



Rethinking Inclusive City Development Amid COVID-19: The Indonesian Context

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Abstract. *Currently, cities all over the world are experiencing pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including cities in Indonesia. Studies show that the number of poor has been increasing since the spread of COVID-19, mostly in urban areas. Recent news indicates that the pandemic has the potential to add millions of new urban poor due to the threat of future layoffs faced by low-income people. The current condition in Indonesia's urban areas indicates exclusion of the urban poor, which underlines the need for inclusive city development. Indeed, this crisis exposes the exclusion of vulnerable people, reveals deep inequalities in society and exacerbates the existing inequality among the Indonesian population. Because of the ongoing disruptions that arise in urban areas, the COVID-19 pandemic offers the opportunity to rethink the importance of inclusive city development so that they may become thriving cities for all. Besides, this study also argues that only inclusive cities can grow and thrive under all circumstances and future challenges. This paper discusses how to transform challenges amid COVID-19 to opportunities that can promote inclusive city development.*

Keywords. *inclusive city, city development, covid-19, Indonesia.*

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Abstrak. *Saat ini, kota-kota di seluruh dunia sedang mengalami tekanan akibat pandemi COVID-19, termasuk kota-kota di Indonesia. Studi menunjukkan bahwa jumlah penduduk miskin terus meningkat sejak penyebaran COVID-19 yang umumnya terjadi di wilayah perkotaan. Berita terbaru menunjukkan bahwa pandemi berpotensi menambah jutaan orang miskin baru di perkotaan akibat ancaman PHK di masa depan yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat berpenghasilan rendah. Kondisi perkotaan di Indonesia saat ini menunjukkan eksklusivitas dari kaum miskin kota, yang menggarisbawahi perlunya pembangunan kota yang inklusif. Memang, krisis ini mengekspos pengucilan orang-orang yang rentan, mengungkapkan ketidaksetaraan yang ada di masyarakat dan memperburuk ketimpangan yang ada di antara penduduk Indonesia. Karena gangguan yang terus menerus muncul di perkotaan, pandemi COVID-19 menawarkan kesempatan untuk memikirkan kembali pentingnya pembangunan kota yang inklusif sehingga dapat menjadi kota yang berkembang untuk semua. Selain itu, studi ini juga berkesimpulan bahwa hanya kota inklusif yang dapat tumbuh dan berkembang dalam segala situasi dan tantangan di masa depan. Makalah ini membahas bagaimana mengubah tantangan di tengah COVID-19 menjadi peluang yang dapat mendorong pembangunan kota yang inklusif.*

Kata kunci. *kota inklusif, pengembangan kota, COVID-19, Indonesia.*

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Introduction

Currently, cities all over the world are experiencing pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and cities in Indonesia are no exception. Studies show that the number of poor has been increasing since the spread of COVID-19, mostly in urban areas (Corburn et al., 2020). Recent news indicates that the pandemic has the potential to add millions of new urban poor in Indonesia. This situation is triggered by the threat of future layoffs that are faced by low-income people due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In fact, before the COVID-19 outbreak, low-income people living in urban areas already had limited access to clean water and proper sanitation (Mozar and Sijbesma, 2010). Arguably, low-income people are the most vulnerable people since they have less access to pandemic response resources. Current conditions in Indonesia's urban areas indicate exclusion of the urban poor, which underlines the need for inclusive city development.

In the academic literature, the notion of the inclusive city has been a topic of lengthy discussions for the past two decades at least. Similarly, advocating inclusive city development has been one of the focuses of the United Nations (UN), as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 11, and in the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The latest SDG report (2020) states that before the COVID-19 outbreak many efforts in making sustainable urban development were unequal and slow (Leal Filho et al., 2020). Accordingly, since the COVID-19 pandemic, urban development has suffered a major setback. Indeed, this crisis exposes the exclusion of vulnerable people, reveals deep inequalities in society and exacerbates the existing inequality among the population.

Because of the ongoing disruptions that arise in urban areas, the COVID-19 pandemic offers the opportunity to rethink the importance of inclusive city development so that cities can thrive for all people. New policies issued in the midst of this pandemic show that the Indonesian government has begun to integrate health regulations into all policies regarding various aspects of life (Djalante et al., 2020). Consequently, this study proposes to see the challenges the pandemic poses as an opportunity to integrate various regulations that promote inclusive city development in all policies in response to COVID-19. The notion of the inclusive city emphasizes the empowerment of all its inhabitants (Gerometta et al., 2005). Thus, all city residents, notably low-income people and the urban poor, should have the same access to various opportunities in order to improve their welfare as well as opportunities to shape and plan the city they live in. Furthermore, this study also argues that only inclusive cities can grow and thrive under all circumstances and future challenges.

This paper discusses how to transform challenges amid COVID-19 into opportunities to promote inclusive city development. This study was carried out by examining the three dimensions of the inclusive city, namely the spatial dimension, the social dimension, and the economic dimension, within the context of Indonesia. The components within each dimension were studied to find out the challenges in implementing inclusive city development, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, relevant recommendations are given so that challenges can be transformed into opportunities that encourage and empower all people without exception to participate in all aspects of life in urban areas.

Urbanization and the Concept of the Inclusive City

Initially, the importance of thinking about inclusive city development was driven by accelerating urbanization. Urbanization is an irrepressible and unstoppable process given that

more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas today (Hoornweg and Pope, 2017). In addition, studies have shown that in 2050, two-thirds of the world's population which is around 8 billion people, will live in urban areas (Hoornweg and Pope, 2017; Rémillard-Boilard, 2018). Today, urban areas throughout the world accommodate 70 percent of the world's economic activity. Urbanization is primarily driven by the intention of people to get a better life and improve their standard of living since urban areas promise better and more diverse employment opportunities. Rapid urbanization also encourages high urban density, which cuts many transaction expenses on infrastructure and services while at the same time producing significant economic growth (Lewis, 2014). Urban areas contribute more than 70 percent of global GDP and therefore urbanization helps to reduce poverty and provide opportunities for people to increase their incomes (Zhang, 2016). However, urbanization, which is acknowledged as a positive force to increase economic growth, turns out raise the poverty rate in urban areas (Ravallion, 2002). The availability and the provision of infrastructure and services apparently have not followed the rapid pace of urbanization. The unavailability of affordable land in locations close to the place where the urban poor get their income forces them to live in informal settlements that are not healthy and safe, with inadequate infrastructure and services as well (Jones, 2017). Limited access, rights, and opportunities for people who are marginalized lead to high social disparities in urban areas (Baker and Gadgil, 2017). Crime and violence arise as a result of increasing inequality in terms of access, rights, and opportunities (Baker and Gadgil, 2017). This situation calls for inclusion in urban areas.

Essentially, an inclusive city is a city with safe access to healthy public spaces and affordable public transportation for everyone, as well as a place where people are able to cycle and walk safely and comfortably (Schreiber and Carius, 2016; Baker and Gadgil, 2017). An inclusive city is friendly to everyone in it. However, the inclusive city is not only about access; it gives certainty to its inhabitants to be accommodated, respected and given equal opportunity, regardless of their age, ethnicity, beliefs, abilities, income, and gender (Gerometta et al., 2005; Schreiber and Carius, 2016; Baker and Gadgil, 2017). The main idea of the inclusive city encourages every individual within society without exception to be able to coexist with one another, with each individual having the same opportunity to participate in every aspect of life in the community (Schreiber and Carius, 2016). It accommodates all interests and all differences. In the definition of the inclusive city, its inhabitants or citizens are the central focus. An inclusive city provides equal political opportunities to its people and cares about groups of people who are categorized as poor. Inclusive cities listen to the voices of the urban poor, involve them in city planning and first of all provide the basic infrastructure and services such as affordable housing, clean water, and electricity (Shah et al., 2015; Baker and Gadgil, 2017). They provide opportunities for people who are blind, deaf, and disabled within the category of the urban poor to be able to move about independently (Prince, 2008; Alessandria, 2016). In the urban poor discourse, people with a disability cannot be ignored because the number of people with disabilities is significant (Yeo, 2001). Poverty and disability are inseparable, poverty cannot be said to come to an end if people with a disability do not enjoy the same rights as non-disabled people. It can be argued that poverty creates disability and vice versa. Eventually, an inclusive city provides a great opportunity for marginalized people to improve their welfare. An inclusive city is a city that everyone aspires to, but up to now this concept has only been fought for by a small number of people (Gerometta et al., 2005). The inclusive city should not be pursued by only a few people but by all people.

The Three Dimensions of the Inclusive City Approach

Studies and literature on inclusion within urban areas in response to rapid urbanization imply that the current condition of urban areas is in contrast to the notion of the inclusive city. It is no secret that certain people or groups of people within non-inclusive urban areas are fragmented, segregated and excluded, driven by large disparities (Klaufus et al., 2017). The World Bank explains that these disparities are reflected in three dimensions in urban life, namely spatial, social, and economic (Shah et al., 2015). In terms of the spatial dimension, large disparities create spatial segregation that occurs as a result of low-income people being spatially grouped and living together in informal settlements (Van Eijk, 2010; Shah et al., 2015). Informal settlements that are found in different parts of the world show similar living conditions that pose risks to the safety and health of people who live there. In terms of the social dimension, social exclusion of marginalized people on the basis of social class, status, and ability often force them to give up their rights to participate in many opportunities that could improve their welfare within urban areas (Shah et al., 2015; Klaufus et al., 2017). In terms of the economic dimension, marginalized groups of people often work in informal jobs with low and unstable income (Shah et al., 2015; Klaufus et al., 2017). Meanwhile, their access to financial assistance is often hampered by stable and regular income requirements (Jones, 2017). These unfavorable conditions ultimately make the urban poor more marginalized and vulnerable.

Accordingly, in developing a sustainable inclusive city, a three-dimensions approach must be considered. In terms of the spatial dimension, an inclusive city must be able to provide decent housing, infrastructure and basic services such as clean water and adequate sanitation for all its citizens and the urban poor in particular (Baker and Gadgil, 2017). It can be argued that provisions related to the spatial dimension are the most basic requirement that should be obtained by every member of society in urban areas. In terms of the social dimension, an inclusive city assures the basic rights of its people without exception to be able to participate in social and political activities in daily life (Shah et al., 2015; Baker and Gadgil, 2017). With this certainty, marginalized people will have the opportunity to improve their lives. In terms of the economic dimension, an inclusive city ensures the availability of employment for all its people. Therefore, in addition to financial assistance, the urban poor also need to be given more access to training and education that will equip them to work in industries located within urban areas (Lewis, 2014; Baker and Gadgil, 2017). Inclusive cities are not just cities with high economic growth; all inhabitants can reap the benefits of economic growth. These three dimensions are complementary to each other, which means in developing an inclusive city it is necessary to look at all three dimensions simultaneously. Thus, the challenges faced by the urban poor in receiving the benefits of urbanization can be overcome by making cities more inclusive.

The context of Indonesia

Currently, 55% of the Indonesian population live in urban areas. In 2025, it is estimated that the population of urban areas in Indonesia will reach 70% of the total population (Firman, 2016). This high level of urbanization in Indonesia occurs not only due to the migration of people from rural areas to urban areas but also due to rural areas changing to urban areas (regional enlargement/reclassification) arising from the growth of industrial areas and settlements in rural areas (Wilonoyudho et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the growth of urban areas in Indonesia leads to various issues that are mainly related to the issue of inequality, such as urban poverty due to lack of access to opportunities in terms of the spatial, social and economic dimensions in urban areas (Goldblum and Wong, 2000). Initially, urbanization in Indonesia was expected to bring economic growth and prosperity to people living in urban areas, but rapid urbanization also

raised disparities. This emphasizes the importance of the notion of inclusive city development in managing urbanization in Indonesia.

Method

The desk study approach was used in carrying out this research. This approach provides the opportunity to explore various studies that have been conducted on certain themes. In this study, the keywords used in gathering data and information includes 'the inclusive city approach', 'urbanization', 'Indonesia', and 'COVID-19'. Data analysis was conducted using an inductive approach to provide more comprehensive conclusions with regard to various details that were studied.

Findings: Challenges in Indonesia Context Amid COVID-19

The following are the results of exploring the challenges faced in urban areas in Indonesia in creating an inclusive city amid COVID-19. The findings are categorized into three dimensions, namely the spatial, social, and economic dimensions.

Spatial Dimension

Access to a Decent Living

According to the survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik – BPS*) in 2019, 28.49% of urban households in Indonesia have less than 8 m² area per person in their house, with a minimum of four people per household (BPS, 2019). This underlines the issue of overpopulation in Indonesian cities, which has resulted in the creation of informal urban settlements by low-income people, also known as urban kampungs (urban villages). By its definition, an urban kampung is self-help housing with an informal character, often built on illegal land, built using temporary materials, and with a lack of basic infrastructure such as sanitation and water provision (Nurdiansyah, 2018). Because of the pandemic, the vulnerability of people living in urban informal settlements has increased (UN, 2020; Schmidt-Sane et al., 2020). People living in urban kampungs are at a high risk of COVID-19 transmission due to their dense population and limitations in maintaining physical distancing. The protocol of physical distancing is almost impossible to implement in such congested living spaces (Bou Karim et al., 2020). Massive testing in densely populated informal settlements has been targeted for the near future. A lack of proper ventilation, water and sanitation facilities add further to the vulnerability of the urban poor during the pandemic (Bou Karim et al., 2020).

Access to Sanitation

Before the pandemic there was still a percentage of people living with limited sanitation facilities in urban areas. According to a BPS survey conducted in September 2019, 19.52% of urban households in Indonesia do not have access to proper sanitation facilities (BPS, 2019). Moreover, 24.89% of poor households in urban areas do not have private toilets (BPS, 2019); they share one toilet with other households or use a public facility for bathing and washing (Bou Karim et al., 2020). Amid the limited access to sanitation facilities, it becomes challenging to maintain the protocols of hand-washing for COVID-19 prevention. By having to share these facilities across a community of over approximately 20 families, the urban poor becomes more prone to transmission if one person in the community gets infected by the COVID-19 virus

(Bou Karim et al., 2020). Consequently, isolation cannot be done in individual houses but only at the village level due to the nature of sharing amenities such as communal bathing and public toilets within the kampung. Moreover, the government has not implemented a contextual approach to handle the vulnerabilities with regard to limited hand-washing facilities. It is local leaders who take the initiative to provide additional hand-washing basins for the community (Bou Karim et al., 2020).

Access to Water

Before the pandemic, access to clean water was already a huge challenge for many low-income people in urban areas. According to the BPS survey conducted in September 2019, 18.45% of urban households in Indonesia did not have access to improved drinking water source services (BPS, 2019). The problem of water pollution from industrial and household wastes is a hindrance to supplying potable water in cities. In general, appropriate sources of clean water in Indonesia are bottled water, refilled water, piped water, pumped wells, protected wells, and water springs with minimal 10 meter distance from waste collection points (BPS, 2019). However, there are still 33.41% of poor households in urban areas that rely on other water sources outside of the appropriate sources mentioned (BPS, 2019). Arguably, the urban poor have no direct access to clean water. The lack of adequate water infrastructure is further detrimental to the urban poor living in informal settlements during the pandemic. They rely heavily on the distribution of water gallons through traveling vendors who mostly do not adhere to health protocols such as wearing masks (Bou Karim et al., 2020). Consequently, women who normally buy water gallons from vendors are exposed to an added transmission risk (Bou Karim et al., 2020). Moreover, the distribution of water, food and other necessities have to be very localized at the kampung scale in the case of isolation.

Access to Affordable Public Transportation

Affordable means of urban transportation are important for low-income people. For instance, in Jakarta, public transportation is an important urban infrastructure that is aimed to cater to a large population at an affordable price. According to studies in 2017, 20% of users of Jakarta's commuter lines had an income below the minimal paid wage in that year (Nazwirman, 2017). However, the pandemic has left the urban poor more vulnerable concerning urban transportation. Whereas 82% of people in Indonesia are already aware of the danger of using public transportation during the pandemic due to rapid transmission (BPS, 2020), the urban poor have limited or even no choice in mobility mode and depend largely on public transportation.

Due to their limited income, the urban poor can be categorized as 'captive riders' in contrast to 'choice riders' who have the option of commuting using private vehicles, i.e. middle- and upper-class people (Zhao et al., 2014). Arguably, the urban poor still have to take public transportation to commute to work due to economic pressure in the midst of the threat of the deadly virus. Moreover, in the case of the satellite cities around Jakarta, the commuter line plays a significant role for low-income people. Many people live in peri-urban areas such as Bekasi or Depok and commute using the commuter line to go to their work in Jakarta. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, there was a huge drop in the number of users. However, although there is an obvious reluctance towards public transportation, low-income people are captive to the vulnerability posed by using public transportation.

Social Dimension

Local Empowerment

In COVID-19 prevention, the method of engagement with the low-income community relies heavily on local empowerment and participative planning between the government and local communities. It can be said that local empowerment is an effort by multiple actors in developing local communities to act, choose and be part of the decision-making process, especially on things that involve the lives of the community. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Health, working together with the local government, has encouraged local empowerment in urban kampung units by distributing a COVID-19 prevention manual (Kemenkes RI, 2020). It provides clear guidelines and step-by-step protocols involving taking the community's health information, analyzing factors that may cause transmission, socialization and focus group discussions, organizing local programs, and running the programs. Every person in the community has an indispensable role and responsibilities, including the neighborhood leader, religious leaders, local health facilities, police and the whole society. Additionally, certain people may be appointed or become volunteers as team leaders to hold responsibility in communication, health, operational, logistics and security for COVID-19 prevention in urban kampungs (Pemda DIY, 2020).

Communication. Furthermore

The method of communicating the urgency of the pandemic to low-income groups relies heavily on two-way conversations among them. Mostly, the urban poor have limitations in understanding highly technical terms, which makes them prone to the spread of hoaxes, poor access to digital-platformed information, and a language barrier toward international sources (Schmidt-Sane, et al., 2020; Wilkinson, 2020). Consequently, low-income communities rely on two-way dialogue through local focus group discussions and one-to-one and door-to-door methods to disseminate information on COVID-19 preventive actions (Schmidt-Sane, et al., 2020; Tunda et al., 2020; Wilkinson, 2020). It is common practice in kampungs to have activists voluntarily speak to each person about the danger of COVID-19 and the urgency to start implementing health protocols. It signifies the unique and inclusive approach required in communicating with low-income people.

Economic Dimension

Impact on Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises

Based on statistics from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises from 2018, the number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) accounted for 99.99% of the total number of businesses in Indonesia (*Kemenkop dan UKM*, 2018). Moreover, SMEs provided jobs for 97% (116.978.631 people) of the total number of people employed in businesses nationwide (*Kemenkop dan UKM*, 2018). Therefore, UMKM is a significant contributor to the provision of job opportunities to society in Indonesia. However, the pandemic has hit SMEs severely. According to a survey conducted by Bank Indonesia (BI), nearly 72% of SMEs have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, since the large-scale social restriction (PSBB) policy has been implemented, the income of many street hawkers in major metropolitan urban areas was significantly reduced because they rely heavily on manual transactions. Arguably, workers in the informal sector face the greatest threat due to reduced sales, payment difficulties, goods distribution issues and problems in obtaining raw materials.

Additionally, minimal knowledge of running a business digitally also adds to their challenges to adapt.

The Emergence of the New Urban Poor

Before the pandemic, the poverty rate in Indonesia showed a steady decline from 1999 to 2019 (BPS, 2019). However, the pandemic has broken the declining trend of poverty in Indonesia, to an increase for the first time since March 2015 based on a survey conducted by BPS (BPS, 2019). Particularly cities contribute significantly to the increase of the poor. This means there are more new urban poor due to pandemic unemployment, which may further limit access of them and their families to decent living conditions, clean water and proper sanitation. Moreover, their children are more likely to suffer from stunting. It can be argued that the pandemic exacerbates inequality, economic disparities and potentially leads to higher crime rates.

Rethinking Future Inclusive City Development in Indonesia

The Spatial Dimension: Accessibility to Basic Needs

Based on these findings it can be argued that all basic needs, such as decent living conditions, clean water, proper sanitation and affordable transportation, in urban areas are not enjoyed equally by all people. The most burdened by the pandemic are the urban poor. If the living conditions of the urban poor are not improved, they will face a detrimental impact. It is difficult to improve their welfare if their basic needs are not met. Therefore, it is necessary to develop multiple opportunities to realize an inclusive city. In terms of the provision of decent living conditions and accessibility to basic needs it is necessary to think about solutions that can be applied as quick responses as well as about solutions for the long run. For quick responses, the government in partnership with private companies (as part of their corporate social responsibility) should provide infrastructure and services that can be used directly by the urban poor amid the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the provision of pedal-operated hand-washing stations. In terms of the long run, the government needs to involve the people who live in informal settlements to improve their welfare by giving training and education on everyday healthy living that will form healthy behavior. Often, the urban poor are not well informed regarding the importance of healthy behavior besides healthy living conditions, partly due to their inadequacy to afford a decent living. Therefore it is necessary to encourage and empower them through training on maintaining a healthy and clean daily life that fits their budget.

Regarding public transportation, the urban poor lack protective clothing because they cannot afford it. The government should provide basic kits for COVID-19 protection such as face masks and hand sanitizers for low-income people for their safety in using public transportation. The distribution of these basic kits needs to be organized and well-distributed in urban informal settlements. When in stations and inside public transportation, monitoring should be done to ensure obedience to health protocols such as maintaining physical distancing and wearing the minimum protective clothing to minimize the transmission risk when using public transportation. At the same time, the government is required to ensure the operational requirements for public transportation considering the reduced capacity. The current initiatives to provide additional and free shuttle buses to relieve the congestion in train stations should be followed by constant monitoring to ensure that the capacity is adequate. Alternatively, it is also beneficial to promote active transport or non-motorized modes such as walking or cycling in urban areas, which are more affordable for the urban poor. Thus, the government needs to provide the infrastructure for promoting active transport in the form of safe and comfortable

pedestrian paths and cycling lanes. These efforts are also aimed at achieving a more inclusive city that is sustainable in the long term.

The Social Dimension: Local Empowerment

In terms of the social dimension, the government needs to foster local empowerment within urban informal settlements amid COVID-19. A quick response can be to encourage the people who live in informal settlements to watch each other (natural surveillance) to see whether everyone follows the health protocols and to report any violation to the authorities. This idea is also supported by the strong sense of community that is common in urban kampungs, which highlights the benefits of shared local wisdom and cultural values that can prevent the spread of the virus. The cultural value such as *gotong-royong* that already exists within the Indonesian community also helps to form a cohesive social group, which leads to greater compliance with health protocols. For example, based on a study of an urban neighborhood in Semarang, people in strong community groups help to remind each other to obey the health and safety protocols, help each other in delivering logistics and help to provide conducive places for quarantining within the kampung (Widiuseno and Sudarsih, 2020). Additionally, they implemented the trilogy of leadership in education from the national activist Ki Hadjar Dewantara as part of COVID-19 education (Widiuseno and Sudarsih, 2020). It emphasizes local leaders as role models, motivators and facilitators of the community's aspirations. Arguably, integrating local wisdom and cultural values in mitigating risks can foster an inclusive urban neighborhood in the long run.

Economic Dimension: Job Opportunities

In terms of the economic dimension, a quick response from the government includes providing training and directing SMEs to produce basic protective equipment such as masks, face shields, hand sanitizers and gloves that are easy to make and in high demand during the pandemic. This is done to help sustain their economy at least during the pandemic. In the long run, the government needs to give financial assistance without complicated requirements for the urban poor. Moreover, any financial assistance needs to be evenly distributed across informal settlements within urban areas in Indonesia. Opportunities given to the urban poor to start small businesses during this time is pushing forward a more inclusive city. Given that the pandemic has limited people in doing conventional transactions (cash-in-hand), it is necessary for the government to organize training and support the infrastructure for the urban poor to be able to migrate from conventional to digital means of doing business. On the other hand, the implementation of the government's strategy for boosting the economy such as the National Economic Recovery program (PEN) needs to be constantly monitored.

Conclusion

On top of urbanization challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has undisputedly intensified the need for inclusive cities. In the context of Indonesia, not only has rapid urbanization disadvantaged the urban poor, but the pandemic has put even more pressure on them to sustain themselves. Across three dimensions, heightened vulnerabilities and challenges that the pandemic has brought to low-income people are conveyed. In terms of the spatial dimension, the densely populated and inadequate informal settlements pose a great challenge in maintaining health protocols, which is crucial in preventing virus transmission. Additionally, the social dimension highlights the indispensable role of local participation and collaboration among all actors including the government and private enterprises to contain the spread of the virus.

Moreover, in the economic dimension, the severe drop of income experienced by SMEs and the emergence of the new urban poor signify the greater pressure low-income people are experiencing during the pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the opportunities for nurturing the inclusivity of cities.

Arguably, the pandemic offers an opportunity to improve urban inclusivity for vulnerable groups across the spatial, social and economic dimensions. Basic infrastructure in urban informal settlements such as hand-washing stations needs to be provided to adequately maintain safe and healthy living. Any efforts should seek the involvement of all actors within all layers of society, including the urban poor, to solve issues regarding inclusivity. Meanwhile, any government intervention should be well-monitored in its implementation to make sure of its effectiveness. Education on the notion of the inclusive city should be promoted so that all people may understand its importance. Lastly, rethinking the inclusive city should not only be a response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the notion of the inclusive city should continue to be developed when facing any other possible crisis in the future.

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