

Laidlaw Leadership in Action
Volunteering Report
Summer 2025

Organisation: PAUD PETA Jakarta (PETA Kindergarten)
Location: Jakarta, Indonesia
Dates: 18 August – 24 September 2025
Programme: 6-Week Leadership in Action (Laidlaw Scholars)

Introduction



Entrance of the school.

The long corridor serves as a parking space for motorcycles of parents picking up their children. It is large enough for once car but typically serves as a parking space for parents' motorcycles.



Street the kindergarten is on. Roads are very small and cars can barely fit.

Early childhood education in Indonesia remains a crucial but underfunded sector. Many children from low- and lower-middle-income households start primary school without foundational skills in reading or writing, and systemic challenges in public schooling, such as overcrowding, automatic promotion policies, and high costs of private schools, make it difficult for families to secure quality education. Some children end up going to primary school without the key skill of being able to read or write, struggling very much as they keep getting promoted to higher grade levels with faster pace and higher difficulty.

Within this context, **PAUD PETA Jakarta (PETA Kindergarten)** was established as a grassroots initiative to prepare children academically and socially for entry into primary school. The kindergarten not only delivers basic literacy and numeracy lessons, but also provides mentorship, character development, and community support, which will be written about more in depth later in the report.



Front door of the school

My first day volunteering, I had trouble finding where exactly the school was, because you had to go through several very narrow, winding roads. The school didn't have a very bright, clear sign, but rather this small banner on its gate. This is the only sign that the school has to mark its location. Despite its more understated façade, it experiences a growing number of students per year, and everyone in its vicinity seem to have a particular fondness for this small community school.

During my first week, I came up with several key objectives that I wanted to achieve in my six weeks at the school. After some conversations, reflection, and research, I decided that the scope of the project support the school by:

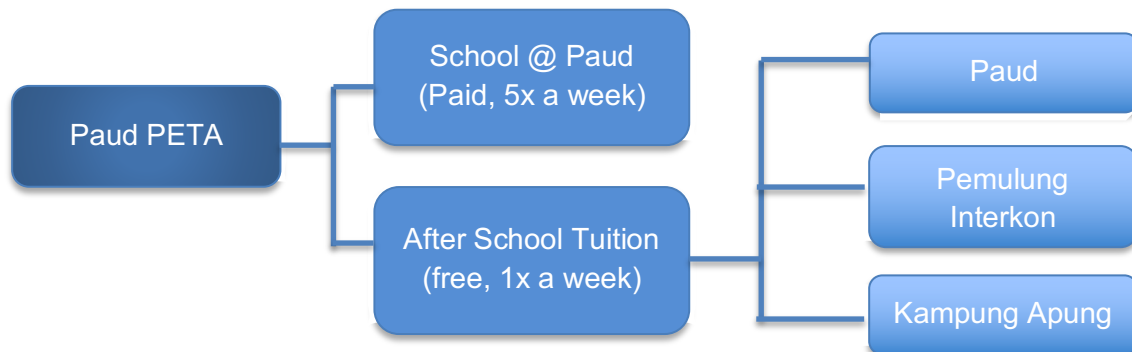
Objectives

- Co-teaching academic subjects (reading, mathematics, English).
- Reinforcing teacher skills through training and lesson design.
- Building trust with parents and the community through events.
- Documenting systemic challenges through interviews with students, parents, and staff.
- Proposing actionable strategies for sustainability and survival of school

Background

PAUD Peta teachers split their focus into two main areas: the first is their kindergarten school (“PAUD”) for kids between ages 4 - 6 (~35 kids) as well as their after-school tuition (free of charge) that they hold in 3 different locations in Jakarta. The first one is also held at the kindergarten, the second one is at Pemulung Interkon (which is a gathering place for garbage collectors) and Kampung Apung, a structure built partly on top of the riverbank on a makeshift structure due to a lack of available space.

Organisation



The school charges a monthly fee of 120,000 Indonesian Rupiah, equivalent to approximately £6, based on an exchange rate of 20,000 IDR to £1. It offers classes in English, Indonesian, Mathematics, and other core subjects. In addition, the school provides after-school tuition for a wider age group ranging from 6 to 15 years old, effectively covering pre-kindergarten to middle school students.

The school is government-licensed and operates in full compliance with national curriculum standards and protocols. It is also an official member of the Indonesian Association of Kindergarten Schools.

The school’s founder, Anna, began by reaching out to unhoused children who often spent most of their time on the streets in areas such as *Grogol*, *Slipi*, and *Kemang*. She would bathe them, cut their hair, remove fleas, provide clean clothes, and teach them basic literacy and numeracy skills. Her compassion and dedication laid the foundation for what the school has become today.

In the past, the school did not have a permanent location and operated in temporary spaces to teach and counsel children. It was only after receiving a large donation, equivalent to around £25,000, that the school was able to purchase its current building. To put this into perspective, the monthly minimum wage in Jakarta is about £250, with the majority of the families with children enrolled at PAUD earn less than £100 per month, including those with stable jobs.

A Look into the Interkon Location





Mothers and their newborns gather to accompany children with their lesson











Context

The kindergarten operates in a modest building in Jakarta, with simple classrooms and limited facilities. It serves children aged 4–6, many of whom enter with minimal preparation. Some are unable to read or write at kindergarten entry, while others still struggle with basic literacy at age 6.

The staff consists of highly dedicated teachers who often **teach themselves new material**, print worksheets at their own expense, and adapt lessons without a formal curriculum. Teachers double as mentors, providing parents with advice on family struggles, and supporting children through social and emotional difficulties.

Students come from varied backgrounds. Some parents work as police officers, nurses, or service staff, while others face unemployment, incarceration, or financial instability. Many children grow up in households where parents are overworked, stretched thin, or unable to provide academic support at home.

One of the greatest systemic barriers is the **transition to primary school**. Public schools are oversubscribed, forcing many children to delay entry until age eight or nine. Private options are unaffordable for most families, resulting in interrupted educational progress.

Founders and Leadership

The school's **founder and principal** embody a deep commitment to creating opportunity for children who would otherwise be left behind. Their vision is clear: to provide children with the literacy, numeracy, and moral grounding to succeed in life. Despite limited funding, they persist through personal sacrifice, partnerships with church foundations, and reliance on donations.

Their motivation is rooted in the belief that **education is the most powerful lever for breaking the cycle of poverty**. During interviews, they expressed long-term goals to expand the school's reach, strengthen teaching capacity, and build partnerships that can sustain growth.

Anna - Founder

Anna, the school's founder, has long spent her time on the streets of impoverished areas in Jakarta counseling and guiding young children as well as advocating for their education. She believes that education is their ticket to a better life. Kids who display a willingness and enthusiasm to be enrolled in school are taken in by her and sent to a school to be educated. At this point in time, she did not yet own a home and was still renting the place she is living in with these kids.

These were not the easiest kids to live with. They would steal neighbours' fruits, start fights at school, and fight with each other. It is difficult handling them all, in addition to having a full time job. At a point, she had taken in 50 kids and lived with them all. With a lot of time, energy, dedication and effort, Anna and her team instilled in them character and values, and some of them now have incredible careers and are doing incredibly well. Some are soldiers, nurses, policemen and more.

Rosita - Head of Foundation

Rosita hails from *Garut*, far from the capital city Jakarta. She is one of the children Anna has taken in and met with her late husband who advocated for her and put her in school. She was six at the time and spending a lot of her time on the streets and not in school. She lived with the other children and went to school with them too. It was not always easy. She and Anna would make simple foods and drinks to sell to people living around the area to make extra income, and later on would turn down job offers to stay with the foundation as principal. She is an incredible example of the success of Anna's education and is now a proud advocator for the school.

Long Term Goals

- Build a professional school with well trained teachers and proper resources and facilities
- Have a place for people to stay and be sheltered
- Teachers who can handle kids with special needs, e.g. speech delays, autism, down syndrome
- A basecamp for training and schooling
- Be able to be independent and less reliant on donations

The Teaching Team



From Left to Right: Wiwid, Mega, Dini (School Principal) and Dian

A Look Inside











Key Takeaways

1. Leadership and Teacher Dedication

Teachers are extraordinarily resourceful, compensating for lack of training and materials with creativity and personal effort. They are mentors to both children and parents, acting as trusted figures in the community.

2. Student Enthusiasm with Learning Gaps

Children are eager learners. Despite arriving underprepared, they respond enthusiastically to lessons and persist when challenged. Progress is slow compared to national standards, but resilience is strong.

3. Household and Systemic Barriers

Families face financial hardship, parental absence, and systemic educational policies that promote students without mastery. This undermines children's readiness and self-confidence in school.

4. Discipline and Behavioural Struggles

Classroom discipline is inconsistent. Teachers avoid strict discipline due to fear of parental complaints, while children often display disruptive behaviour, hyperactivity, or speech delays that require one-on-one supervision.

5. Nutrition and Hygiene Deficiencies

Poor diets (instant noodles, fried snacks, bread with spreads) limit focus and growth. Hygiene practices are weak, with no handwashing facilities at school and little reinforcement of cleanliness habits.

6. Community Trust as a Foundation

Events such as food distribution and character workshops strengthen ties between the school and families. Parents see teachers as partners in raising children, not just educators.

Community Voices & Interviews

- **Teachers:** Reported that parents frequently call or text for guidance on family struggles. Teachers also expressed the pressure of teaching children with wide variations in readiness, often needing to give one child undivided attention for two-hour lessons.
- **Parents:** Shared both financial and emotional struggles. Many value education deeply, but cannot afford to send children to private schools or provide sufficient home support. One family described a son who completed primary school but could not progress to secondary due to oversubscribed public schools.
- **Students:** When encouraged to share their dreams, students spoke about wanting to become doctors, police officers, and teachers. This demonstrated that ambition exists when children are given space to imagine a future.

Interview Insights

Interviewer: Stacy Kabidin

Language: Originally Indonesian, translated to English by author

Setting and Consent: Semi-structured, in-person at PAUD PETA. Participants consented to note taking and anonymized reporting where requested. Names reflect how participants introduced themselves.

1. Family Background and Living Situation

All three interviewed parents, Ibu Diana (30), Firda (27), and Fira's mother (38), live in rented accommodation near PAUD PETA in Cengkareng, Jakarta. Each family rents a single room that serves as both living and sleeping space.

Most parents are internal migrants who moved to Jakarta for work opportunities. Ibu Diana relocated from Lampung to join her husband, who works in construction and warehousing.

Firda remarried in late 2024 and lives with her husband and child while processing marriage legalization paperwork.

Fira's mother has lived in Jakarta for over sixteen years with her husband and two children.

All families described modest living arrangements but expressed a sense of stability because of their proximity to school and the surrounding community.

2. Employment and Financial Conditions

Across households, fathers are the main earners, typically in construction or informal labour, while mothers remain full-time homemakers or do small-scale work from home.

Ibu Diana's husband earns a daily wage of around IDR 2.4 to 2.5 million per month from construction work. The family's income is sufficient but leaves little room for saving. Firda's husband, a street vendor selling eggs, earns between IDR 40,000 and 300,000 per day, averaging about IDR 2 million per month. Income fluctuates sharply with demand, and rent of IDR 550,000 per month consumes a significant portion of expenses. Fira's family reports a relatively higher combined income of about IDR 6 million per month from her husband's construction job and her own paid laundry work. Even so, there is little capacity for long-term savings.

Common financial pressures include rent, food, school supplies, and milk. For Firda in particular, education costs remain a strain, leading her to skip meals so her child can eat properly. All families expressed the desire to save for home ownership or for their children's future schooling.

3. Daily Routines and Household Roles

Mothers are responsible for domestic management and early education at home. Mornings are typically filled with cleaning, cooking, and light teaching before school. Fathers work long hours, leaving around 7:30 a.m. and returning by evening.

In each household, mothers described balancing household duties with informal teaching, such as helping children read or count. However, lack of time, fatigue, and limited educational materials often make this difficult.

4. Challenges and Concerns

Economic and Practical Challenges

The main obstacles revolve around financial insecurity and education-related expenses. Parents cited uniforms, shoes, and learning materials as recurring burdens.

Firda also faces administrative challenges in legalizing her marriage, which adds emotional and financial stress. Firda's mother expressed health concerns, including uric acid issues, and anxiety over her husband's ability to sustain income as he ages.

Educational Challenges

Parents emphasized the difficulty of keeping children engaged in learning at home and affording supplementary materials or tutoring. Ibu Diana struggles to balance housework with her child's learning. Firda's mother finds it emotionally challenging to supervise study sessions, often leading to frustration.

Future Concerns

All parents expressed deep concern for their children's educational continuity and economic stability. Each hoped their children could pursue higher education, even up to university level, to secure a better life.

Dreams for their children include professions such as doctor or armed forces officer, representing aspirations for stability and respect.

5. Educational Aspirations and Child Development

Parents unanimously value education as a pathway out of poverty. None of the mothers had the opportunity to study beyond high school themselves, so they view their children's education as a chance to achieve what they could not.

Ibu Diana hopes her child will reach the highest education possible. Firda wants her child to earn a bachelor's degree. Firda's mother aspires for her children to have a better life and a stable job.

Children were described as sociable, curious, and eager learners, with developing strengths in arts, creativity, and practical skills.

6. Community and School Support

All three parents credited PAUD PETA and the PETA Foundation as significant sources of assistance.

Parent counselling sessions and free tutoring were viewed as particularly valuable. Firda noted that her child learned to write within a month through the program. Parents requested more frequent tutoring, ideally weekly or daily, and continued parental guidance sessions.

They consistently emphasized the importance of volunteers' consistency and teacher encouragement in maintaining motivation and progress.

7. Teacher Perspectives

Rosita, Chair of PETA Foundation and Character Education Mentor

Rosita's personal journey from out-of-school youth to educator deeply informs her mission. Having been supported by a foster parent who enabled her to return to school, she now teaches English and character development.

She emphasizes holistic education, aiming to instill values such as love for God, family, and nation alongside academic growth. Her approach combines personal connection, role modeling, and constant encouragement.

Key observations include that students often face economic hardship that affects focus and self-confidence. Despite this, when supported, they demonstrate strong curiosity and enthusiasm. She calls for richer English resources, structured character education, and greater parental engagement.

Rosita's aspiration is to continue learning creative pedagogy and to be a teacher who inspires life, not just academics.

Yulia Ardini (Dini), Principal of PAUD PETA

Dini has sixteen years of teaching experience and a background of financial hardship before being supported to complete her education. She takes pride in observing growth across children's emotional, cognitive, and character dimensions.

Her primary challenges are adapting to students with special needs and encouraging parental collaboration. She highlights that learning outcomes improve significantly when parents cooperate.

She identifies a need for assistant teachers to handle large or diverse classes, continuous teacher training, and better preparation of children for Grade 1, particularly in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Her vision is to nurture children who are successful and impactful while maintaining humility and service to the community.

Megawati Silalahi, Assistant Teacher

Megawati began assisting with teaching during junior high school and continues to support CALISTUNG (reading, writing, arithmetic) for kindergarten students.

She cites patience as both her greatest challenge and area for growth. Her teaching focuses on character-first learning, individualized encouragement, and firm, clear instruction.

She relies on faith, mentorship, and online resources, and would benefit from more visual materials and interactive media. She believes strong communication with parents and recognition of children's talents are key to lasting development.

Her professional goal is to become a skilled and reliable teacher.

8. Overall Insights

The combined testimonies of parents and teachers reveal a tight-knit yet financially constrained community where education is both a burden and a beacon of hope.

Economic precarity affects nearly every aspect of family life, from nutrition to school readiness. Parental motivation is exceptionally high, with clear aspirations for children's long-term education.

Teachers act as moral anchors, balancing academic instruction with character education and emotional support.

The PETA Foundation's holistic model, combining learning, counselling, and faith-based character building, has been pivotal in sustaining engagement among both children and parents.

Identified Needs

- More frequent free tutoring and assistant teachers
- Structured character education materials
- Teacher training and visual learning aids
- Parent workshops to enhance home-based learning
- Ongoing financial and school-supply support for low-income families

9. Conclusion

The PAUD PETA community reflects the challenges and resilience of many urban migrant families in Jakarta. Parents' sacrifices, often at the expense of their own comfort, demonstrate a deep belief in education as the route to dignity and stability.

Teachers, many of whom overcame hardship themselves, model perseverance and compassion that extend beyond the classroom. Together, they form a system sustained not by wealth but by shared purpose, faith, and an unwavering commitment to give the next generation a better start.

Core Contributions

Over six weeks, contributions included:

- **Academic Support:** Assisted in Reading and Mathematics classes, taught Primary 1–2 students, and prepared English lessons for both children and teachers.
- **Teacher Training:** Designed lesson materials, created interactive teaching strategies, and ran English classes to improve teacher fluency.
- **Community Engagement:** Co-organised a food distribution event (sembako packages), encouraged parental involvement, and facilitated student-led activities.
- **Character Building:** Conducted a workshop on responsibility, honesty, teamwork, cleanliness, and respect using stories, activities, and role-play.
- **Documentation:** Recorded interviews, gathered stories of family struggles and student aspirations, and drafted a comprehensive project report to share findings.

Six-Week Timeline

Week 1 – Orientation and First Teaching Experience

- Met with founder and principal after Independence Day celebrations.
- Observed classes with large groups; supported advanced-level children.
- Outputs: LSN post, organisation profile, draft report.
- Findings: leadership commitment, teacher dedication, student enthusiasm but with gaps, systemic challenges (promotion policies), discipline and behavioural difficulties, poor nutrition, lack of hygiene education.

Week 2 – Expanding Roles in Teaching and Training

- Assisted in Reading and Math lessons; taught English to teachers.
- Introduced interactive classroom strategies.
- Outputs: Lesson plans, teacher interviews, LSN post.
- Findings: bullying, financial hardship, barriers to education, eagerness to learn math, teachers as mentors, parental reliance on teachers.

Week 3 – Deepening Community Understanding

- Conducted parent/teacher/student interviews; led lessons across subjects.
- Outputs: Interview notes, family/student stories, LSN post.
- Findings: families face severe financial challenges, parents see education as the only investment, students ambitious with encouragement.

Week 4 – Community Event and Food Distribution

- Organised sembako distribution and storytelling; involved students in planning.
- Outputs: Event report, photos, LSN post.
- Findings: families appreciated recognition and support, stronger school–community trust, reinforced value of education.

Week 5 – Site Visit and building on teaching English fundamentals

- Workshop on further English fundamentals: Grammar, vocabulary, conversation
- Outputs: Workshop materials, classroom documentation, LSN post.
- Site Visit to other locations, meet more people the foundation are helping

Week 6 – Reflection, Closing, and Next Steps

- Conducted closing interviews; compiled stories of progress.
- Outputs: Comprehensive final report, photos, LSN post.
- Findings: noticeable improvement in teacher confidence and student engagement; stronger family trust; clear opportunities for sustained support.

Call to Action

The project highlights both the resilience of PAUD PETA and the urgent needs that remain:

- **Training opportunities** to equip teachers with structured curricula.
- **Facilities upgrade** such as handwashing stations and basic learning materials.
- **Scholarships and partnerships** to ensure children progress beyond kindergarten.
- **Nutrition programmes** to address hunger and focus.
- **Counselling** for parents who can benefit from added guidance

Education at PAUD PETA is more than academics—it is community, hope, and opportunity. With external support, this grassroots school can continue transforming lives.

Contact Information

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For further details, full documentation, or partnership enquiries, please contact the school directly or access project posts on the **Laidlaw Scholars Network**.