas.

In the course of my research, four temporal strands emerged. First, in Belu, there was a conjunctural moment of intervention—the conflict with East Timor—that allowed for ongoing engagement in the years to come. Emergency constituted the primary reason for long-term engagement in Belu, rather than any other set of factors (e.g., direct need) that often determine project location. Second, external timelines, in this case of Literacy Boost's donors, operated on an annual cycle. This rhythm formed the parameters of the program and the possibilities within it. Third, community members in Belu, perhaps unsurprisingly, had the longest temporal horizon when it came to understanding rates of change and progress. Fourth and finally, I examine the temporal logics that drove the Literacy Boost program. Literacy Boost staffers were caught in the middle, working both within the tight, annual timeframes of the donors and the long temporal horizons of the target communities. But at the heart of their own operations was the reading fluency measure—the one-minute timed task—which was *the* bottom line for the program to succeed.

Ultimately, the implementation tensions that arose between the various actors in the Literacy Boost program had more to do with commitment to place, than some fixed temporal framework. It was the nature of that commitment that allowed people to function on different timescales and with different speeds—and Save the Children acted as a temporal broker (rather than a cultural one) to move the project along.

The conjunctural moment of intervention

In trying to understand why Save the Children was in Belu at all, it is necessary to examine the conditions of its entry into the regency. For most of Indonesia, the most significant point of recent historical rupture occurred in 1998, with the fall of Suharto and the New Order Era, and the beginning of the Reformation Era (*Reformasi*). The end of the New Order Era and the ascent of President B.J. Habibie allowed for a referendum on self-determination in Dili, on August 30, 1999. East Timorese were allowed the choice of either autonomy—to become a semi-autonomous area but still a part of the Indonesian nation, as was later the case of Aceh Province—or independence. After nearly 25 years of bloody war waged by the Indonesian military (through both overt operations and through covert support of pro-Indonesia militias) against the Timorese, the Referendum for East Timor independence passed. In the aftermath, an estimated 200,000 refugees fled to West Timor as pro-Indonesian militias and Indonesian paramilitary forces destroyed infrastructure and killed an estimated 2,000 civilians (CAVR, 2005). Belu Regency, as it directly abuts East Timor, absorbed many of those Timorese refugees, and Atambua and Atapupu in particular saw their population swell. In Atapupu, many of the refugees moved into the hills above the main town, where they still live to this day, with sporadic electricity and limited access to other public utilities (Pak Nemo, personal communication, February 24, 2017). Even as many refugees returned to East Timor in 2002, when the East Timor nation was officially established, there is still the abiding problem of land distribution. In interviews with townspeople (including with refugees) a central question was how the refugees would survive in Atapupu, a coastal town,

considering few of these highlanders from East Timor were able to work as fishermen. There was limited land to farm—despite the vast hills and valleys—and many were left to become tenant farmers, renting arid and often rocky land from the "original" residents of the town.[62]

In addition to the land distribution question, the influx of Timorese into Belu put pressure on all areas of bureaucratic administration. The refugee camps were concentrated near Haliwen Airport just outside of Atambua and also near Atapupu. Alongside the influx of refugees was a parallel influx of international and Indonesian aid workers, and their attendant funds, material goods, and mandates. International NGOs arrived in Belu to distribute aid and to set up refugee camps, and eventually, permanent settlements for the refugees (Save the Children, 1999). Save the Children focused on providing education for the refugees in Belu, initially setting up *sekolah lapangan*, or field schools, in the refugee camps. Ronald, who worked for Save the Children in the Atambua office from 2004-2010 as a community outreach staff member, recalled that aim of the refugee camp schools was to allow refugees to *menjauhkan dari trauma,* or to gain distance from the trauma. Providing education was good not only for the children enrolled in schools, but also for the adult volunteer teachers and parents (Ronald, personal communication, December 17, 2016).

Indeed, in the years immediately after the East Timor war, Save the Children worked to set up schools for refugees not only in the camps, but also in permanent locations. The organization secured official permissions and land to build 30 schools, working with the local Department of Education so that later these schools could eventually be converted into state schools.[63] Though the schools were built quickly, with cement floors and walls made of local materials, they give a sense of the long-term vision of Save the Children in Belu. Schools project a future; they anticipate growing children and communities, and a sense of permanence.

Emergency, then, is an extraordinary moment to intervene. For Save the Children the intervention, though prompted by emergency, does not end with it. Rather, the intervention, in this case, the establishment of a whole school system, stretches far into the future. Crucially, it is in the time of emergency that Save the Children gained a foothold to shape future, permanent schooling infrastructures, to make inroads within government bureaucracies, and to become familiar with local political and cultural dynamics, all within a future-looking frame. In this way, there is a tension between the here-and-now, short-term work of NGOs (precisely the unsustainability that critics point to), and strategic, long-term planning. Emergency is also a time of sped-up intervention, with urgency that allows certain things to be done more quickly than would otherwise be normal. Until the crisis, schools were being built at a steady pace in Belu, and then suddenly, 30 new schools appeared to accommodate the refugees, but which also fundamentally changed the institutional landscape of education in Belu.

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62 The distinction between West Timor (Indonesian) and East Timorese is complicated by the fact that many people consider themselves to be from both places. Many of those who are "original" residents have spent long periods of their lives in East Timor. Even now, the border remains somewhat porous. In the last two years, the border crossing point at Atapupu has been significantly upgraded on the Indonesian side. Previously, it was a known secret that one could cross the border without a passport. Now that is no longer possible, and passports – which are both expensive and must be renewed every five years – are required to cross. People have found other methods, including crossing through forest paths, or commonly, by sea. The border, then is not only the land border, but an extremely porous water perimeter.

63 One notable exception was in the Atapupu area (Ronald, personal communication, December 17, 2016). In this case, the village head had worked with Save the Children to construct a new school, but once a new village head came into office, the school was destroyed. According to Ronald, local residents were "sensitive" to the aid given to refugees: "They often asked 'Why do they get all the stuff? Why do you give it directly to the refugees and not through the existing government and community systems?'" Thus, their sensitivity stemmed not only from having to share land with refugees, or even the allocation of material goods (and sympathy) to refugees, but also the *way* in which aid was distributed, altogether bypassing existing village systems.

Significantly for the present study, it was precisely this earlier engagement that allowed for Save the Children to return to Belu for its Literacy Boost program. In the reports on Literacy Boost in Belu (e.g., Brown, 2013), Belu is described as an important site for promoting literacy because of the challenges in teaching and learning arising from multilingual populations, the regency's remote location, and the generally poor access to education, particularly in rural areas outside of the capital city of Atambua. However, according to a longtime staffer, who worked in Belu during the initial intervention and again in recent years, the single most important factor for choosing Belu for the site of implementation was Save the Children's previous work there (Ibu Esti, personal communication, June 29, 2017). In the years after the emergency, Save the Children had accumulated institutional knowledge, a useful network that spanned government bureaucrats, local leaders, as well as logistical staff like drivers, and enough staff members who had worked in Belu, who could quickly start up another round and another kind of intervention.

The Implementer's Timelines

Save the Children worked within multiple timescales. They had to work as if the programs had many years left of funding, even when the likely reality loomed: that there would be no additional funding and the project would soon end. The day-to-day work was governed by these opposing possibilities, but also with much more mundane, pressing concerns. There is always a ranking of time happening, trying to negotiate the seriousness and relative urgency of each timescale.

For all of the Literacy Boost projects that take place around the world, there are a set of reports generated: the baseline, midline, and endline reports. These reports should ideally show progress in children's literacy skills over the course of the intervention, as demonstrated on a literacy assessment administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the intervention. These assessments serve as the bookends to a whole flurry of activities, and anything that falls outside of these outside time markers is not included in the reports that serve as the primary research tools of the Literacy Boost program worldwide.

What is less determined, however, is the actual length of the intervention, or the amount of time between baseline and endline reporting. The Literacy Boost projects in Indonesia are implemented with variable timeframes, largely (if not wholly) dependent on funding conditions, rather than any scientific evidence about the ideal length for a literacy intervention. In one implementation site in Indonesia, the Literacy Boost intervention is planned for eight years, but continued funding beyond the fourth year is contingent on annual results. In another site, the intervention will last for 10 years. In Jakarta, there were two durations of the Literacy Boost intervention: half of the 22 participating schools received Literacy Boost for two years, while the other half of participating schools received the intervention for four years. Initially, there were two distinct interventions: Literacy Boost, and another project focused on school and personal hygiene. All the participating schools in Jakarta were supposed to receive both interventions, each for two years. Half the schools would start with literacy and then move onto hygiene, and vice versa for the other batch of schools. However, when it came time to switch, it was found that the Literacy Boost schools did not make the expected gains, so they would continue to receive the Literacy Boost intervention for the remaining two years, with supplementary units on health and hygiene (Meli, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Meanwhile, the other schools, which had started with hygiene, would only be able to receive Literacy Boost for two years. Here, we see how timeframes—and indeed, the duration of the project—had to be manipulated so that certain gains as measured by the Literacy Boost Assessment would be produced.

In Belu, the Literacy Boost program lasted a total of four years, over the course of a pilot programming year, followed by three years of regular program implementation. In the last weeks of the fourth and final year of the intervention, staff members still held out hope

that the project would be extended for another year. Many local staffers commented on how only at this (relatively late) point did everything run well; they had good relations with education officials and high elected leaders, as well as with teachers and principals at participating schools, and the staff themselves were now up to snuff. As the head of Literacy Boost in Belu noted, some staff members started *dari nol,* or "from zero", and that the exceptional training they received on the job should be put to further use; it would be a "waste" to stop the project and disband a team that was finally working at optimal levels (Heri, personal communication, September 18, 2016). In this way, there is a stark difference between the carefully-worded outward-facing reports, in which time is perfectly apportioned for the required activities of the intervention, and the always-changing realities of day-to-day work – especially the daily work of raising and spending funds. There is *always* more to be done, if there is funding available.

Donor time pressures moved Save the Children to pursue a different funding plan for the Literacy Boost project in Sumba. There, Literacy Boost was tied into a comprehensive ten-year intervention that focused on health, education, and economic livelihoods. However, what Save the Children gained in time, they lost in focus and administrative control. The only way to secure funding for this long-duration intervention was to set up a complicated sponsorship system, whereby program funding is provided by individual sponsors in South Korea. The sponsor would be matched with a child in Sumba, and they two were to exchange letters. The sponsors would also receive regular updates on the child(ren) they sponsored from Save the Children staff. This setup presented substantial challenges for the staff, who not only had to be in regular contact with their Save the Children counterparts in Korea, but who had to translate letters from children in Sumba—many of whom are not fluent in Indonesian when they start the first grade—into English, which would then get translated into Korean by their Save the Children Korean counterparts. Here, the Save the Children staffers act as actual translators (of language), brokering the relationship between children in Sumba and their benefactors in South Korea. In many other ways, the Save the Children staffers in Indonesia play the role of the broker between benefactors and recipient communities by translating temporal expectations.

No matter how long the intervention – whether two, four, eight or ten years long –the Literacy Boost intervention is carved up into discrete tasks with specific time allocations, apportioned out in a Detail Implementation Plan. This document was circulated vertically, between the local staff in the field offices, the Save the Children country office, and when requested, to higher-up levels in the Save the Children organization (such as to international technical advisors), to development management teams at contracting firms tasked with carrying out several Save the Children interventions in Indonesia, or to donors like DFAT or New Zealand Aid. The Detail Implementation Plan was made directly from the logframe for the program, or as the country educational officer joked to me once, the "Program Bible." The logframe provides the ultimate scale against which outcomes are measured, determining the direction, speed, and volume of change.

Each week, and indeed *each day,* is accounted for in the Detail Implementation Plan. Each actor, or "stakeholder," performs ideally in the Detail Implementation Plan. Because the tasks and activities in the Plan are sequential and depend on previously finished tasks and activities, any earlier interruption or delay would have a domino effect on all subsequent plans. Of course, delays and interruptions were inevitable, and things did not always, or even often, progress in the order or sequence of to the Plan. In a sense, the Detail Implementation Plan was aspirational, while the Literacy Boost staffers maintained a more realistic timeline for their activities. The Detail Implementation Plan, with the apportioned plan for how the next three years would be spent, was for donors and others in the outside world. There was a whole second plan that was used for day-to-day operations, and it was this second plan—

often unwritten and frequently adjusted—that actually conformed to conditions on the ground.

One difficulty in following these carefully-timed plans had to do with technology and communication infrastructures. In sites like Jakarta, meetings or school visits could be rescheduled with a quick message on a WhatsApp group or at very least, with a phone call. This was often not possible in Belu, where many schools were not yet within cellular service range, much less for internet. Training sessions and other Literacy Boost events had to be scheduled far in advance, with schools being notified through letters sent by couriers or drivers on staff, who would spend whole 10-hour days delivering letters to a few schools. Often, when events were scheduled for 9 am, they actually started closer to 11 am, but it was not possible to rush anyone with text messages or calls. These logistical challenges presented one barrier to following the Detail Implementation Plan, but a whole host of other factors—including staffing shortfalls and changes in the political or bureaucratic landscape—serve to exacerbate the gaps between the ideal timeline in the Detail Implementation Plan and actual implementation.

There was a seeming disconnect between the Detail Implementation Plan and the daily rhythms of actual program implementation. I suggest that all of the Literacy Boost staff were well aware of the gaps. Much time and effort were spent making the plans, even though staffers knew the plans would be rendered inaccurate, if not irrelevant, from nearly the moment the project began. The political economist Timothy Mitchell (2002) has written persuasively about the power and mirage of technocratic planning, or "the divide between reality and its representation" (p. 82), noting that the latter is a "reformatted knowledge, information that has been translated, moved, shrunk, simplified, redrawn" (p. 99). In the case of Literacy Boost in Indonesia, the Detail Implementation Plan was necessary for showing progress, tasks completed, measurable movement toward project completion. It was indeed a case where complex relationships, processes, achievements, and negotiations were broken down into abstracted, sequential action items. Development is about measurable progress over a series of time markers, and the Detail Implementation Plan was both the guide to and the representation of such progress. Literacy Boost attempted to cater to international donors and technical advisors, who needed to show tangible results. At the same time, Literacy Boost staffers also conformed the Detail Implementation Plan as much as possible to conditions on the ground. In this way, Save the Children's Literacy Boost staffers attempted a temporal balancing act, brokering time imperatives with the Detail Implementation Plan at the center.

Belu Time: Slow and Fast

In this section, I consider some aspects of temporality in one of the implementation sites of the Literacy Boost intervention in Belu. My focal research school in Belu, SD Bose, underwent four years of Literacy Boost intervention, between 2012 and September 2016. This school was considered a "model school" by Save the Children, frequently shown to visitors and government officials. It was a school that had received four years of the Literacy Boost intervention; it was one of the pilot schools that participated starting in the first year. SD Bose, then, represented a success story, and was held up as an example of how Literacy Boost could lead to deep impacts in a school and community. However, by July 2017, even minor changes that were encouraged by the Literacy Boost intervention—such as creating a print-rich environment by hanging up posters and alphabet displays—were no longer evident. The classroom walls were again bare, with two exceptions: at the front of the classroom hung the mandatory portraits of the Indonesian president and vice-president, which marked the space as a classroom, and between the two portraits hung a cross, which marked it as a Catholic one. There were no literacy visual aids, except for a small printout of the alphabet

taped up to the windows, nearly impossible for most students to see. This was the scene merely one year after the conclusion of the Literacy Boost intervention.

The Literacy Boost timeframe of measurement—the four years bookended by the baseline and endline assessments—could capture progress on certain indicators, but just outside this timeframe a very different situation presented itself in Ibu Agnes's class first grade classroom at SD Bose. Ibu Agnes had taught at the school for decades, and was a frequent participant of the Literacy Boost teacher training sessions and other program intervention, but her teaching practice showed little evidence of it. A common lesson plan was the following: she would ask a student to read a sentence from the board. Then, for the rest of the class period, 1.5 hours that dragged on, students were expected to copy that sentence in their own notebooks. In my observations, students quickly became adept at stretching out their efforts to fill the whole period; they knew that it would not take 1.5 hours to write one or two sentences, so they could goof off in the interim. For some students who did finish early, Ibu Agnes would dismiss them to play in the schoolyard for the rest of the period. It is clear, then, that from the narrow timeframe of the intervention and its measurements, an upward trend appears, but that momentum, or even the direction of the change, is not guaranteed outside that narrow, four-year segment of time.

When I discussed the situation at SD Bose with former Save the Children staffers, they were disappointed. One said, "If four years isn't enough to make a difference, what can we do? How long do we have to stay?" This anxiety about the ideal duration of intervention frequently came up in conversation with Save the Children staffers, and with it, some measure of acknowledgment that no amount of time—whether two, four, eight, or ten years—would really ever be enough to do all that they promised and planned.

In the same period of observing Ibu Agnes's class (and seeming backsliding), I had the chance to interview Pak Stefanus, a longtime educator and a former school supervisor in the same community in Belu. In recounting his impressions of how attitudes toward schooling and literacy have changed in the area over his lifetime, he said, "You can't imagine what it was like 40 years ago. Only the sons of kings could go to school. And now you see, everyone sends their children to school." In his remarks, Pak Stefanus emphasized the incredible pace of progress in Belu, a stark juxtaposition of how his community was framed by NGOs that deemed it in need of urgent intervention. In this exchange, I glimpsed an alternate temporal horizon, one that also had a developmental logic of progress and change, but had a drastically expanded timeframe. With the "before" segment spanning forty years or a lifetime, the speed of change was astoundingly rapid, in contrast to what appeared to me, and to many Save the Children staffers as well, as slow change or even stasis.

Then there were other calendars that strongly impacted life in the communities of my focal schools, beyond the official calendars that the Departments of Education publish. Daily routines at my focal schools in both Jakarta and Belu were deeply intertwined with religious observance. In Belu, the official daily school day (from 7:30 am to noon) was often interrupted: students were released early to clean out the Cathedral across the street, or to attend a special mass. This was especially true during Holy Week, which took place during the birthday of the Parish. But other holidays—especially Christmas, Easter, and All Saints' Day—also led to celebrations and commemorations that stretched out far beyond what was allocated in the official academic calendar published by the Department of Education. Part of this was related to the recent history of the war, and the fact that there were now so many Timorese residents in Belu. For All Saints' Day, a time to visit and light candles upon the graves of family members, many in town set out to East Timor by truck, by motorbike, and some by foot. These trips never took less than three days, though in the official academic calendar school was released for precisely one day. Not only did teachers and the principal at SD Bose make allowances for their students to extend their school breaks for such religious

reasons, there was also a sense of contingency that seemed inherent to the official school calendars. For most of Indonesia, including my focal school and community in Jakarta, there are always two calendars in play: the standard one that uses solar months and the Islamic lunar calendar, which dictated when the major holidays would fall each year. The school calendar was an amalgam of the two.

On a smaller timescale, SD Bose's students and teachers experience both loose and tight time daily: seemingly long stretches of time loosely spent juxtaposed against extremely tightly coordinated routines. For example, what many in Western contexts consider *de rigueur* conditions of schooling—the iconic school bell that never deviates from its proscribed schedule—simply was not a part of school life in Belu. There was a bell, but it was rung manually by teachers or the school headmaster at varying times on different days. The sound of the bell did correspond to an expected action—going out of the classroom for recess, filing back into the classroom afterward—but it did not ring at precise, routinized times, thereby delinking the sound of the bell with the creation of a schedule of regular temporal segmentation. There were, however, moments of extreme, tightly-coordinated precision. When students were released from school each day, they lined up in the school yard, with military precision. One student from the sixth grade yelled out commands as if he were a military leader, and students all responded kinetically in step with each other in perfect synchrony.

The school days usually lasted for less than proscribed four and a half hours for the upper grades, or two hours for the first and second graders. School was supposed to start at 7:30 am each day, though this was the exception rather than norm. *Everyone,* including the teachers, experienced extenuating circumstances: cooking took longer than usual, a child was ill, the motorbike had broken down, and so on and so forth. School started anytime between 7:30 and 8 am, and at times a bit later. When the school day ended also depended on many factors beyond the official school timetable. In addition to the religious reasons cited above, students were often released early to help clean the school buildings and yard, or because teachers were to attend a meeting in the nearby city. When someone in the community passed away, students and teachers were released early so that a large contingent could attend the wake. None of these common practices were any indication that parents and teachers were unaware or disrespectful of the school calendar. However, it does show that the school calendar was not the primary determinant of the flow and speed of life in the town.

I came to understand how much Save the Children's language, timetables, and benchmarks, all of which rely on temporal markers, have come to shape my own understanding of development. The segmentation of time, or the determination of the increment to be measured, thus determines the outcomes. In the case of Belu, educational outcomes vary if we look at the four-year increment, the five-year increment, or the forty-year increment. At four years after the Literacy Boost intervention, the outcomes appear positive; at five years, they seem dismal; and then at forty years, the educational outcomes look stellar. In other words, like in any other kind of assessment, the parameters of the assessment define its outcomes. In a moment, different timescales come into contact, illuminating how varied speeds of change—in the same moment—can be and are detected by different actors.

Donors' Timelines

The funders of the Literacy Boost program in Belu, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, which was formerly known as Ausaid), operate under very different timelines that are largely unrelated to particular histories or conditions in Indonesia. In an interview with two DFAT education officers about the Literacy Boost intervention they were about to start funding in Lombok and Sumbawa Indonesia, one said, "We are looking to shift toward economic partnership versus the older model of service

delivery. After 15 years of projects not working, we have to try something new" (Greta, personal communication, June 29, 2017). On the one hand, DFAT looked precisely to long-term outcomes by evaluating a fairly long duration of interventions: 15 years. On the other hand, in a pivot to short-term, nimble thinking, DFAT's education team aimed to be engaged as the project was running: if some aspect of the Literacy Boost intervention was not producing outcomes, or not at the rate at which they were expected, they would change course and make adjustments. This approach, of course, raises its own thorny temporal issues about durations of intervention. I asked Greta, "How do you know if something is working, or if it needs more time?", to which she answered, "That's difficult to tell." She was honest about the quandary of when to dig in and when to change course—a central one in international development work. Of course, for every dollar that goes toward literacy work in one site, that is one less dollar that goes to literacy work (or something else) in another site. There are real trade-offs, something that my interlocutors emphasized in their remarks.

Measuring progress for DFAT was straightforward: projects were considered successful or not through quantitative evaluation on an annual basis. The DFAT education officers acknowledged the limitations of quantitative evaluation (in this case, literacy assessment results) while also acknowledging that numbers *are* the trump indicators, often used in cross-country comparisons. As I detailed in Chapter 1, the smallest and most significant measure of time in the Literacy Boost intervention is one minute: the amount of time that children are allotted to read as many words as possible in order to demonstrate their reading fluency skills.

Reading fluency, then was the key indicator for determining the success or failure of the program. It is the bottom line, as donors say, and it was more influential than the numbers of teachers trained, Reading Camps held, or parents reached via community outreach. After all, the Literacy Boost program's defining goal was to boost the literacy abilities of early grades students such that they were able to read better and earlier. Increasingly, what reading better meant, from a programmatic perspective, was that students were able to read faster. That is, not only faster in their academic careers and with respect to their age, but literally read (and enunciate) faster in a timed task. For Indonesia's Literacy Boost program, the Correct Words Per Minute threshold for reading fluency was 35 words.

Dowd and Bartlett (2019) note that the focus on Correct Words Per Minute (CWPM) became a focus of international development donors and practitioners largely because it was a neat, clean, numeric and single-faceted way to compare progress across countries and languages (p. 189). This "need for speed" as Dowd and Bartlett write, directly relates to the ease of measurement of speed. It is a clean indicator, one that boils down to a bottom line, a single digit that seemingly translates well: with this one number, it is possible to compare children at school A with those at school B in Belu, children in Belu with those in Jakarta, Indonesia with Vietnam, and ultimately, to compile a global ranking of children's reading fluency rates worldwide. There is no comparable measure for other literacy component skills, such as vocabulary or comprehension, most likely because they are too complex to abstract into one clean measure.

The DFAT education officers based in Jakarta were called to Canberra each year to review all of education projects in their Indonesia portfolio. The project outcomes were plugged into a formula that determines their OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) efficiency ratings, and these ratings were then presented to a panel that monitored and evaluated all the DFAT educational "investments" in Indonesia and the region, and then the ratings were held up against a regional average (Greta, personal

communication, June 29, 2017).[64] Time for DFAT, and by extension Literacy Boost in Indonesia, was thus, as Foucault (1977) suggested, added up and capitalized.

Hence, timing was a key component of demonstrating efficacy: finding just the right timeframe to demonstrate optimal, visible results, and knowing when to intervene in the intervention itself. For Greta, she had to keep in mind that DFAT, and by extension the Australian taxpayers, wanted to know immediately if things were on the right or wrong track, however that was determined. Indonesian government officials and policymakers, on the other hand, were less likely to object to investment even if it doesn't produce immediate gains. Similarly, one of goals of Literacy Boost in Indonesia was to produce long-term policy and funding shifts toward childhood education and literacy through their advocacy work with the Indonesian government. Thus, they negotiated for more time; the one-year interval is not inherently important to them, unless their program funding was cut, for example. More important was the mid- to long-term outlook, or that of baseline and endline of the overall project. And yet, under the thumb of a donors, Save the Children was under pressure to produce results for Literacy Boost on an *annual* basis and to show that their interventions work. However, their own measurements often could not capture those changes, either because of the instrument, the methodology, or the temporal frame.

These competing goals—of short-term results and long-term advocacy—led to constantly shifting timeframes of Literacy Boost projects, even within Indonesia; the hope was that with a different project duration, the effects of the intervention would miraculously and boldly manifest. A duration too long and a raft of consequences would emerge: discontented donors (in this case, the Australian taxpayers), the perception that targeted stakeholders will or have already come to depend on the interveners, and of course, the missed opportunity cost of covering more of the map by spreading the donors' and Save the Children's reach to other regions of Indonesia or Southeast Asia. The converse is also true: if the duration of intervention is too short, stakeholders will not have had enough time to absorb the lessons and no meaningful impact is felt, or more importantly, detected.

Discussion: The rate, speed, and tempo of the program

We can see how conflicting agendas and priorities are drawn into sharp contrast by looking at timeframes and speeds. For DFAT's education officers, they were accountable to DFAT, and by extension the Australian taxpayers, on an *annual* basis. Within this annual evaluation timeframe, it was the one-minute segment that mattered most: how many correct words read, on average, by students was the ultimate litmus test of the Literacy Boost program's impact on participating schools and regions. Save the Children, in contrast, had the long-term goal of producing educational policy change through their advocacy work with the Indonesian government. Save the Children's timeframes were longer than their donors'—they cared more about showing progress over the duration of an entire intervention—and thus they were always negotiating for more time from the donors to prolong the interventions. At the same time that Save the Children attempted to slow down donor's project timeframes, they worked to speed up timeframes of the communities they work in, by cramming as much as they could (as evident in the Detailed implementation plan) in a relatively short amount of time, while under pressure from donors like DFAT also producing results on an annual basis.

Save the Children's temporal brokering was not always successful. Some teachers and school principals in both North Jakarta and Belu complained about the Literacy Boost program schedule: of the constant interruptions to their regular schedules, having to send teachers out for trainings, for principals to go participate in meetings. They complained that the intervention was a hassle (*merepotkan*). In addition to the question of finding the ideal

64 Also see the DFAT Annual Reports for Indonesia. Objective 2, "Children have improved literacy and numeracy" remains the same from year to year. (DFAT, 2017).

duration of intervention, there is also a question of rhythm, speed, and tempo. Interruptions, whether for trainings, meetings, or other activities, were both (and alternately) perceived bothersome and useful. At the same time, DFAT and other donors were perpetually in some state of dissatisfaction, that more was not accomplished in the two, four, or 15 years that they had funded a project.

If we think of a chart measuring any particular indicator relating to Indonesian education, whether it be school enrollment, literacy levels, or educational funding, we would see steady if not astounding gains over the past one hundred years. This is what Pak Stefanus reminds us of. The total trend is upwards, but if we take any segment of the chart, we will find extreme variability, and possibly what appears to be a downward trend. Development practitioners tend to look at a narrower segment, one that is limited to their period of funding, thus ignoring historical trends, as well as the potential aftereffects of their intervention, which may appear long after the last endline measurement. One of the key aims for Save the Children was to determine a relevant, most appealing unit of temporal segmentation that allows them to demonstrate the most improvement within the shortest amount of time. Never mind that those gains may evaporate quickly in the following temporal segment, as seems to be the case at SD Bose in Belu with Ibu Agnes's class.

We have moved among drastically different timescales, between the one minute of the literacy assessment and the long durée evoked by Pak Stefanus, which spanned decades and indeed, nearly a century. We have moved between the annual evaluation cycles of the donors and the intricately mapped out timelines for the four-year implementation of the Literacy Boost intervention crafted by Save the Children staffers in Indonesia. In juxtaposing the one-minute timed task against the rest of the school experience, the former stands out for its temporal rigidity. Take Ibu Agnes's open-ended assignments to copy a single sentence from the board as a point of contrast. The contrast is important, not because Ibu Agnes's way is the "local" way of how things are done, and thus automatically appropriate. Rather, the contrast is important because Ibu Agnes's students were vastly unprepared for such a timed task, not only because of their literacy skills or lack thereof, but their unfamiliarity with such timed assessments amplified any uncertainty related to reading, often resulting in poor test outcomes.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the fundamental temporal conflict, the huge gap between Ibu Agnes's classroom and DFAT staffer Greta's outlooks, for example, are due to different commitments to place and community. In other words, though they are all "stakeholders", some people, in this case Pak Stefanus, hold more of the stake. Because Pak Stefanus lived in Belu, grew up in Belu, and his future was also rooted in Belu, he was oriented toward taking the long view of things, to see change and development over a lifetime rather than a year. DFAT staffers, on the other hand, were responsible to a whole other set of stakeholders: their bosses in Canberra, and by extension, the Australian taxpayers. Through their own metrics of success and failure, change must be measured on an annual basis, and their actions must track towards a tangible effect in that timeframe. Significantly, DFAT was not truly accountable to Ibu Agnes or her students; their work would not get canceled through metrics of Ibu Agnes, or those of the community. And it was these fundamentally different set of relationships of responsibility that also determined temporal outlooks, and thus temporal conflicts.

Like other development scholars have suggested, these findings point to a strong need for NGOs to attend to local conditions. But the research on Literacy Boost in Indonesia shows that it is not only the "content" translations that matter, such as how best to translate the reading assessment or even determining how many words per minute a child should be able to read fluently. It also points to the necessity of seriously adapting the temporal aspects

of the intervention—the speeds, durations, and timeframes of the activities of the intervention—to mesh with local temporal modalities and expectations.

We can imagine each character of this story as each wearing their own watches, consulting their own calendars, operating within their own timeframes and trying to accommodate others'. Thus, the taxpayers of Australia, the panel of DFAT bureaucrats in Canberra, the DFAT education officers in Jakarta, the Save the Children Indonesia Country Office, Save the Children field office staffers in Belu, Pak Stefanus and other Indonesian education officials, Ibu Agnes in her classroom, and her students in the slowly-passing 1.5 hours of class each day, all came into contact through this Literacy Boost program—but not only they, but also their different temporalities and outlooks. And it is when these timescales intersected and collided that tensions emerged. As Bruno Latour writes, "We never encounter time and space, but a multiplicity of interactions with actants having their own timing, spacing, goals, means, and ends" (2005, p.181). Against universal measures of time, through these stories I aimed to elevate temporality and time as central components to understanding development processes.

Conclusion

This dissertation provided an empirical, ethnographic account of an international development literacy initiative in Indonesia. It demonstrated the fundamental importance of local particularity in the design, implementation and evaluation of one such initiative, while also showing that broad and generalizable conditions were shared across the sites of intervention. Key dimensions of particularity included linguistic context, experiences of uncertainty, formulations of authority, and temporal unitization. Literacy Boost program designers and staffers, in my experience, were well aware of the need to attend to local conditions, yet they worked within parameters at least partly defined by donors.

In Chapter 1, I explored how Literacy Boost measured results, and in what settings those measurements took place. Save the Children has a robust internal research arm—both in their MEAL (Measurement, Evaluation and Learning) program, which extends down to each field office, and in their SUPER (Save-University Partnership for Education Research) program, which recruits graduate researchers to analyze their programs worldwide. Chapter 1 situated Literacy Boost's tool for measuring literacy. It analyzed how it worked (or did not) in the conditions of Belu and Jakarta—and more specifically in the multilingual particularity of Belu. At SD Wamea, the literacy measurement event took place in a context where Indonesian was not even spoken by children, much less read and written; their teacher provided oral translations between Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Bunak. Thus, it is difficult to generalize gains between baseline and endline evaluations given the high degree of heterogeneity of testing environments. At SD Wamea, for example, any gains in literacy on the Literacy Boost assessment were also partly gains in basic Bahasa Indonesia proficiency. At schools like SD Wamea, Literacy Boost's contribution to students' literacy trajectories was modest, as it was tied up with students' gains in Indonesian language proficiency. Likewise, if students did not make expected, impressive gains in literacy, that would be little reflection on the Literacy Boost intervention's efficacy.

Numerical measurements, as I showed in Chapter 4, constituted the absolute form and value for donors like DFAT: the number of schoolchildren that showed improvement over the past year, the percentage of students who made gains in vocabulary, and most importantly, the average number of correct words read per minute (CWPM). These numbers came directly from the Literacy Boost assessment, but the conditions of testing—and their utter variability between sites—remained concealed within those numbers, no matter how much contextualization was provided in evaluation reports.

Given these constraints, what did the Literacy Boost assessment *do*, as a practice and as a tool? As I noted in Chapter 1, it was *not* used to communicate student results to teachers and headmasters, as is typical for student assessments. Rather, it constituted a form of institutional communication. Much like the logframe and other NGO discursive tools, it served particular functions (i.e., defined literacy) and designated certain audiences (i.e., development staffers and donors), while leaving out other materially imbricated considerations altogether. To wit: the assessment, in practice, defined literacy as the number of words read per minute, thereby making literacy a quantifiable and comparable value in any given site. Yet how those figures were ascertained (i.e., through testing under drastically different conditions) could not be divulged through the quantitative, results-centric operation.

The assessment's most critical function, beyond serving as a form of internal, institutional communication, was to generate the conditions for comparison. In the introduction to the dissertation, I considered the difficulties of comparison between two sites that differed along every possible axis. Comparing the two sites, for Literacy Boost and its donors, requires a numerical index as the means for standardization. The assessment was the tool that generated those seemingly standardized numbers, even though standardizable

conditions of measurement were not possible, no matter how many enumerator trainings were held.

For Save the Children, the international comparison of Literacy Boost results was considered, if not legitimate, at least inevitable (see Dowd et al., 2013). They address the issues surrounding cross-national comparison—to say nothing of comparison within national borders—within official discourse through terms like "local contextualization." The "contextualization" that occurs in both the program's implementation (e.g., adjusting teacher training units in accordance with local resources) and evaluation (e.g., adjusting the reading comprehension passage in accordance with local students' background knowledge) is indeed vital, and I frequently admired the great lengths to which Save the Children staffers went to ensure local relevance of the Literacy Boost program. Yet the issues of contextualization and comparability go beyond their efforts—they are baked into international development common practice, and indeed, best practice.

I showed that "local contextualization" cannot account for the vast variability in the testing event. At SD Wamea for example, testing children for Indonesian literacy when they did not even speak it could never be fully accounted for through the Literacy Boost assessment or the evaluation reports. The case of testing at SD Wamea in Belu questions the very ground on which comparison rests and what comparison actually produces in this intervention. In cases like these, the central issue is not about finding the right target number of correct words read per minute (CWPM), or even finding a more suitable measure to replace this fluency measure.

The Literacy Boost program was formulated through its internalities like the CWPM fluency measure, yet I found that the lived impacts of the program were in its externalities: the instances of empowerment through the Community Action Cycle, the long-term shifts in punishment and self-discipline at schools.

Literacy-related activities were not the focus of the Literacy Boost program in North Jakarta. As I explored in Chapter 2, Jakarta staffers spent most of their time and energy working on the Community Action Cycle, which was a form of participatory planning for schools. The process drew out tensions related to school budgeting, funding structures, and teacher pay. I focused on one focal school, highlighting how uncertainty shaped the school's environment and trajectory. Uncertainty characterized the lives of teachers whose professions were precarious, as well as the lives of parents, who had to navigate the city, its bureaucracy, and the educational system while poor and landless. Each actor, though they may not have thought of uncertainty as the primary problem they faced, dealt with it in both pressing and long-term horizons.

The Community Action Cycle process produced some remarkable outcomes at participating schools in North Jakarta, not least of which was a sort of insurgent agency on the part of some parents and teachers: people who, used to being sidelined, suddenly felt both the imperative and ability to speak up. Even so, many who were vocal faced retaliation, and change at the school level rarely occurred. In my analysis, that change did not happen on a broader scale was not due to any particular actor acting poorly. Rather, I argued that a concatenation of historical and social forces facilitated an intersection of people, activities, and desires in that particular moment and place, leading to some speaking up and others refusing to listen.

In Chapter 3, I underscored how Literacy Boost variously amplified and reorganized the role of discipline in schools. In investigating practices of positive discipline and temporal discipline, the ethnographic analyses from Belu and North Jakarta bore out Foucault's (1977) hypothesis about the evolution of discipline. As in Foucault's analysis, I too found that modern sensibilities—namely, the urge to eliminate bodily punishment—did not harken the

end of discipline. Instead, the focus has shifted to disciplining the soul, through techniques of temporal and spatial management, and increasingly, an emphasis on self-discipline.

Literacy Boost's foray into disciplinary issues took completely different trajectories of intervention in Belu and North Jakarta. In Belu, the intervention prodded teachers to remove "the wood" from their desks and inculcated principles of positive discipline. Meanwhile in North Jakarta, Literacy Boost added layers of monitoring and time management at schools, and encouraged school stakeholders to "stop at the red light," even when no one was watching.

The push to ban corporal punishment does not only occur in so-called developing countries like Indonesia, however. In the American context, educational researchers Curran and Kitchin (2018) have analyzed national data on reductions in the use of corporal punishment. They found that in many districts, reduction in corporal punishment predicted lower suspension rates. This finding tracks with Literacy Boost's proposed model of change, in which teachers and school officials make a wholesale shift from punitive discipline—which includes both physical punishment and suspensions—toward positive discipline. Yet, the authors also find that in districts serving a greater percentage of racial minorities, as the use of corporal punishment decreased, suspension rates went up. This finding tracks with the actual effects of the Literacy Boost program in Indonesia. While there was a shift away from corporal punishment in Belu, there was also a shift toward discipline that directs students' and teachers' temporal and spatial coordinates, in the form of monitoring.

The role and status of the child was a recurring theme across Chapters 2 and 3. In all facets of the intervention, Literacy Boost attempted to elevate the position of children, and in doing so, came up against opposition by adult stakeholders. As I described in Chapter 2, children were included in planning meetings in the Community Action Cycle process, and in Chapter 3, children were conceptualized to be full holders of human rights. In both cases, by collapsing the distinctions between children and adults in formulating its categories of "stakeholders" and "holder of human rights", Literacy Boost went against the popular current, which tautologically dictated that children were children, and adults were adults, each with their distinct responsibilities and rights.

At the heart of the issue were differing conceptions of childhood—and whose definition was accepted, the right one—and the relationship between children and adults, and the best way of educating children as they become adults. One Save the Children report on banning corporal punishment made their stance clear: "Children are no longer seen as property of their parents but as people in their own right, and this change in perspective applies equally to teachers and others working 'in loco parentis'" (Global Initiative, 2017b, p. 28), a perspective that was not widely shared by my interlocutors in Belu. The distinctions between childhood and adulthood, and the values and responsibilities attached to each, are at stake in the debate what is in question when we consider positive discipline in Belu.

Like with school-based management issues and the Community Action Cycle (see Chapter 2), classroom discipline became a central facet and fact of the intervention. This was not a case of Literacy Boost nosing into seemingly random areas of schooling. Rather, these "incidental" issues were central to literacy learning, even if they were not conceived of as such in Literacy Boost official communications. The translation of the program by field officers frequently entailed this sort of work – figuring out *which* "incidental" issues are actually central, and how to incorporate that within the Literacy Boost framework. All of this confirms what we know to be true theoretically: that issues as focused as literacy learning are enmeshed with social, cultural structures and ways of doing things, at schools, communities, in homes.

One of the central findings in Chapter 3 was about the temporal ramifications of discipline reform, particularly in North Jakarta. In Chapter 4, I broadened the frame to

consider how conflicting temporalities of the various Literacy Boost stakeholders resulted in drastically different understandings of progress, development, and program uptake. I argued that only by examining the different temporal pressures that drove action and decision-making at all levels of the intervention, is it possible to determine the intervention's impact. Save the Children played the role of temporal broker between donors, who operated on an annual review cycle and who prioritized the one-minute segment of the reading fluency measure as a key metric for program evaluation, and school stakeholders, who took a much longer view of progress and educational development. One imperative for Literacy Boost staffers, then, was to demonstrate the most improvement within short segments of time, while still balancing the long-term needs and outlook of their participant schools and communities.

Taken together with Chapter 1, Chapter 4 showed how the tools and temporalities of measurement (e.g., donors' annual review of progress and testing at project baseline and endline) allowed for certain, partial understandings of the Literacy Boost program's impact in Belu and North Jakarta. As with the Literacy Boost assessment, the variability in project intervention length created challenges for standardizable measurement, and thus comparison. And though the length of the intervention differed in the two sites (and even within them, as in the case of North Jakarta), the evaluation remained the same.

This dissertation's main findings engender a number of implications for research and for development practice and participation. For Save the Children and other organizations seeking to implement educational interventions in Indonesia, the implications of this study range from the technical to the structural. As I wrote in Chapter 1, the content, format, administration, and use of measurement tools like the Literacy Boost assessment can and should be improved. Though a critical perspective would wish the assessment eliminated altogether, a realistic perspective knows this to be, in the near term, impossible. There are some ways in which *more* standardization would be useful. For example, if the same literacy assessment could be administered orally to students form minority language groups in Belu. Yet, what Chapter 3 shows is that there will invariably be different uptakes of the intervention, no matter how much the Literacy Boost is further contextualized to local conditions.

Another implication, for both development practice and research, is that in order to capture broader stories about *how* and *why* interventions work (or not), an array of research methods is necessary. Different kinds of research result in different stories of how the Literacy Boost intervention works. The lived experiences of the intervention in North Jakarta and Belu—the perspectives of Pak Felix, Ibu Rita, and Pak Ferry— and the meanings attached to discipline reform are rarely discussed within official Literacy Boost discourse, partly because they are not explicitly valued (by donors), but also partly because they cannot be detected through the habitual forms of NGO evaluation. The question, then, is how to incorporate qualitative research into NGO evaluation streams—and how to make donors see its significant, and indeed singular, role in showing the full spectrum of impacts of development work.

I was able to follow the stories I shared over time—meeting with stakeholders *after* they left Literacy Boost meetings, months *after* they attended teacher training sessions, and *after* the conclusion of the intervention. My research proceeded with a different kind of temporality, and provides a counterpoint to neat before-and-after snapshots of development progress. My first visit to SD Bose, for example, took place in 2015, during preliminary fieldwork, when the school was receiving its third year of intervention from the Literacy Boost program. When I returned in 2016, and over the course of the year of fieldwork, I saw how the school changed again after the intervention ended. In other words, I could bear witness to the intervention's sustainability. I could see how durable the changes really were, which particular changes stuck and which ones floated away – a short-lived period of

something different. I suspect that for most development practitioners, this amount of time is a luxury denied by donor and internal reporting imperatives. One question for researchers of education development, then, is how to reconcile the opposite temporalities of academic work and development work.

Parents, teachers, and education officials would undoubtedly come away with a different set of implications. Parents at schools like SD Sarjana still likely face many of the same experiences of uncertainty today, and many likely operate within similar sets of financial and time constraints. Literacy Boost, though perhaps the most well-regarded, will not be the last development intervention sweeping through their children's schools. Parents will continue to be invited, and pressured, to attend sessions with NGO representatives and educational officials, all in the name of ensuring even stakeholder buy-in. During the course of my research, I was continually impressed by Literacy Boost field staffers' commitment to constituent communities and their hard work, even as I saw how they too worked within temporal and financial constraints imposed by donors, the national office, and NGO habitual practice. For parents who felt able, like those at the model school SD Roro in North Jakarta, the presence of Literacy Boost in their community allowed them to contribute to and guide a local literacy movement—no small feat. Similarly, teachers and educators with whom the literacy message resonated took up the opportunities to attend more trainings, become master trainers themselves, and spearhead new literacy initiatives at their school.

This dissertation was conceived of, researched, and largely written when international development work involved travel, and lots of it. I write this conclusion six months after the World Health Organization officially declared covid-19 to be a global pandemic, at a time when across the world, schooling has been disrupted, moved online, or halted altogether. Covid-19's spread throughout Indonesia has meant that most children are engaging in distance learning, a poor substitute for what was often already a challenging learning experience in schools. Mostly asynchronous lessons are now video-taped and disseminated via apps like WhatsApp, and students are expected to record and send their assignments back to teachers, and this only works in well-connected places. In lieu of the univocal choral response to teachers' questions, students now lack the routine aural contours of their classroom, and now answer alone to a phone screen.

Covid-19 will undoubtedly have long-lasting, and perhaps permanent, impacts on education *and* global development work. Yet the work continues. Though more of it—both education and development work—may take place via learning applications and other digital interventions, similar tensions will arise: unintended outcomes, shifts in disciplinary and surveillance regimes, and misalignments in measurement and temporal outlooks. For researchers, development practitioners, and educators alike, the imperative is to determine what those tensions are in real-time or close to it, and largely deprived of the traditional means.

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Appendix A: Sample Literacy Boost Assessment (Indonesian)

Alphabetic Knowledge

Baris 1	e__1	L__2	v__3	G__4	p__5
Baris 2	S__6	b__7	Q__8	r__9	D__10
Baris 3	h__11	w__12	Y__13	K__14	u__15
Baris 4	N__16	t__17	A__18	x__19	J__20
Baris 5	c__21	Z__22	m__23	f__24	O__25
Baris 6	i__26				

Vocabulary

yang	kembali	dengan	teks
di	itu	hahasa	mendeskripsikan
kelas	tanda	Indonesia	ciri
kamu	menggunakan	cerita	tegak
ayo	tepat	bunga	tumbuhan

Note: From Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

Reading Comprehension Passage

Kakek dan Nenek Tiba
Pulang dari tempat tamasnya, ayah Rio mendapat kabar bahwa Kakek datang. “Kakek dan Nenek sudah di stasiun kereta api! Ayo, kita cepat ke stasiun!” kata Ibu. Setelah tiba di stasiun, kata Rio, “Nah, itu Kakek dan Nenek!” “Kakek…! Nenek…!” teriak Rio. Rio dan adiknya berlari menyambut Kakek dan Nenek. Kakek dan Nenek memeluk cucu-cucunya. “Kami rindu kepada kalian,” kata Kakek dan Nenek. “Ayo, kita bawa koper Nenek dan Kakek ke mobil!” kata Ayah. Tiba di rumah, Rio dan keluarga merasa gembira. Mereka gembira dapat berkumpul bersama. Nenek lalu membuka bungkusan. Bungkusan tersebut berisi oleh-oleh. Rio mendapat sebuah tas sekolah. Adiknya mendapat sebuah boneka lucu. Jumlah kata yang benar dalam satu menit pertama: Jumlah total kata yang benar: Apakah murid ini adalah pembaca atau bukan pembaca? (Jika anak membaca kurang dari 5 kata dengan benar di 30 detik pertama, DIA BUKAN PEMBACA)

Reading Comprehension Questions

Reading comprehension question	Correct answer
1. Bisakah kamu menceritakan kembali isi bacaan tadi?	Rio dan keluarga menjemput kakek dan nenek di stasiun, mereka hendak berkunjung ke rumah Rio, Rio dan keluarga merasa gembira akan kedatangan kakek

	dan nenek, kakek dan nenek membawa oleh-olah untuk Rio dan adiknya
2. Siapa yang dating?	Kakek dan nenek
3. Di mana Rio dan keluarganya menjemput Kakek dan Nenek?	Stasiun
4. Dengan siapa Rio pergi ke stasiun?	Ayah, Ibu, dan adiknya
5. Apa yang dilakukan kakek dan nenek saat bertemu cucu-cucunya?	Memeluk
6. Bagaimana perasaan seluruh anggota keluarga saat berkumpul?	Gembira
7. Rio mendapat oleh-oleh apa dari Kakek dan Nenek?	Sebuah tas sekolah
8. Mengapa keluarga Rio merasa gembira dapat berkumpul bersama?	Karena kakek dan nenek tidak tingal bersama mereka, mereka tidak bertemu mereka setiap saat, sudah lama mereka tidak berjumpa kakek dan nenek
9. Mengapa kakek dan nenek memberikan oleh-oleh untuk Rio dan adiknya?	kakek dan nenek sayang kepada mereka
10. Jika kamu tidak tinggal bersama kakek dan nenekmu, apa yang kamu rasakan saat bertemu dengan mereka? Mengapa kamu merasa demikian?	Benar jika menyatakan sepakat atau tidak dengan penjelasan yang menggunakan setiap referensi dalam cerita

Appendix B: Sample Literacy Boost Assessment (English Translation)

Vocabulary Words

that	return	with	text
of	it	language	to describe
class	sign	Indonesia	trait
you	to use	story	erect
come on	right (proper)	flower	plant

Note: Author's translation.

Reading Comprehension Passage

Grandpa and Grandma Arrive
Returning from their sightseeing trip, Rio's father received news that Grandpa arrived. "Grandpa and Grandma are already at the train station! Let's quickly go to the station!" Rio's mother said. After arriving at the station, Rio said, "Oh, there are Grandpa and Grandma!" "Grandpa…! Grandma…!" yelled Rio. Rio and his younger sibling ran to greet Grandpa and Grandma. Grandpa and Grandma hugged their grandchildren. "We missed you guys," said Grandpa and Grandma. "Let's bring Grandpa and Grandma's suitcases to the car!" Rio's father said. After arriving at home, Rio and his family felt happy. They were happy to be gathered together. Grandma then opened the packages. The packages were full of gifts. Rio received a backpack. His sibling received a cute doll. Number of correct words within the first minute: Total number of correct words: Was this student a reader or not a reader? (If the student read less than five words correctly within the first 30 seconds, THEY WERE NOT A READER).

Note: Author's translation of reading comprehension passage from Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)

Reading Comprehension Questions

Reading comprehension question	Correct answer
1. Can you retell the content of the passage?	Rio and his family pick up Grandpa and Grandma from the station, they head to Rio's home, Rio and his family feel happy because of Grandpa and Grandma's arrival, Grandpa and Grandma brought gifts for Rio and his younger sibling
2. Who arrived?	Grandpa and Grandma
3. Where did Rio and his family pick up Grandpa and Grandma?	The station
4. With whom did Rio go to the station?	His father, mother, and younger sibling

5. What did Grandpa and Grandma do when they met their grandchildren?	Hug them
6. What feeling did every family member feel when they all got together?	Happiness
7. What gift did Rio receive from Grandpa and Grandma?	A backpack
8. Why did Rio's family feel happy when they all got together?	Because Grandpa and Grandma don't live with them, they don't meet all the time, it has been a long time since they have met Grandpa and Grandma.
9. Why did Grandpa and Grandma give gifts to Rio and his younger sibling?	Grandpa and Grandma love them
10. If you do not live with your Grandpa and Grandma, what would you feel when you meet them? Why would you feel that way?	Correct answer if student answers in agreement or disagreement with explanation that uses all the references from the story

Note: Author's translation of the reading comprehension questions from Sample Indonesian Literacy Boost Assessment (2016)