



The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Contribution to Reducing Health Problems in Indonesia in 2023

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Abstract. After the Covid-19 pandemic, global health became a crucial issue considered by many countries as the basis for domestic and international policies. Indonesia, as a developing country, still faces a variety of unresolved health problems. Various health collaborations have been carried out with countries such as the United States, China, and European nations. In addition, there is also cooperation with global philanthropic organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). BMGF is an international charitable foundation owned by the Gates family with the aim of helping developing countries address various health, poverty, and education issues. BMGF has collaborated with Indonesia since 2009 by providing support to improve the health system through international organizations, local NGOs, and educational and research institutions. The purpose of this study is to identify the various contributions provided by BMGF in reducing health problems in Indonesia. The method used is descriptive qualitative, utilizing secondary data collection through literature and related documents. Using the concepts of philanthropy and transnationalism, BMGF's contributions to Indonesia are manifested in the form of research studies related to telehealth, digitalization of health services, strengthening health policies, genomic surveillance of tuberculosis, and transformation of the national health system.

Keywords: Filantropi; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Health; Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Global Health, according to Kickbusch, is health issues that transcend national and governmental boundaries and require action by global forces that determine human health (1). Furthermore, Global Health is a health area that focuses on global health issues, requiring cross-national, multidisciplinary cooperation, including non-health sectors, aimed at achieving equality in the health status of the world's population. Health is one of the main pillars of human development and the welfare of a country. However, Indonesia still faces various health challenges, such as infectious diseases (e.g., tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS), malnutrition, and low immunization coverage. In a global context, international philanthropy has become an important actor in supporting health improvement efforts in developing countries. One of the main actors in this field is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), which has actively provided financial, technical, and strategic support to address health problems in various countries, including Indonesia. The BMGF has been involved in various health programs in Indonesia since the early 2000s, such as increasing immunization coverage, eradicating malaria, and strengthening the health system (2). The BMGF first arrived in Indonesia in 2009, when it provided US\$2,151,008 to the Alliance for Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Disease Threats in Asia Foundation for malaria eradication. According to the foundation's official database, the largest BMGF grant in Indonesia was received by PT. Bio Farma (Persero) through four programs, in 2014, 2018, 2019, and 2020 (3).

In 2014, US\$3,081,165 was provided to Bio Farma through its Global Development division for research purposes. In 2018, the Bill Gates Foundation again provided US\$300,000 in aid to Bio Farma through its Global Health division for vaccine development. A year later, Bio Farma received another US\$10,159,525 for polio eradication. Bio Farma received US\$45,758,365 in February 2020 for polio eradication efforts. The Indonesian FinTech Foundation (BMGF) also visited Indonesia to inject funds into the technology sector. The Indonesian FinTech Association (APHI) received US\$768,988 in 2019. The BMGF also visited Indonesia in June 2020, providing assistance to PT. Polinasi Iddea Investama, the parent company of the popular health app Halodoc (3).

International Relations studies examine the role of both state and philanthropic actors (non-state actors) in implementing various global health programs. The partnerships established can accelerate the success of these programs. The aim of this research is to examine BMGF's contribution to addressing health problems in Indonesia through various philanthropic programs and strategies in the health sector.

METHODS

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach and the research type is descriptive. The information collection strategy used is web-based exploration and report- or file-based research. The data analysis method consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The final process is the method of presenting the results of the data analysis. In this case, the data results in this study are explained descriptively and explanatory. These results are narrated for easier understanding. The data presentation related to this research will describe the data and analysis that have been conducted related to the case studied using descriptive explanatory explanations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. BMGF's Contribution to Reducing Health Problems in Indonesia in 2023

1. MoU with the Indonesian Ministry of Health regarding Cooperation on Health System Transformation

On June 8, 2023, the Indonesian Ministry of Health signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BMGF. The MoU outlines support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to the Ministry of Health in realizing health system transformation in Indonesia. This MoU encompasses three areas of cooperation: implementation of Indonesia's transformation agenda, development of broader-impact health policies, and support for Indonesian leadership in strengthening the health architecture in ASEAN. This collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will also involve stakeholders or supporting entities such as research and development institutions, universities, and the private sector (4).

2. Health Policy Strengthening Grant to Aceso Global

A grant worth USD 1,798,840 was awarded in June 2023 to Aceso Global, based in Washington, D.C., to support the Indonesian Ministry of Health in designing health policies, enhancing the technical capacity of senior policymakers, and initiating relevant policy activities. The program duration is approximately 18 months (5).

As part of its healthcare transformation agenda, the Indonesian Ministry of Health established the Health Policy Agency (BKPK) in late 2022 to strengthen policy capacity and support the decision-making process. The BKPK comprises the Health Service Financing, Service Delivery, Pharmacy and Human Resources, Global Health, and Coordination Secretariat. This BMGF-funded project aims to develop policy analysis capacity, strengthen management across the Agency, and provide advice on healthcare financing and delivery (6).

The specially designed Health Policy Training program is designed to engage staff tasked with analyzing policy issues and strengthen their ability to communicate policy issues and potential solutions. The long-term agenda for this two-year Indonesian project includes: developing a strategic direction with the BKPK management team; targeting technical input for the Center, particularly for Health Service Financing, as BKPK is the sole policy oversight body within the Ministry of Health; assistance in building effective business processes; and continuing to support the agency through the upcoming change of government (6).

3. Research Grant for Telehealth Studies to the Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI)

The Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI) was established in 2014 with the goal of strengthening primary health care in Indonesia. Over time, in addition to strengthening primary health care, CISDI has expanded its program reach to include disease prevention, research-based health policy advocacy, and health emergency response. CISDI was also developed as a non-profit organization that facilitates cross-sector collaborations to realize an equal, empowered, and prosperous Indonesian society within a healthy paradigm (7).

In July 2023, the BMGF awarded a 14-month grant of USD 203,694 to understand the enablers and barriers to the implementation of telehealth services in Indonesia. The study's research focused on primary healthcare (8). BMGF is also developing an investment plan for the digitalization of healthcare services in Indonesia. CISDI is trusted as a partner to undertake essential preparations before initiating interventions—including facilitating observations of the current situation in several provinces as a baseline assessment of public perceptions of digital healthcare services (9).

In addition, CISDI collaborated with Kore Global Consulting Inc., a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation partner, to understand how gender and inclusion can be integrated into the primary health care strategic framework, with a particular focus on investments in three regions: Indonesia, Nigeria, and Kenya. Together with KORE Global, CISDI analyzed gender-based challenges and barriers for communities accessing local health services (9).

4. Grant for Digitalization of Healthcare Operations to the Summit Institute for Development (SID)

The SUMMIT Institute for Development (SID), was officially established in 2007. The idea for the foundation came from several former members of the SUMMIT Senior Management Team. SUMMIT is a large-scale randomized controlled trial conducted in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, with the aim of reducing maternal and infant mortality in the context of routine prenatal care. SID's mission is to improve maternal and child health, with a vision of improvement through health research and human development at the community level through participatory evidence-based decision-making and sustainable action. Therefore, SID is expected to achieve improved health and human development at the community level through participatory evidence-based decision-making and sustainable action (10).

In July 2023, the BMGF awarded a grant of USD 2,780,213 for 18 months with the aim of promoting the digitization of primary healthcare services, increasing the visibility of operational data through a digital dashboard, and digitally transforming the health system (8). Grant, among other things, is realized in the form of a health application accessible to the public. The BUNDA App, developed by SID, is one innovation in the health sector that provides maternal and child services. SID is one of the NGO partners of the West Lombok Smart City, which also supports actions towards smart government, smart living, and a smart society (11).

5. Genomic Surveillance Grant to Padjadjaran University

A grant of USD 500,863 was awarded to academics at Padjadjaran University in November 2023 to establish a genomic surveillance system for drug-resistant tuberculosis in West Java and evaluate the feasibility of its routine use. The human tuberculosis genetic surveillance program is being implemented in collaboration with the West Java Provincial Health Laboratory. The program will last approximately 25 months (12). This ongoing research grant, which began in 2021, focuses on tuberculosis and the development of a new vaccine.

A subsequent grant, awarded in the same month, of USD 3,818,121, will last for 42 months to evaluate and demonstrate how new diagnostics for tuberculosis can improve tuberculosis care and control in Indonesia (12). Indonesia still has the second-highest number of tuberculosis cases in the world. One reason for this is the prevalence of inadequate housing. This situation creates a need for tuberculosis research in Indonesia. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation itself is interested in funding tuberculosis research, partly because this disease remains a global health priority for the WHO and is a key agenda item in the implementation of the SDGs (13).

6. Grants related to Indonesia's National Health System through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund

In November 2023, the BMGF funded health system transformation in Indonesia through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), managed by the World Bank. The total amount of funding is USD 4,999,456, with the general objective of contributing to Indonesia's health system transformation agenda by promoting a healthy, resilient, and productive health system (14).

Specifically, according to Annex I of the Administrative Agreement between the BMGF, the IBRD, and the International Development Association regarding the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Indonesia's Health Transformation, this funding aims to: strengthen primary and secondary health systems; provide technical assistance for epidemic preparedness, infectious disease preparedness, equitable health financing systems, capacity building for health care staff, data systems, and health digitalization; support program management, planning, communication, monitoring, evaluation, and funding activities for recipients (15).

NO	RECIPIENT/OBJECT	ASPECT	GRANT (USD)	TIME
1	Ministry of Health	MoU on Health System Transformation Cooperation	-	June
2	Aceso Global	Support for health policy	1.798.840	June
3	Center for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives (CISDI)	Telehealth Study Research	203.694	July
4	Summit Institute Development (SID)	Digitalization of Health Services	2.780.213	July
5	Universitas Padjajaran	Tuberculosis Genomic Surveillance	500.863	November
6	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)	National Health System Transformation	4.999.456	November

B. Implementation of the Concepts of Philanthropy and Transnationalism

This research uses the concepts of Philanthropy and Transnationalism as analytical tools. Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody define philanthropy as voluntary action for the common good (16). Essentially, philanthropy has two main components. The first is financial: philanthropy generally involves some element of financial transfer, such as donations of money to groups, causes, or individuals. The second is results-based: philanthropy seeks to use these funds to improve the welfare of others or advance the public good (17).

The MBGF philanthropic foundation has a financial component by providing financial donations to community groups through partnerships with governments, one of which is Indonesia. These donations are then used to support programs in health, education, poverty, the environment, and others. The programs aim to improve the quality of life of affected community groups.

In the health sector, MBGF has long-standing partnerships with the government and philanthropists in Indonesia, such as the Tanoto Foundation and the Tahir Foundation. This collaboration with several philanthropies is an effort to raise funds to address health issues in Indonesia. Most of this funding is implemented through research, training for individual and group stakeholders, vaccine development, digitalization of healthcare services, and so on. Meanwhile, collaboration with the government is carried out through relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, and others. This collaborative program with the government is realized through various forms of assistance, including policy mechanisms and related technical assistance.

Meanwhile, the concept of transnationalism, according to Ani Soetjipto, emphasizes how social, economic, cultural, and political interactions occur beyond national borders, involving individuals, groups, or organizations with cross-border connections (18). According to the concept of transnationalism, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) are categorized as organizations that transcend national borders. Likewise, philanthropic foundations are able to cross national borders and establish partnerships to improve the quality of life for vulnerable communities in poor and developing countries.

In carrying out its function as a philanthropy, BMGF has crossed borders with various countries, including Indonesia. The collaborations established by MBGF extend beyond state actors to philanthropists and other NGOs in the target countries. Various forms of support, both material and policy, have been implemented to reduce and ease the burden on countries in various aspects. By carrying out humanitarian missions encompassing health, technology digitalization, human resource development, and more, BMGF has successfully illustrated the international relationships between philanthropic actors across national borders. This demonstrates that international relations actors are not solely dominated by states, but also by philanthropic foundations as part of transnationalism.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the BMGF's contribution to Indonesia's health sector is highly beneficial, both in terms of funding and policy. The assistance provided is sustainable year after year and has proven to ease the burden on the country in achieving adequate public health. Therefore, external funding, whether through collaborative schemes with state or non-state actors, needs to be maximized, not only in the health sector but also in other areas such as education, employment, the environment, and so on.

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