



# Gender Equality for Women's Poverty Alleviation: Case Study in Maluku Province

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**Abstract.** Women's poverty is also associated with gender equality. Understanding gender is one step toward improving women's welfare to escape the poverty cycle. Ending poverty in all forms everywhere and gender-sensitive is the goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that must be realized by 2030. In 2022, Maluku was one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia, experiencing an increase in the poverty rate in female-headed households by 0.83 percentage points compared to 2021, apart from experiencing increasing poverty rates. Maluku still experiences obstacles to gender equality, as reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI). This research uses the literature review method. The data source of this research is secondary data. Secondary data in the form of scientific articles, thesis or dissertation, reports from trusted organizations and also from textbooks. Researchers used data analysis techniques in the form of descriptive analysis. This research found that limited access to resources makes women more vulnerable to poverty, a phenomenon known as the feminization of poverty. In the framework of intergenerational balance, it is necessary to change the paradigm that women, as a vulnerable group or recipient group, only need to be protected. However, women are equal parties and have valuable contributions to sustainable development. Sustainable development cannot be achieved if policymaking does not consider the community's needs. The role of the government is certainly needed to make gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies, and efforts to empower women must be carried out comprehensively in terms of both hard and soft skills to increase the social capital of women themselves.

**Keywords:** gender equality, women's poverty, feminization of poverty.

## 1 Introduction

The balanced participation of women and men in development indicates a region's success. This balance is because almost half the world's population is women, so equality between women and men is needed to achieve inclusive, sustainable development [1, 2]. Based on the 2020 Population Census, the female population is almost comparable to the male population, namely 136.66 million men and 133.54 million women [3]. These data indicate that gender equality is one of the main factors in achieving development in Indonesia. From an international perspective, gender is an

issue considered in almost all aspects of the SDGs. Concerning poverty, women's poverty is always associated with gender equality. Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and gender-sensitive is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which must be realized by 2030 [4].

In 2022, Maluku is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia, which experienced an increase in the poverty rate in female-headed households by 0.83 percentage points compared to 2021. Apart from experiencing the problem of increasing the poverty rate of women, Maluku is still experiencing obstacles in gender equality as reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Empowerment Index (IPG), where the HDI for women with a value of 68.65 is still lagging behind the male HDI, which has reached a value of 73.66 with a high status; then, for the Gender Empowerment Index, it has decreased compared to 2021, namely from 75.54 to 74.99 in 2022 [5, 6]. It shows that limited access to resources makes women more vulnerable to poverty, known as the feminization of poverty [7–11].

Various studies related to the poverty experienced by women show that gender inequality and women's limitations in access, control, participation, and economic benefits affect women's quality of life, which in turn makes women more vulnerable to poverty than men [12–15]. To support poverty alleviation efforts and the success of a region's development, understand gender equality, which is one of the steps to improve the welfare of women to escape the poverty cycle, which will eventually prosper the community. Efforts to alleviate poverty and fight for gender equality will not be maximized if they do not touch on the root of the problem, so this research will examine how gender equality is experienced by women in the aspects of education, health, economy, and politics in Maluku Province.

## 2 Research Methods

This research uses the literature review method. A literature review is research conducted by researchers by collecting data from various sources such as books, articles and other references related to research problems and objectives [16]. The data source of this research is secondary data. Secondary data is obtained not from direct observation but from research results conducted by previous researchers. The secondary data sources in question are scientific articles, theses or dissertations, reports from trusted organizations and also from textbooks [17]. The data collection method used by researchers in this study is the documentation method. The documentation method is a method of collecting data by searching, digging up and reviewing data from literature sources related to what is intended in the formulation of the problem. In this study, researchers used data analysis techniques in the form of descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis technique in this study is intended to see, review and describe with numbers the object under study as it is and draw conclusions about it according to the phenomena that appear at the time the research is conducted and then further explain the causes of the research results [16].

### 3 Results And Discussion

The achievement of gender equality and justice is an absence of discrimination against women and men that allows equal and equitable access, participation, and control over development and the benefits of development. Having access and participation means having the opportunity or control to use resources and having the authority to decide how to use and the results of these resources. Control means having full authority to decide on the use and results of resources to benefit from development [18, 19].

Gender equality is also associated with women's poverty. Women's poverty is known as the feminization of poverty. The feminization of poverty is the loss of opportunities and freedom of women in making life choices, thus making them unable to obtain educational facilities, basic economics, employment, security protection, and political involvement [8], [10], [11], [15].

#### 3.1 Gender Equality in Education and Women's Poverty

Although gender equality in education has improved at the national level in the last decade, the problem of gender equality or gender inequality in education is still faced by Maluku province, as shown by the achievement of the average length of schooling and educational status between women and men, where the achievement of the average length of schooling for women only reaches 9.95 years or only reaches grade IX at junior high school/equivalent, which is lower than that of men who have reached 10.11 years or reached grade X at high school/equivalent. Then, when viewed from the educational status in 2022 in Maluku Province (Table 1), the percentage of the female population aged five years and over who did not / have never been to school is higher than the male population, 3.36 percent compared to 3.05 percent, while for the status of education still in school, the percentage of the female population who are still in school for each level is generally lower than the male population [20].

**Table 1.** Percentage of Population aged five years and above by education status and sex in Maluku Province in 2022

Education Status	Percentage of Population		
	Male	Female	Total
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Never been to school	3.05	3.36	3.20
Still in School	31.43	30.40	30.92
Elementary school/equivalent	14.15	13.27	13.71
Junior high school/equivalent	6.00	5.55	5.78
High school/equivalent	6.47	6.03	6.25
Diploma to University	4.80	5.56	5.17
No longer attending school	65.52	66.24	65.88
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Some previous studies have tried to unravel the problem of gender equality in education that women still feel due to several reasons, such as Economic factors, when family economic limitations make parents give more opportunities to their sons for higher education; Factors of inadequate educational facilities, both in terms of the number of institutions and facilities; Social factors, including how parents nurture and raise children and the assumption that girls have sufficiently mastered the basics in education (no need for higher education); Factors of the division of roles according to gender, as determined by parents through different treatments since childhood in the family; Then, cultural factors and beliefs significantly influence parents' principles regarding their children's education. The term "female nature" and the patriarchal culture that still prevails in all provinces of Indonesia, the practice of early marriage, and the social norm of men as the breadwinner are challenges for women to pursue higher education. The education system in Indonesia is still gender biased, where at every level of education, such as curriculum, teaching materials, and materials that still contain gender-biased illustrations and language (men play a role in the public and women play a role in the domestic), or extracurricular activities at school often perpetuate gender stereotypes (for example, men as class leaders and women as secretaries or treasurers [21–23]).

The explanation above confirms that the problem of gender equality in the aspect of education is one of the factors that affect women's poverty [13, 24–27]. Women in developing countries generally bear too much of the burden of poverty, limited levels of education, scarcity of adequate employment opportunities, and minimal social mobility [28]. Many women experience poverty, although these conditions do not necessarily encourage women to engage in economic activities to release the poverty experienced; the low level of education and the increasingly narrow land tenure dominate the characteristics of women in poor households [14]. In addition, education also determines the mindset in making decisions in choosing a job or determining decisions on the education of children who are the future generation that can break the chain of poverty because the higher the education of the head of the household, the more they will understand the urgency of education in improving welfare [29, 30].

### **3.2 Gender Equality in Health and Women's Poverty**

The level of people's health affects their quality of life. In several studies, health complaint data is used as an indicator to see gender equality issues in the health sector [1, 31, 32]. The Central Bureau of Statistics Indonesia defines health complaints as disturbances to physical conditions (shortness of breath, heat, diarrhea, headaches, chronic and acute illnesses, health problems due to accidents) or mental (depression, anxiety, fear, trauma, schizophrenia), including due to accidents or other things that disrupt daily activities. The percentage of the population who have health complaints in Maluku Province shows that the percentage of women who have health complaints is 17.08 percent higher than the male health complaint rate of 14.15 percent, and further that the morbidity rate of the female population is higher at 8.18 percent compared to men at 6.88 percent [20].

In addition to the number of health complaints that describe public health, maternal mortality, and stunting are also indicators of gender equality issues related to poverty. The high maternal mortality rate and stunting rate illustrate that this problem must be a concern because the high maternal mortality rate and stunting are problems that will be borne throughout the child's life and, at a macro level, can potentially affect the quality of human resources in the future. Based on the Maluku Province BPS report, the maternal mortality rate was 261 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is still far from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target for 2030 of 70 deaths per 100,000 [33]. According to research from the Study of the Nutritional Status of Toddlers in Indonesia (SSGBI) in 2022, the prevalence of stunting in Maluku province is still relatively high at 26.1 percent, which exceeds the threshold set by the WHO of 20 percent [34].

Several studies explain factors that cause gender equality problems in the health sector, namely related to culture or gender norms in the family, where the culture still distinguishes in terms of feeding, which makes women get less nutritional intake; lack of knowledge about pregnancy planning and adequate health information and services, the weak position of women in decision making related to the utilization of maternal health services, the assumption in the community that the health of pregnant women, infants, and the fulfillment of toddler nutrition is the responsibility of women, even though these problems are the shared responsibility of men, families, and communities [35, 36].

Based on this explanation, the issue of gender equality in the health sector must still be a concern for many parties because this is in line with Chambers' (1983) theory regarding the poverty trap, which explains that the poverty problems experienced by households poverty are not only dominated by elements of material deprivation but there are also other elements in their poverty, namely elements of physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability and helplessness, which of course afflict households poverty with different levels of suffering from one another [37]. One aspect that affects poverty is the health of an area, or it can be said the other way around, because poverty is the cause of poor health and barriers to accessing the health facilities needed [38, 39].

### **3.3 Gender Equality in the Economy Employment and Women's Poverty**

Gender equality issues in labor access reflect the extent to which a country provides equal employment opportunities between women and men. Indicators of access to the labor market include the labor force participation rate. The labor force participation rate measures the population's opportunity to access the existing labor market. Other indicators are the working population's percentage and the working population's ratio to the total population. According to BPS, in Maluku Province, there is a problem of gender equality in the labor force participation rate between men and women; the labor force participation rate of males is 78.33 percent, which is higher than that of females, 52.47 percent. Categories employment status is formal and informal activities. People who work in formal activities include those with the status of business assisted by permanent/paid labor and laborers/employees/employees and the others as informal activities. Based on the employment status, the male population works more

in formal activities at 37.78 percent, and the female population works more in informal activities, totaling 203,472 people (65.01%) with the employment status as family workers/unpaid at 25.58 percent [40].

Several factors influenced the relatively low participation of women in the economy and employment, including (i) socio-cultural norms regarding working women and traditional gender roles, (ii) women's double burden in the family (productive and reproductive), (iii) unfavorable policies, regulations, and conditions in the workplace as well as discrimination starting from the time of acceptance, during work, and post-employment; (iv) there are still violations of workers' rights, especially women in the workplace (violence and sexual harassment) [2, 28, 41].

Problems in this aspect of employment indicate that the worsening economic conditions will lead to poor women [12, 14]. Birdshal and McGreevey (1983) stated the burden of women's poverty because of the dual role of housekeeper and breadwinner for the family. Women are responsible for caring for children, preparing food, fetching water and firewood, washing clothes, cleaning the house, and managing household finances, which absorb most of their time. However, this work is often not considered "work," so it is also not counted in the "production" of a household. The assumption is that a woman's income is only an "addition" to the husband's income. There is a link between women and poverty, where patriarchal culture has indirectly imposed restrictions on women, and equality issues have contributed to women's close identity with poverty [42].

Women's and men's experiences of poverty are different, and women are far more disadvantaged than men in accessing economic resources as a doorway to eliminating various injustices in society. Although more women are engaged in income-generating or productive activities, which have the potential to reduce poverty, the fact that they generally have to combine productive activities with reproductive work makes them poorer. Heavy workloads and the inability to adequately rest and recuperate can have negative implications on health and, in turn, impact poverty. It makes female-headed households poorer than males [8, 15, 43, 44].

### **3.4 Gender Equality in Politics and Women's Poverty**

Law Indonesia No. 7/2017 on Elections, which requires women's representation of at least 30 percent, is the government's effort to encourage women's political involvement. Although these efforts continue to be made and have been supported by various policies, women's representation still needs to reach its target [2]. Show in Maluku Province, where the proportion of women in parliament in 2022 was only 22.22%. The inherent patriarchal culture in Indonesia, especially in Maluku, is an external factor that makes women feel discriminated against and less trusted to participate in politics. As for internal factors, namely the limited education of women, which makes the quality of women still lacking and the lack of interest of women who want to engage in politics [45–47].

The involvement of women in politics is closely related to poverty, and the level of representation of women in political institutions has a significant influence on the quality of life of women because the quality of life of women cannot be separated

from public policies made by political institutions and is closely related to the budget to implement them. With the lack of government sensitivity to gender issues, if women do not participate in determining policies to improve welfare, it is very likely that women's needs will be placed on a low-priority scale [45, 48].

### **3.5 Government's Role**

The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia guarantees the right of every citizen to enjoy and participate in development in various fields. Resolving poverty issues can begin with attention to gender equality in Maluku Province. Presidential Instruction No.9/2000 on gender mainstreaming is a regulation every region must implement. Upstream The problem of gender equality is the insensitivity of society to gender issues and social norms, especially the solid patriarchal culture, which is one of the obstacles to women's progress both in the domestic and public spheres; changing social norms can be started from the formation of norms in family education and care, as well as formal and non-formal education, then government intervention in increasing public understanding of gender through socialization in families, workplaces, organizations, and social networks.

Empowerment is a government policy to increase women's capacity for both hard and soft skills, but increasing knowledge through empowerment is not enough if it is not accompanied by providing access to women to participate, control, and make decisions in development and making people aware of the importance of gender equality in every aspect of development.

Gender equality through women's empowerment has a significant impact on poverty reduction. The local government has various regulations, policies, and commitments to support women's empowerment programs, but this has yet to run optimally. Budgeting is one of the obstacles encountered, so the various empowerment programs prepared have yet to run optimally. Based on the Ministry of Finance report, the Gender Responsive Budget (ARG) decreased from 2019-2021 due to the lack of awareness of Ministries and Institutions in ARG budget tagging [2]. Gender-responsive budgeting is a fiscal approach to reduce inequality and promote economic growth and equitable development [49].

In addition to the budget, monitoring and evaluation related to the needs related to the implementation of gender mainstreaming (PUG) must be carried out systematically, integratively, and implementatively in order to encourage faster efforts to realize gender equality. Further expanding partnerships with Integration and collaboration with various groups of civil organizations and other parties in international communities must be carried out by policymakers to improve gender equality [50].

## **4 Conclusions**

Limited access to resources makes women more vulnerable to poverty, a phenomenon known as the feminization of poverty. In the framework of intergenerational balance, it is necessary to change the paradigm that women are vulnerable or recipient groups

that only need protection. However, women are equal parties and have valuable contributions to sustainable development. Increasing women's participation in gender equality in various aspects of life will improve the welfare of women and society in general. Gender equality is closely related to poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

Sustainable development will only be achieved if policy-making considers the community's needs. The role of the government is certainly needed to make gender-responsive poverty alleviation policies through women's empowerment. Efforts to empower women must be carried out optimally and comprehensively both in terms of hard skills and soft skills to increase the social capital of women themselves, then pay attention to supervision through systematic and integrated monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of women's empowerment and of course collaborate with various parties in increasing women's empowerment.

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