

Learning centers help children reach their dreams

By Dede Sudono, Programme Officer for Child Labour and Education and Gita Lingga, Communications Officer of ILO Jakarta. (Jakarta, Indonesia): Dozens of children packed inside a small house in Tugu Utara Village, North Jakarta, to enthusiastically watch a big hit movie titled *Meraih Mimpi* (Reaching dreams). Their eyes were glued to the screen, enjoying every scene of this inspiring film about believing in and reaching your dreams. After watching the movie, the children gathered together to talk about their own dreams and how they could also reach their dreams if they believed in themselves.

This special activity was conducted by the Children Learning Centre managed by Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa (YCAB). The Centre targets children from disadvantaged families in surrounding areas. "Screening educational movies for children is one of our regular programmes to attract children and parents to come to the center," said Stevens Onsoe, Programme Manager of YCAB. "We also have many other educational programmes to help children use their spare time for educational and recreational activities rather than roam around on the street." As well as *Meraih Mimpi*, the Centre has also screened other inspiring movies such as *Laskar Pelangi* and *Garuda di Dadaku*.

YCAB is an independent non-profit institution established in August 1999. Its three strategic pillars are as follows: healthy lifestyle (drugs prevention and education for in-school children); rumah belajar (the learning house for drop-outs and street children); and community development. With support from the ILO through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Tugu Utara Learning Centre began its operations in March 2009 and has delivered various education-related services such as a remedial program, life skills education, and provides facilities for art and creative activities.

"We are basically trying to move the playing ground from the streets to this center so that we can easily monitor the children. Those who do not appear for a few days will receive home and school visits from our field workers. We also regularly hold meetings with their parents, to inform them of the progress achieved by their children as well as to raise their awareness about various child-related issues, such as children's rights, child labour and so forth," explained Stevens.

To date, the Centre has been able to attract more than 150 school children. These children mainly come from families who are currently receiving the Government's conditional cash transfer programme (PKH). Through this programme, the Government of Indonesia transfers a certain amount of money to very poor households and requires the receiving households to meet certain conditions, including keeping children in education (formal or non formal) or sending children who have dropped-out, back to school.

Asih Susanti, a 16 year-old, joined the remedial programme at the Centre in October 2009. Recently, she has graduated from Junior High School (in January 2010) with a flying colors. "I dropped out from junior high because I did not like my previous school. I was very fortunate that the center found me so I could continue my study and earn my junior high diploma. I never thought I would," she said cheerfully.

The ILO-IPEC has also supported a similar learning centre in Lagoa Village, Koja sub-District, which is managed by Yayasan Sekolah Rakyat Indonesia (YSRI). To reach families under the PKH programme, the ILO-IPEC has also supported the Women's Human Resources Development Centre (PPSW) to economically empower the families through credit unions and to improve their understanding of good parenting practices. In addition, the ILO-IPEC has supported efforts to provide educational services to almost 5,000 children from families under the PKH Programme in West Java (Sukabumi, Cianjur and Bandung Barat Districts) and in East Java (Jember District). (*)