

A REPORT TO THE INSTITUTE ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT,  
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

**ENRICHING ISLAMIC EDUCATION:  
AN EVALUATION OF THE INDONESIAN PESANTREN  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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## **PART ONE:**

### **OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY FINDINGS**

This report provides a description and evaluation of the “Indonesian Pesantren Development Program” operated by the Institute on Training and Development (ITD) in Amherst, Massachusetts with funding from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA) of the U.S. Department of State. The Indonesian partner for the project is INSIST (Indonesian Society for Social Transformation), a non-governmental organization specializing in citizen training, and based in the university city of Yogyakarta in the Special District of Yogyakarta in Java, Indonesia.

Launched in September 2002, the Pesantren Development Program was designed to bring 18 leading Muslim educators and religious scholars (*ulama, kyai*) two times each year from Islamic boarding schools (*pesantrens*) for three weeks of travel and study in the U.S. With the launch of its third year of operations in 2005, the program was expanded to include educational leaders from Islamic day schools (*madrasas*). Since the first visit in 2002, six groups of educators have visited the United States, arriving in September and May. The purpose of these visits is to introduce the educators to American society, education, and government through a program that combines classroom instruction with visits to public and private schools, houses of worship, universities, civic organizations, and government offices in several cities across the eastern United States.

In addition to providing a general introduction to American society, the Pesantren Development Program has the following goals:

- To deepen participants’ understanding of the teaching methodologies, curricula, and management techniques used by American educators and to explore their relevance for Indonesian Muslim schools.
- To introduce participants’ to the social and religious pluralism of the United States, through discussions with American scholars and educators from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Americans backgrounds; and, in so doing, to deepen

participants' commitment to and teaching on religious freedom, democracy, pluralism, and tolerance.

- To assist participants in preparing and implementing a “mini-grant” project, related to the project’s broader goals, in their own schools.

During the final days of their visit to the U.S., the educators work with staff from the ITD to prepare a small-grant proposal. Each educator who completes the program and writes an adequate proposal is given \$2000, for the purpose of improving educational facilities, teaching methods, or curricula back at the participant’s home school. The Indonesian partner for the project, INSIST, administers these funds, providing 75% of the funds up-front and the final 25% after the partner’s completion of the project and a written report.

Since its inception in 2002, ninety-four leading Muslim educators have participated in the Pesantren Development Program. In preparing this report, the project evaluator was instructed to focus on participants from the fifth and sixth groups or “third class” (known as class 3a and 3b) of the program. Group 3a visited the U.S. in May 2005 and consisted of 14 educators and religious scholars (a fifteenth person went home early for health reasons); group 3b visited in September 2005 and consisted of 17 educators. The evaluation of this class and the Pesantren Development Program is based on the following experiences and materials:

- Discussions with ITD staff on December 21, 2005 and January and February 2006, and the reading of ITD proposals and reports from the first three years of the Pesantren Development Program, in February and March 2006.
- Travel to Indonesia from June 30 to July 24, 2006. During this time the project evaluator accompanied by an INSIST staffer, Muhammad Ishom, and a research assistant, Laode Arham, visited nine pesantrens that had participated in the program. The evaluator had private, in-depth interviews with eleven project participants, tape recording and transcribing six of the interviews. At 9 of the 11 schools, the evaluator also spoke with other pesantren administrators and educators, in an effort to evaluate the program’s broader impact at the school.

Sites visited were located in or near the cities of Makassar, South Sulawesi; Balikpapan, East Kalimantan; Medan, North Sumatra; Banda Aceh, Aceh; Klaten, Central Java; Lasem, East Java; Tuban, East Java; Mojokerto, East Java; and Yogyakarta. In addition to field-site interviews and program-impact assessment, the evaluator also interviewed INSIST staff, including Nena Lemanah, the coordinator for the pesantren project, and Muhammad Ishom, the program's assistant coordinator since January 2005 (and also a teacher and administrator in a pesantren in Surakarta, Central Java). The evaluator also participated at the reunion of alumni from the third year of the program on July 18-20, 2006 in the city of Yogyakarta, and conducted additional interviews with participants (see Appendix).

- A fifty-question survey of the thirty one participants in the third-year class. The survey was prepared in collaboration with Ms. Kris Engstrom from ITD during April and May 2006. In early June 2006, the survey was distributed to the Indonesian participants by INSIST staffers, under the direction of Ms. Lemanah and Mr. Ishom. Thirty of the thirty-one participants completed and returned the survey. The survey focuses on three issues: participants' satisfaction with the pesantren program; the impact of the program on educational methods and curricula at the teachers' home schools; and the impact of the program on teachers' attitudes toward and teaching on pluralism, democracy, the place of Islam in governance, and the United States.

### **Summary Findings.**

The full details of the findings of this evaluation are presented in the pages the follow. However, by way of overview, several general findings stand out:

1. **Levels of Satisfaction with the Program and Program Providers.** Surveys and interviews indicate a *very high* level of overall satisfaction with the Pesantren Development Program, and an equally very high level of satisfaction with the consideration and quality of service provided by both the ITD and INSIST partners.

2. **Impact on Teaching and Curricula.** The surveys and interviews indicate that participation in the program had a moderate to strong impact on teaching methods, curricula, and student participation back at the pesantren leaders' home school. Surveys and interviews indicated that the program's greatest area of educational impact lay two areas: a) enhancement of library and computer resources, and b) teachers' efforts to create more active student learning like that observed at schools in the U.S. The mini-grants of \$2000 were also judged to be of significant benefit. The funds were most commonly used for library improvements, purchase of computers, or computer training.
  
3. **Impact on Views of Democracy, Pluralism, Secularism, etc.** The surveys and interviews indicate that participation in the Pesantren Development Program had a moderate to strong impact on the message educators conveyed at their home school concerning democracy and pluralism. The program had a smaller but still noteworthy effect on the message Muslim educators convey concerning religious pluralism and gender equality, issues on which there is greater disagreement in the broader Muslim community. It should be noted that, although their exact attitudes vary, recruits to the Pesantren Development Program are expected to come to the program already having a general interest in democracy and pluralism. As a consequence of this recruitment policy (which the evaluator regards as appropriate), participants tend to be somewhat more democratic-minded than the Muslim public in general. The participants' views on gender also tend to be more egalitarian than the Muslim Indonesian norm. Notwithstanding these views, the pesantren leaders as a whole are not avant-garde "liberals," but stand broadly within the pesantren community's mainstream.

The survey indicated that, without exception, program participants agree that democracy is the best form of governance for Indonesia. Most participants also report that their experience in the United States has strengthened this conviction. By contrast, participation in the program had little or no impact on participants' views of secularism, defined as the separation of religious authority from that of

state. Most participants remain opposed to this doctrine, and do not see its implementation as necessary for democratic governance.

Participation in the program also had a less consistent impact on participants' views of the role of the state in the implementation of Islamic law. The participant pool is divided between those who support implementation of Islamic law by the state and those who believe that the state should have no such role. Comparison of this survey with a larger survey of Indonesian Muslim educators that the evaluator completed in December 2005, however, indicates that support for state implementation of Islamic law is still only half as strong among program participants as among Islamic educators in the population as a whole. Participation in the program appears to have strengthened the reservations of a plurality of the teachers toward excessive state intervention in religious affairs as well as their commitment to civic freedoms.

4. **Impact on Views of the United States.** Participants indicated that the program had an *overwhelmingly* favorable effect on participants' views of the American people, with the great majority of participants reporting strongly positive impressions. A smaller but still majority of participants also report that their participation in the program left them with a somewhat more favorable view of the American government. Without exception, all interviewees expressed deep unhappiness with U.S. policies in the Middle East. A small but significant minority (40%) believe that America and Great Britain's actions themselves constitute a form of terrorism. Participants' disagreement with U.S. Middle Eastern policy makes their positive impressions of the American people and many if not all aspects of U.S. governance all the more striking.

In 2004, the evaluator assessed other U.S.-sponsored programs for democracy and civic education in Indonesia, including the USAID and The Asia Foundation programs on Islam and Democracy (reviewed February-May 2004). In comparing the Pesantren Development Program with other American collaborations with Indonesian Muslims, the evaluator is left with the clear impression that the Pesantren Program has succeeded well

in achieving its stated objectives. It has enhanced Muslim educators' understanding of teaching methods and curricula, strengthened Muslim teachers' commitments to democracy and pluralism, and created more nuanced and favorable views of the American people and government.

## **PART TWO:**

### **EVALUATING THE PROGRAM RATIONALE**

With some 88.7% of its 235 million people professing Islam, Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority country in the world. Indonesia is also the largest country in the strategically important Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); an OPEC country and a major exporter of liquefied natural gas, as well as other natural resources; the largest industrial economy in Southeast Asia; and a strategic partner of the United States in the Muslim world. Since the resignation of the long serving and authoritarian President Soeharto in May 1998, Indonesia has been plagued by outbreaks of ethnoreligious violence and a series of terror bombings carried out by the Jemaah Islamiyah, a group thought to have ties to the al-Qa'ida. Notwithstanding this turmoil, post-Soeharto Indonesia has held two free and fair national elections (1999 and 2004), the results of which have been notable for their moderation. Both elections saw 80% of the electorate give their vote to parties committed to constitutional democracy and a multiconfessional nationalism, while most of the remaining 20% of the electorate voted for moderately conservative Islamist parties committed to the establishment of some form of Islamic governance.

For these and other reasons, the United States has long had an interest in maintaining good ties with Indonesia in general and with its Muslim-majority population in particular. From the mid-1960s to the early 1990s, the United States viewed Indonesia as a staunch Southeast Asian ally. With the end of the Cold War and transitions to democracy in East Asia and eastern Europe in the 1990s, tensions grew between the U.S. and the authoritarian Soeharto regime. Tensions between Indonesian Muslims and the United States also grew during these years as a result of Muslim unhappiness with U.S.

policies in the Middle East. Indirectly the tensions also reflected the growing religiosity of large numbers of Indonesian Muslims, the result of an historically unprecedented resurgence in religious piety that began in the mid-1980s and continues to this day.<sup>1</sup>

More recently, polls indicate that, since the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in late 2001 and Iraq in March 2003, opposition to U.S. policies has deepened and anti-American sentiment has grown. However, with the notable exception of the Jemaah Islamiyah attacks, violent opposition to U.S. policies remains rare, and even during the early phases of the U.S. intervention in Iraq, the actual number of people expressing their opposition to U.S. policies through street demonstrations was small compared to the total Muslim population. Notwithstanding the efforts of a radical fringe, most of the demonstrations have been peaceful, and attacks on Americans and other Westerners have been almost unknown. No less important, Indonesians' unhappiness with U.S. policies in the Middle East has not resulted in a notable reluctance to cooperate with U.S. aid agencies. The country's two largest Muslim social organizations, the Nahdlatul Ulama (approximately 40 million supporters) and the Muhammadiyah (approximately 30 million), both continue to express a strong interest in cooperating with the U.S. and other Western countries. The project evaluator's visits to pesantrens and madrasas in July 2006 indicate that the great majority of Muslim educators are especially eager to cooperate with Americans in the field of education.

Opposition to U.S. policies also does not appear to have translated into opposition to democracy, the rule of law, or constitutional government. Surveys of Muslim Indonesians conducted during 2001, 2003, and 2004 by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at the Hidayatullah National Islamic University (UIN) in Jakarta, and by the writer of this report in 2005 (working in collaboration with the UIN), indicate that 80% of all Indonesian Muslims regard democracy as the best form of government for Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> These figures are several percentage points higher than those from comparable polls in

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the survey polls on Indonesian Muslims, see Saiful Mujani et al., *Benturan Peradaban: Sikap dan Perilaku Islamis Indonesia terhadap Amerika Serikat* [Clash of civilizations: the attitude and behavior of Indonesian Islamists toward the United States] (Jakarta: Penerbit Nalar 2005); and Saiful Mujani, "Religious Democrats: Democratic Culture and Muslim Political Participation in Post-Suharto Indonesia" (Columbus, Ohio: Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Ohio State University, 2003).

Western Europe. Support for democratic freedoms including freedom of the press and freedom of association show similarly strong levels of support. However, these same polls indicate that Muslim Indonesian views on matters of gender equality, religious minorities, and state-sponsored implementation of Islamic law (*shari`a*) are more nuanced, in ways that point to disagreements among segments of the Muslim public over just what aspects of modern democracy and citizenship are compatible with Islam.

For example, while 80% of Muslim Indonesians agree or strongly agree with the idea that democracy is the best form of government for their country, a similar number express support for the idea that the state should take a direct role in the implementation of Islamic law. In recent years, many Western analysts and democratic-minded Muslims have argued that a full implementation of Islamic law, with its limits on the citizen rights of women and non-Muslims (among other things), is in contradiction with democratic values.

Surveys of the general Muslim public also indicate that a small majority of Indonesian Muslims believe that the state should take measures to insure that Muslims perform the annual fast during Ramadhan. The Muslim population is divided almost evenly over the question of whether women should be allowed to assume positions of national political leadership, which conservative Muslim leaders have long claimed is contrary to Islamic law. Similarly, a small majority of Muslims believe that non-Muslims should not be allowed to assume positions of leadership like that of the president or vice president. Finally, a solid majority believe that the United States and Great Britain's global war on terrorism is in actuality a war on Islam.

These and other findings from other research studies demonstrate that Indonesian Muslims are strongly committed to the general idea of democracy. But these same studies indicate that Indonesian Muslims also disagree on other important issues, including the rights of non-Muslims and women in the political system, and the compatibility of democracy with state enforcement of Islamic law. The survey of participants in the Pesantren Development Program, discussed below, shows that these issues also divide participants in this program.

One of the social arenas where debate over these issues is now raging is in the two primary Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, the pesantren and the madrasa. The

*pesantren* is an Indonesian variation on the classical Middle Eastern religious school or *madrasa*, which in earlier times was a boarding school dedicated to the study of the Qur'an and such Islamic traditions of knowledge as Islamic law, the canonical collections of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (known as the hadith), Arabic grammar, and Islamic mysticism (*tassawuf*). As was the case at classical Middle Eastern *madrasas*, students at Indonesian *pesantrens* typically board, although today some *pesantrens* also offer religious instruction to students from nearby communities who choose not to board at the school. Indonesia today has an estimated 15,000 *pesantrens*.<sup>3</sup>

Equally important, and unlike their classical Middle Eastern counterpart, since the early decades of the twentieth century, *pesantrens* have added instruction in general or non-religious instruction to their curricula; most also adopted such curricular innovations as examinations, graded classes, and classrooms with desks. After independence, the Indonesian government encouraged these reforms, in a general effort to harness Islamic schools to the task of raising educational standards across the country. Today the great majority of *pesantrens* offer a curriculum that consists of 70% instruction in general-educational subjects like mathematics, science, and English and 30% instruction in religious subjects. A minority of *pesantrens*, those known as *pesantren salaf* or *salafiyah*, offer religion-only study. With the growing popularity of Islamic preaching and education, the largest religion-only schools have experienced a steady expansion in enrollments over the past fifteen years. One reason this has occurred is that parents and students alike believe that the religion-only schools provide a more rigorous training in Islamic studies and a better chance for success in the preaching profession. (Popular preachers in Indonesia, it should be noted, can earn considerably more than school teachers). The majority of students who attend these religion-only schools, however, do so after completing their government-mandated nine years of general education.

In the Indonesian context, a *madrasa* is an Islamic “day school” (i.e. its students do not board), offering instruction in general as well as religious topics, usually in a 70-30 format (70% general education). Modern-style classes, examinations, and teaching

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of Islamic education in contemporary Indonesia, see Azyumardi Azra, Dina Afrianty, and Robert W. Hefner, “Education and Democratization in Indonesia,” in Robert W. Hefner, *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming, January 2007).

methods are also the norm. Most Indonesian madrasas also use some variation of the national curriculum and textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Religion. As *pesantrens* have modernized, many have added madrasas to their institutional complexes, so there is no absolute divide between the two institutions. However, of the 30,000 madrasas found in Indonesia, the majority are stand-alone day schools.

In the Indonesian setting, neither madrasas nor *pesantrens* are archaic or medieval institutions. Specialists of Islamic education recognize that Indonesia's Muslim schools are among the most forward-looking and innovative Islamic educational institutions in the world, notwithstanding the fact that they are, in general, underfunded. Since the revival of popular interest in Islamic studies and piety began in the late 1970s, enrollments in both of these institutions have more than doubled. Today, some 15% of Indonesian students are officially enrolled full-time in Muslim educational institutions. Approximately twice that number, or another 30% of the student population, take part-time courses in Islamic studies at *pesantrens* or through courses run by teachers based in *pesantren* complexes. In educational terms, then, *pesantrens* and madrasas exercise an enormous influence on the Muslim public, helping to shape their views on social and political matters. Madrasas and *pesantrens* also exercise influence by virtue of the fact that their leaders act as opinion-makers and leaders in local and national politics. In the post-Soeharto period, all of the major parties have actively recruited support in the *pesantren* community. It was no coincidence that all of the leading candidates for president in the 2004 elections chose *pesantren*-based scholars as their vice-presidential running mates.

This is to say, then, that the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' focus on *pesantren* and madrasa leaders is an appropriate one. In most of contemporary Indonesia, the directors and teachers in Islamic schools play a leading role as opinion-makers and community leaders. The discussions that take place in Islamic schools have a broad impact in the larger Muslim community, and Islamic schools have long served as cultural brokers for ongoing social change.

For all these reasons, then, the author of this report concludes that the rationale for the *Pesantren* Development Program is both timely and compelling. The remainder of

this report will focus, then, not on the program rationale, which is well-demonstrated, but on the following features of program implementation:

1. Recruitment of participants
2. The course of training and study provided in the United States
3. Impact of the program on teaching, curricula, library resources, and management back at participants' home schools
4. Impact of the program on participants' views of democracy, pluralism, inter-religious tolerance, and secularism
5. Impact of the program on participants' views of the United States
6. Impact of the program on network building and cooperation

## **PART THREE:**

### **EVALUATING PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

#### **1. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION**

Working in consultation with its ITD partner, INSIST in Yogyakarta plays the leading role in the selection and recruitment of candidates for the program, although on a few occasions the American consulates in Indonesia have recommended candidates for participation as well. At INSIST, the program coordinator, Nena Lemanah, aided by the program's assistant coordinator, Muhammad Ishom, and the INSIST administrative manager, Tati Marmati, make a preliminary identification of suitable pesantrens for the program.

Mr. Ishom's role in this regard is central. Ishom is a religious scholar from the al-Muayyad Pesantren in Surakarta, Central Java, a well-known school that has played a prominent role in several USAID programs, as well as projects on pluralism and democracy funded by other Western nations. Ishom was also a participant in the first group of Islamic teachers sent to the United States in 2002, and escorted group 3A when it visited the United States in May 2005. Mr. Ishom became assistant coordinator for the Pesantren Development Program in January 2005, replacing the previous assistant

coordinator, Mr. Imam Aziz, when the latter decided to dedicate his energies to reconstruction efforts in post-tsunami Aceh. Since he is a well known and well-liked figure in Islamic circles, Mr. Ishom's presence in the program adds immeasurably to the program's legitimacy in the pesantren community. He also has good managerial skills, an area in which Mr. Aziz was judged as less accomplished. Mr. Ishom shows a keen sense of how to balance the varied ambitions of the program. He is an apt choice for assistant coordinator and a major liaison between INSIST and the larger pesantren community.

In drafting a list of prospective pesantren invitees, the INSIST staff attempt to balance several considerations. At the recommendation of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, they have sought in the third year of the program to balance the number of participants from Java and from outside Java; from large and from small pesantrens; and from pesantrens associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, a traditionalist organization which operates more than half of the pesantrens found in Indonesia), Muhammadiyah (a modern reformist organization), and independent or non-affiliated schools.

Once the INSIST staffers have developed a list of prospective pesantrens, the INSIST administrator, Tati Marmati, contacts and interviews each pesantren's director by telephone, in an effort to determine his or her interest in the program. If the director indicates a willingness to nominate a participant from the school, INSIST extends a formal invitation. There is no additional evaluation of the candidate nominated by the school director. Since the participant represents his or her pesantren and since it is hoped that the candidate will transfer what he or she has learned back to the home school, final responsibility for selecting the participant in the program is left with the pesantren director. To the program evaluator, the delegation of final authority for the selection of the individual participant appears appropriate, but an adjustment is recommended below.

In recruiting participants, the INSIST staff have also sought to select a few schools whose participation in the program might alleviate concerns expressed by those in the Muslim community who have accused the Pesantren Development Program of being a crude instrument of American policy, intended to divide and weaken Indonesian Muslims. This is a serious point of concern, since suspicion of the program could seriously undercut its aims. A majority of participants interviewed for this report

acknowledged that, when first invited to participate, some of their school colleagues objected to their willingness to participate in a program sponsored by the United States. A smaller number of participants pointed out that their school directors then asked to see what pesantrens and individuals had previously participated in the program, so as to assess the program's credibility.

One incident that illustrates the reasons for their concern is that one month after the first fellows traveled to the United States in September 2002, a conservative Islamic weekly, *Suara Hidayatullah*, ran a harshly critical story on the program, entitled, "Devide [sic] Pesantrens et Impera." The article complained that the leaders of leading Muslim organizations had not been informed before hand of the program's purpose or scope. The article also implied that the program was an American strategy for dividing and conquering the Muslim community, quoting one well-known Muslim leaders as saying that it was a "brain washing project." In a clear effort to send a warning to anyone who might wish to consider participating in the program in the future, the report listed the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all of the 2002 participants.<sup>4</sup>

In an effort to anticipate and defuse tensions like these, the INSIST staff took pains from the beginning to extend invitations to some of Indonesia's most prominent pesantrens. During the first year of the program, for example, they invited representatives from the Gontor Pesantren in Ponorogo, East Java, and the Langitan Pesantren in Tuban, both of which are highly esteemed in the Muslim community. The program coordinators explained that they preferred to make direct ties to prominent pesantrens, rather than establishing formal ties with national Islamic organizations like the Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul Ulama, for two reasons. First, they felt that the pesantrens participate in the program on an individual, not an organizational basis, and that this feature of the program should be clear to the pesantrens themselves. Second, the program coordinators were concerned that working through national organizations might undercut the coordinators' ability to put together a balanced list of schools, one capable of exercising effective influence in the broader educational community.

The evaluator judges this strategy to have been appropriate and effective. Interviews with Muslim educators during July 2006 indicated that the invitations

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<sup>4</sup> See "Devide [sic] Pesantrens et Impera," in *Suara Hidayatullah* 7:15 (November 2002), pp. 32-37.

extended to influential schools like Gontor and Langitan reassured smaller and less prominent schools that the Pesantren Development Program is not intended to divide the Muslim community. There is perhaps no better illustration of INSIST's achievement in this regard than the fact that, two years after the *Suara Hidayatullah* ran its story lambasting the program as an instrument of divide-and-conquer, the new director of the Hidayatullah Foundation, Mr. Nashirul Haq, accepted an invitation to participate in the program. In a public gathering before fifty teachers at the Balikpapan pesantren complex in July 2006, Mr. Haq told the evaluator that, as a result of his travels to the United States in May 2005, his pesantren had changed course and experienced a "paradigm shift" (his terms) of "profound" proportions. The key feature of this paradigm shift was his pesantren's recognition that one can disagree with U.S. policies in the Middle East but still respect the American people and their institutions. A soft-spoken and moderate man, Mr. Haq has played a central role in urging the influential Hidayatullah pesantren network, which runs some 152 schools, to open itself to establishing cooperative ties with American schools and educators.

The first two classes sent to the United States were disproportionately from Java and from Nahdlatul Ulama-linked schools. However, in the third year of the program the INSIST staff have made good progress toward putting together a team more evenly balanced in terms of its members' regional and doctrinal background. In groups 3a and 3b, some 42% of the participants were from Java, and 58% from outside Java. Some 60% of the participants came from a broadly "NU" background, 20% from Muhammadiyah, and the remaining 20% from an independent background.

**Recommendations.** There are three areas in which adjustments to the recruitment process are worth considering. Consistent with BECA's earlier recommendation, the number of women participants in the program needs to be raised to reflect the significant role played by women in Indonesian Muslim education. The figure need not be proportional to the number of women who teach, but should better reflect the number of women who hold key administrative positions.

The second recommendation is to increase the number of participants invited from madrasas not associated with boarding schools. During the first two years of the program, the Indonesian educators recruited to the program were recruited from

*pesantrens* alone and did not include educators from free-standing Muslim day schools (*madrasas*). Beginning with groups 3A and 3B of the program, however, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs asked that teachers from *madrasa* day schools also be recruited to the program. However, the third-year class still included only one participant from an independent *madrasa*. Admittedly, the directors of *madrasas* not associated with *pesantrens* do not have the same degree of prestige or influence in their home communities as do leading educators in *pesantrens*. However, in terms of national enrollments, non-*pesantren* *madrasas* actually teach more students than do *pesantrens*. In light of these facts, the evaluator recommends that the program include a greater number of leading educators from non-*pesantren* *madrasas*. Educators from independent “Islamic schools” (*sekolah Islam*) – schools that are religious in nature, but not formally identified as *madrasas* – should also be included in the program. In light of the fact that *pesantren* leaders exercise a disproportionately large influence in the broader Muslim community, it is fitting that the majority of participants still be recruited from a *pesantren* background. However, efforts should be made to raise the proportion of non-*pesantren* educators and administrators to 25-33% of the total.

Third and last, the evaluator recommends that, rather than given *pesantren* directors full responsibility for picking the candidate who will participate in the program, the director of each *pesantren* nominate three candidates from which INSIST will select the final participant. At the reunion of ITD-INSIST alumni in Yogyakarta on July 19, 2006, several participants complained to the evaluator that in making their nominations some schools had favored family members over more qualified candidates. The INSIST staff agreed that such patronage considerations had influenced several *pesantrens*’ choice of candidates. Shifting final responsibility of the candidate to INSIST will help to insure that the most qualified candidates move to the fore.

## **2. COURSE OF TRAINING AND STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES**

Participants in the *pesantren* program spend approximately three weeks in the United States, arriving at JFK international airport and traveling directly to the ITD office in Amherst, Massachusetts. English-language competence is not a requirement for participation in the program, and the participants are accompanied in their flight from

Indonesia and during travel in the U.S. by an English-speaking Indonesian escort, chosen by the INSIST staff in Indonesia in consultation with the ITD.

The course of study in the U.S. begins with an orientation program at the ITD office, followed by a day-long training exercise on American education, usually led by a staff member from the University of Massachusetts, and completed with a visit to a regional high school. Over the following days, program fellows participate in a similarly balanced program of classroom instruction complemented by visits to libraries, private and public schools, a food bank, and Jewish, Christian, and Muslim centers (including schools). The group is provided with a similar mix of in-class instruction and first-hand meetings during visits to Boston, New York, and Washington.

The ITD staff who accompany the participants attempt to stimulate discussion throughout the group's travels. They discuss the role of education in democracy, religious pluralism in the United States, the causes and cures for religious intolerance, and the U.S. government's role in education and religion. Discussion of civic issues is complemented by visits focused on introducing the teachers to aspects of American education, including curriculum development in American schools, strategies for building and managing libraries, and methods for effective classroom instruction.

During the last week of the program, participants return to Amherst, to follow a series of in-depth seminars on civic education in America, democratic leadership, and strategies for improving Islamic education in Indonesia. During the final days of the program, participants prepare a mini-grant proposal the purpose of which is to apply some of the lessons they have learned in the U.S. to their own school back in Indonesia.

The training objectives of the pesantren program are ambitious, not least of all because they mix concrete educational goals like curriculum development with the more general ambition of introducing Muslim educators to the United States, democratic values, and American education. The training objectives are all the more challenging because the participants themselves come from different types of Muslim schools with different curricula and teaching methods, some closer in spirit to Western schools and others more distant. Finally, and very important, interviews with participants also indicated that they vary widely in their own educational training and background. Some teachers have spent most of their lives in educationally conservative traditionalist

institutions, while others have obtained most of their academic training in Indonesia's non-religious public school system. No training program can service all participants with equal effectiveness, and the diversity of participant backgrounds presents an additional challenge to this program's success.

In light of this diversity, the program evaluator was keen to determine whether the overall mix of program activities worked to the satisfaction of participants. At least from the participants' stated perspectives, the general response to this question was an unqualified affirmative. This high level of satisfaction was confirmed in the survey, personal interviews, and group discussions at the alumni reunion.

In the survey, which was administered in Indonesian (in which the evaluator is fluent), participants were asked to answer a series of questions about the program with the phrase, "very unsatisfied," "not satisfied," "satisfied," "very satisfied," or "don't know." The tabulated answers to the questions which follow show a *very strong* level of satisfaction with the program, the recruitment process, the ITD's assistance, and the INSIST assistance. The only program area where there is a small measure of dissatisfaction concerns the mini-grant program, discussed below.

### **TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION WITH PROGRAM**

#### **1. Were you satisfied with the selection process for participation in the pesantren program?**

Very unsatisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know	Total
-	-	17	13	-	30
0.00 %	0.00 %	56,67%	43,33%	0.00 %	100 %

#### **2. In general, what was your impression of the program of visit and study in the U.S.?**

Very unsatisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know	Total
-	-	15	15	-	30
0.00 %	0.00 %	50%	50%	0.00 %	100 %

**3. In general, how happy were you with the assistance provided by the ITD in Amherst during the time of the program?**

Very unsatisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know	Total
-	-	12	18	-	30
0.00 %	0.00 %	40%	60%	0.00 %	100 %

**4. How happy were you with the assistance provided by INSIST during the time of the program?**

Very unsatisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know	Total
-	-	9	21	-	30
0.00 %	0.00 %	30%	70%	0.00 %	100 %

**5. How satisfied were you with the mini-grant process developed during the program?**

Very unsatisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know	Total
-	3	21	5	1	30
0.00 %	10.00 %	70.00%	16.77%	3.33%	100 %

In interviews with the evaluator, many participants singled out the staff of the ITD for special praise. “Throughout the program, we always felt as if we were being treated with respect,” said one participant from West Java. “They were so polite, we always felt welcome in the U.S.” Another teacher from Sumatra added, “The way in which they operated their programs, with such consideration and efficiency, provided me with a model that I hope to imitate in my own school.”

Although one interviewee, particularly strict in his observance of *halal* food restrictions, complained that it was “hard to get *halal* food in the U.S.,” the great majority of participants applauded the effort of ITD staff to attend to Muslim food needs. Participants also expressed gratitude for the efforts of ITD staffers to set aside times for daily prayers, and to make arrangements for the participants to attend Friday mosque services.

As to participants’ satisfaction with the overall “mix” of classroom instruction and site visits, the great majority found the curriculum appropriate and interesting,

notwithstanding the fast pace of the travel program. A few interviewees expressed a wish for the program to devote less attention to classroom study and more to visiting schools, libraries, and centers of worship. “There was too much reading to keep up with, and too many ideas,” said one female participant. But this latter was a minority view. An even smaller number of interviewees (including individuals interviewed at their pesantrens and others interviewed at the alumni reunion) expressed an opposite opinion, saying that they felt that less time should be spent on site visits and more time on instruction in classroom, library, and management techniques. One particularly well-educated educator from Sulawesi made a compelling argument that the depth of in-class instruction be made greater.

Struck by the seriousness of this observation, the evaluator raised the question of curriculum “mix” in interviews with 22 of the program participants. These interviews indicated that this appeal for more in-depth class work was not shared by the majority of participants. The majority found the visits to schools and religious centers to be an especially worthwhile and instructive part of the program. Of these visits, the solid majority found their discussions with religious leaders, including Christian and Jewish leaders, especially worthwhile. Meetings with political leaders were judged interesting but somewhat less compelling. One participant commented, “You know here in Indonesia, most of us have never seen a Jew, but we’ve heard all these stories from Palestine, and of course there are the characterizations in the Qur’an. So it was fascinating to meet a Jewish rabbi, and see that he was a moral and sympathetic person, easy to talk with. In fact, for me, the visit to the Jewish school was the most fascinating of all the things we did, because it was so clear to me that Jewish and Islamic schools have a lot in common.” Another participant expressed surprise at the fact that the principal of a Jewish school visited was herself non-Jewish. “This was an example of pluralism at which we were all amazed!”

**Recommendations.** The mini-grant project was the one aspect of the training program about which several participants voiced reservations, albeit minor ones, but the questions raised are relevant to aspects of the project’s general training component. The participants raised two points. First, many felt that the counsel provided by the ITD on how to write a proposal and how to link the goals of the Pesantren Development Program

to school activities back in Indonesia should be discussed in more depth. A handful of participants said they had real difficulty linking the program of study in the U.S. with their own school environment. The evaluator suspects that some of these reservations reflected the participants' diverse backgrounds, and the fact that many teachers have never written a project proposal. Nonetheless, some additional monitoring and assistance during the proposal-writing process seems merited, especially since the mini-grant program is designed to convey lessons from the program back to the participant's home school.

Second, many participants expressed the conviction that the amount of funding available from the mini-grant (\$2000) is too small. Inasmuch as most Muslim schools in Indonesia are cash-strapped, statements of this sort are not surprising, and not something a program of this sort can or should resolve. However, since some of the long-term benefits of the program depend on the successful operationalization of the mini-grant program, a small expansion of the mini-grant program is worth considering. To this end, rather than increasing the mini-grant funding across-the-board, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs might consider sponsoring a second and more competitive round of mini-grant funding, with a smaller number of awards (going to perhaps 1/3 of those who apply), but somewhat more funding (for example, \$3000-4000). These awards could be given to schools that successfully implement their first mini-grant proposal, and then make a compelling written case for an additional project related to the program's curricular or civic-educational goals.

Such a second-round of funding would have two benefits. First, it would encourage participants to find additional ways to apply the lessons from their American experience back to their home schools. Second, and no less significant, the application process would encourage participants to maintain contact with the American sponsor and other Indonesians in the alumni network, helping to develop a long-term network of program graduates.

The participants' requests for more guidance in writing the mini-grant proposal is related, finally, to one other recommendation regarding the program's training component. Although the overall balance of class-room training and site visits seems appropriate, the participants' comments to the evaluator (both in interview and at the

alumni reunion) suggest that the ITD should consider linking the classroom training more explicitly to the site visits, so that the two program components “synergize” more effectively. As one participant from West Java observed, “It would be very helpful if, before each visit, we were told just what was special or important about the place we were about to visit.” Clearly an intellectual synergy is already taking place between the program’s two main components, but a more explicit exposition of the relationship between classroom discussion and site visits would make the synergy all the more effective.

### **3. IMPACT ON TEACHING, CURRICULA, LIBRARIES, AND MANAGEMENT**

The surveys and interviews reveal that participation in the pesantren program had a moderate to strong impact on teaching methods, curricula, and student participation back at the teachers’ home school. The program’s greatest area of pedagogical impact lay in participants’ efforts to create more active student engagement like that they had seen in the U.S. Although several teachers expressed reservations about the degree of informality seen in American classrooms, most expressed admiration for the enthusiasm American teachers bring to teaching and students to learning. Several participants report that they have been inspired to introduce “active learning” methods into their own classrooms. One participant from Central Java observed that, as a result of his visits to American schools, he has encouraged his students to be “closer and braver [berani] toward the teacher.” Another teacher from Java had introduced similar reforms, urging his students to “feel assured that they can express their opinions to the teacher.” He added, “by learning things like this they [the students] can better understand that democracy is not just some jargon introduced by the West to serve Western interests.”

The following answers to survey questions from 30 of the 31 participants indicate that the program had significant effects on curriculum development, management, libraries, and teaching.

#### **TABLE 2: PROGRAM IMPACT ON SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

**Did participation in the pesantren program lead to changes in or otherwise impact the following activities or facilities at your home school?**

	No Change	A Little Change	Yes, Big Change	Don't Know
6. Curriculum development	6.67%	66.67%	23.33%	3.33
7. Teacher Training	20%	36.67%	33.33%	10%
8. School Library	20%	36.67%	33.33%	10%
9. Educational technology like computers	20%	53.33%	26.67%	0%
10. Student Participation in Class	3.33%	56.67%	30.00%	10%
11. Time Students Devote to reading	0%	56.67%	36.67%	6.67%
12. Student Attitudes toward teachers & staff	6.67%	43.33%	43.33%	6.67%
13. Student enthusiasm for learning	3.33%	43.33%	46.67%	6.67%
14. Methods for grading students	3.33%	60%	23.33%	13.34%
15. School management, and date management	20%	60%	13.33%	6.67%
16. Fiscal management	30%	53.33%	6.67%	10.0%
17. Smaller Class Size	26.67%	46.67%	16.67%	10%
18. Other Infrastructural features like access to the internet	26.67%	53.33%	20%	0%
19. Overseeing of Teachers	20%	56.67%	23.33%	0%

Interviews and the written comments that accompanied the surveys illustrate the breadth of program impact. For example, many teachers expressed special admiration for a cultural habit that they felt was more widespread among Americans than Indonesians: reading. A full 90% of the participants reported that participation in the program had resulted in their schools introducing innovations intended to encourage students to read more. Seventy percent said that participation in the program had resulted in changes in school libraries. A Sumatran teacher wrote in her survey that as a result of her

participation in the pesantren program her senior high school had introduced a requirement that students read ten books each semester. A teacher from an East Java pesantren was similarly inspired by American educators' emphasis on reading, and his school now requires students to read from 7-9:00 p.m. each night. A teacher from Sumatra reported, "the students really like the books that we were given by the American consulate." At three of the pesantrens visited by the evaluator, libraries funded through the mini-grant program are open, not just to students from the school, but to people from the nearby community.

Participation in the program has also resulted in changes in teacher training and curricula. An East Javanese participant reported, "Before our school didn't have a vision. But now the teachers have come together and formulated a vision of how we want to teach. Before too we didn't have a clear sense of what our curriculum was. Now too we are in the process of developing our own curriculum." A teacher from Central Java spoke of similarly dramatic changes in teacher training. "We've reformed our training of teachers; the changes are revolutionary. We emphasize modern training and team work for our teachers. We evaluate our teachers now, and those who are lacking in discipline are now subject to sanction."

In these and other testimonies, it is clear that participants in the program feel that their teaching, curricula, and libraries benefited from participation in the Pesantren Development Program. Several educators pointed out that their schools still lack the resources to implement many of the changes for which participants yearn. Most teachers, for example, expressed the hope that they might make class sizes smaller, but most quickly added that such reforms are at present impossible due to funding limitations. Several other educators noted too that implementation of these reforms would take time and the re-training of other staff at the school. Many educators expressed the hope that the United States might provide training in innovative teaching methods and school administration to others among their colleagues back at the home school.

#### **4. IMPACT ON VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY, PLURALISM, GENDER, AND SECULARISM**

In Indonesia as in most other Muslim-majority countries, there is a range of opinion concerning the compatibility of democracy, pluralism, gender equality, and secularism with Islam. Islam is a religion of divine law, and debates about most of these issues return at some point to the thorny question of whether Islamic law indicates that there is such a compatibility. Polls also indicate that Muslim public opinion varies from country to country. Generally speaking, polls suggest that the majority of Muslims support constitutional democracy and the rule of law, while opposing Western-style secularism, understood as the formal separation of state and religious authorities. On matters of gender equality, Muslim public opinion tends to be more divided, with Muslims in the Middle East less inclined to support full citizen rights for women than their counterparts in Southeast Asia.

In Indonesia, this latter generalization also holds, but with certain qualifications. For example, polls indicate that almost half of the Muslim public think that women should not be allowed to become president or vice president. On the question of whether people of different religions should have equal citizen rights, polls indicate that most Indonesian Muslims are willing in principle to extend full citizen rights to non-Muslims. However, when asked whether a non-Muslim should be allowed to run for president or vice-president, a slight majority disagree.

On most of these critical issues, participants in the pesantren program hold views similar to the broader Indonesian public, but they tend on more divisive political questions to be more “liberal-minded.” This generalization is especially true on matters of gender and citizen rights for non-Muslims, where the participants look considerably more reform-minded than the Muslim mainstream. Some 97% of the participants agree that democracy is the best form of government for a country like Indonesia, almost 20% higher than the Muslim public as a whole. Some 90% of program participants agree that Islam teaches that men and women should have equal social and political rights. A full 90% agree that Islam supports the idea that citizens should be able to live freely and without fear. Some 97% believe that citizens should have equal rights to carry out their own religion. Interviews confirmed that, for most of the participants in the Pesantren Development Program, these are deeply held convictions.

As is generally the case in surveys of Muslim attitudes, there are a some issues on which most Muslims feel there is a clear message from the Qur'an or Islamic law as to how social and political affairs should be handled. Some of these matters pose problems for proponents of Western-style democracy. Even on these issues, however, participants in the Pesantren Development Program appear to be more liberal-minded than the general Muslim public, but in a less dramatic manner than for the above-mentioned issues. For example, some 47% of the participants feel that non-Muslims should not be allowed to become president or vice president. Some 53% feel that the state should enforce Islamic law for all Muslims. However, only 30% feel that the state should enforce the Ramadhan fast by punishing those who do not carry out the duty.

Notwithstanding the strength of their conviction that democracy is the best form of government for a country like Indonesia, the participants are divided on the question of whether an Islamic government based on the Qur'an and Sunna and administered by experts in Islamic law is also the best form of government for a country like Indonesia. Some 37% of the participant agree or strongly agree with this statement; but 40% disagree or disagree strongly. Other surveys of Indonesian Muslim opinion indicate that the Muslim population is deeply divided on the question of the law, although the proportion who support the idea that the state should be both democratic and based on the Qur'an and Sunna typically hovers just under 80%. Consistent with their more liberal-minded profile, a greater proportion of the participants in the pesantren development program adhere to a less "statist" view.

### **TABLE 3: PARTICIPANT VIEWS OF DEMOCRACY, FREEDOMS, & ISLAM AND STATE**

**Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
Compared with other systems, Democracy is the best form of Government for countries like Indonesia	43.33%	53.34%	0%	0%	3.33%
An Islamic government, i.e. one Based on the Quran and Sunna and Under the leadership of Islamic					

Leaders is the best form of government For a country like Indonesia	20%	16.67%	36.67%	3.33%	23.33%
Islam teaches the equality Of social and political rights For men and women	30%	60%	6.67%	3.33%	0%
Islam supports Freedom of the press	16.67%	43.33%	20%	3.33%	16.67%
Islam supports the rights of Citizens to live freely & Without fear	56.67%	33.33%	6.67%	3.33%	0%
Followers of all Religions Have to have equal rights to Carry out their religion	50%	46.67%	3.33%	0%	0%
It's best that non-Muslims Not be allowed to become President or vice president	16.67%	30%	30%	3.33%	20%
The state has to enforce the Implementation of shari`a for All Muslims	30%	23.33%	33.33%	3.33%	10%
The state has to make sure that Muslims carry out the Ramadhan Fast and punish those who do not	23.33%	6.67%	50%	13.33%	6.67%
Islam teaches that husbands must Lead their wives, but today many Women are in positions of authority Over men and this should not be Allowed	3.33%	23.34%	50%	13.33%	10%

The above questions do not tell us, of course, whether the participants' attitudes actually *changed* as a result of participation in the pesantren program. The above figures could just reflect views held before participants took part in the State Department program. So as to get a measure of this issue, however, the survey questionnaire asked participants whether their views had actually changed as a result of their participation in the program. The results are presented in Table 4. From the program sponsors' point of view, these data are especially interesting because they tell us that the program did indeed have a positive impact on participants' commitment to democratic and pluralist values.

Even keeping in mind the fact that participants in the Pesantren Development Program tend to have a more liberal-minded profile than ordinary Indonesians, the data from the survey on attitudinal change are striking. The data indicate that on the most

vexing issues in Muslim political debate – democracy, religious pluralism, and gender – a clear *majority* of participants in the pesantren program have introduced important new lessons into their school curriculum as a result of their participation in the program. It is only on matters related to the rights of the disabled – an issue which has never received the attention in Indonesia that it has in the U.S. – that a majority of respondents indicate that their participation did not lead them to initiate changes in their curriculum.

#### **TABLE 4: PROGRAM IMPACT ON CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM**

**As a consequence of your participation in the pesantren program, did you introduce any new lessons on the following topics in your school? (sample = 30)**

	<b>No Change</b>	<b>A Little Change</b>	<b>Some Change</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>Democracy</b>	<b>16.67%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Pluralism Religious Diversity</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>46.67%</b>	<b>6.66%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>The United States</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>
<b>Religions Other Than Islam</b>	<b>43.33%</b>	<b>26.67%</b>	<b>23.33%</b>	<b>6.67%</b>
<b>Disabled People</b>	<b>53.33%</b>	<b>23.33%</b>	<b>16.67%</b>	<b>6.67%</b>

As many participants indicated in our in-depth interviews, curricular changes in a school are often more difficult to initiate than are individual attitudinal changes. Interviewees noted, for example, that most of the innovations in curricula that they might wish to initiate have to be approved by a supervisory committee. Recommended curricular reforms were in several cases slowed because of disagreement among teachers and administrators as to the compatibility of the reforms with some aspect of Islamic teaching.

In light of this fact, the survey also asked participants whether they were more or less inclined to agree with certain political statements as a result of their participation in

the Pesantren Development Program. The answers to these questions were even more striking than those related to curricular reform. On questions related to the importance of democratic government, the equality of rights and opportunity for women, equality of rights and opportunities for non-Muslims, and freedom of the press, a surprising 73-80% of the program participants indicated that they were either a "little more" or "*much more*" inclined to agree with these key democratic issues than they were prior to participating in the program. If these data are accurate, they indicate that the program has had a profoundly democratizing effect on its participants.

It was only on the question of secularism, defined as the formal separation of religious authorities from the state, that the majority of respondents indicated that their attitudes had not changed; by contrast, only 27% report their views had changed. Interviews with individual participants made clear that these statistics testify to a rejection of a *formal and absolute* separation of religion and state authority. Although the great majority of participants are committed to democratic government, and a plurality do not want a government in which religious authorities manage political affairs, most want religious and ethical values to color political life. In interviews, most participants said that to bring about such a coloring there has to be some bridge or institutional linkage between religious authorities and the state. This is why most participants reject secularism, as they understand it.

### **TABLE 5: PROGRAM IMPACT ON PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDINGS OF CITIZENSHIP**

**As a consequence of your participation in the pesantren program, are you *more* or less inclined to agree with the following positions? (sample = 30)**

	<b>Yes, I Agree More</b>	<b>Agree A Little More</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Don't Agree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>Equality of Rights &amp; Opportunity for Women</b>	63.33%	16.66%	6.67%	6.67%	6.67%
<b>The Press Should be Free &amp; Independent</b>	53.33%	20%	6.67%	6.67%	13.33%
<b>Rights and Opportunities Should be the Same for</b>					

<b>All Citizens Regardless Of Religion or Ethnicity</b>	<b>76.67%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6.67%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>
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**As a consequence of your participation in the pesantren program, do you have a more or less favorable impression of the following? (sample = 30)**

	<b>Far More Favorable</b>	<b>A Little More Favorable</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Slightly More Negative</b>	<b>Far More Negative</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>The Importance of Democratic Government</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>26.67%</b>	<b>13.33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>The Importance of Secularism, i.e. Separation of State &amp; Religious Authority</b>	<b>6.67%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>43.33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>20%</b>

## **5. IMPACT ON IMPRESSIONS OF THE U.S.**

The evaluator of this report was no more surprised by the results of this program evaluation than with regard to the question of the impression made by the program and the American people on participants. A full 100% of the participants were either satisfied or very satisfied by their experience in the Pesantren Development Program. Seventy percent felt that the experience had led them to introduce new lessons on the United States into their curriculum. A solid 63.3% had a *far more* favorable impression of the American people; an additional 33.33% had a somewhat more favorable impression. Not one participant came away from the program with a less favorable impression of the American people.

An East Java participant conveyed a widely held opinion. “The comprehensive information I received through the program on America has entirely changed my view of the American people; I no longer think of them as colonizers who like to do battle.”

Another teacher wrote of a similarly dramatic change in perspective. “Before I went to the U.S., my impression of America was largely negative, mostly as a result of Western films which portray lots of violence, bad behavior, and freedom that goes too far.

Another reason I have a bad impression was our press, which writes as if America hates

Islam. It turns out the situation is actually quite different; in fact the American people are peaceful and mostly respect Islam.”

It is equally interesting that, notwithstanding the strength of participants’ opposition to U.S. policies in the Middle East – an opposition to which the evaluator found not one exception – participation in the program even had a modestly favorable effect on participants’ impressions of the U.S. government. For 10% of the participants, the effect was very favorable; 60% were somewhat more favorable; only 6.67% had a less favorable impression. Seventy percent of participants made small or significant adjustments to their curriculum to convey something of what they had learned about the United States to their students.

### **TABLE 6: PROGRAM IMPACT ON IMPRESSIONS OF U.S.**

**As a consequence of your participation in the pesantren program, did you introduce any new lessons on the following topics in your school? (sample = 30)**

	<b>No Change</b>	<b>A Little Change</b>	<b>Some Change</b>	<b>Don’t Know</b>
<b>The United States</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>

**As a consequence of your participation in the pesantren program, do you have a more or less favorable impression of the following? (sample = 30)**

	<b>Far More Favorable</b>	<b>A Little More Favorable</b>	<b>No Change</b>	<b>Slightly More Negative</b>	<b>Far More Negative</b>	<b>Don’t Know</b>
<b>The American People</b>	<b>63.33%</b>	<b>33.34%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
<b>The American Government</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>23.33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6.67%</b>	

In personal interviews participants elaborated on their favorable impressions of the American people. Many referred to their surprise at the warmth and friendliness of the Americans they met, even in chance encounters with strangers providing directions on the street. Many participants also singled out the staff of the ITD in Amherst as prime examples of the cordiality they had experienced in the U.S. Several interviewees also commented that they spoke regularly about their experiences in public. One teacher from eastern Indonesia wrote, ”Each opportunity I have in public, I convey information about

what I saw in the U.S. program of study. And because people and local government know I do this, I'm regularly invited to talk. What I like most to talk about is that, in the U.S. the rights of citizens are really respected. As a result of this, there's been a real change in how well people understand democracy."

However, participants' views of the United States are not unqualifiedly positive. When asked whether Americans have a broad enough understanding of the outside world, 70% of the participants respond that Americans do not. When asked whether they thought Americans understood Indonesia, 77% said Americans do not. When asked whether they thought that Americans had a sufficient understanding of Islam, the results were similar, with two-thirds of the respondents saying that Americans do not.

However, the participants' sharpest assessment of the United States was saved for the U.S. global war on terror. Asked their view about the opinion that "The war on terror conducted by the United States and the United Kingdom actually amounts to acts of terrorism against Muslim nations," the results were striking. Some 43% strongly agreed or agreed that the war on terror is in fact a war on Islam (strong agreement amounting, however, to just 6.67% of that total). Some 20% of the respondents disagreed; 6.67% strongly disagreed; and 30% had no opinion. In the Indonesian Muslim public as a whole, just under 70% of the population regards the global war on terror as a war on Islam. In this sense, participants in the Pesantren Development Program appear to be more nuanced in their views of U.S. policy in the Muslim world than the general Muslim public. Nonetheless the figures provide a partial exception to the otherwise favorable impression that most participants have of the United States.

## **6. IMPACT ON LONG-TERM ALUMNI COOPERATION**

One of the stated aims of the pesantren program is to strengthen each pesantren's contribution to Indonesian society, not just by empowering individual schools, but by building lasting communication among program participants. The ITD staff maintain personal contact with participants through e-mails, a website set up for program alumni, and through staff visits and alumni meetings.

For most participants, the alumni reunion held the year following each class's visit to the U.S. is the most important of these activities. The evaluator participated in

the July 2006 alumni reunion in Yogyakarta. Organized by INSIST and the ITD, the reunion was well-run, and engaged the alumni in an active way by breaking down the participants into workshops teams who discussed strategies for more effective teaching. The 2006 event was hosted by Ms. Kristina Engstrom from ITD, and it was clear that participants viewed her with genuine affection. The workshops not only allowed participants to socialize and reminisce but encouraged them to talk about ways to address questions of active learning, civic education, and democracy in their schools.

When asked in interviews about the reunions, the great majority of participants said that the events had been both enjoyable and educational. Many expressed the hope that the workshops could be continued beyond the first year. (Each year's reunion brings together only that year's participants, supplemented by two representatives from each of the prior years' programs). These participants noted that most alumni do not regularly access the ITD web site, and except for the first-year reunion, there are few opportunities for program fellows to keep in contact. This is especially the case because some of the alumni do not have access to the internet through their schools.

At the July 2006 meeting, the ITD and INSIST encouraged alumni to take additional steps to enhance post-program cooperation. The alumni elected a new team of coordinators for the "Forum Pesantren." The Forum is an alumni association established at the first reunion in December 2004. Although in early 2005, the association raised fund for victims of the Aceh tsunami, most interviewees from the program's first years indicated that, although they have maintained contact with individual alumni, they have not been active in the broader Forum. Alumni at the 2006 meeting expressed a desire to revive the Forum, although some again observed that participants who lack internet access will not be able to participate fully.

Several interviewees commented that the lack of post-program contact reflects the inevitable reality that the alumni live separate existences in schools with different educational programs, and located in different parts of the country. Several participants expressed the hope that the alumni network might yet be strengthened. However, most were resigned to or even at ease with the present low-key state of affairs. They pointed out – and the program evaluator agrees – that the long-term impact of participation in the program is felt most significantly in their own schools and communities.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since its inception in 2002, the Pesantren Development Program has brought 94 leading Muslim educators to the United States for a three-week program designed to introduce participants to American culture, education, and government. The program aims in particular to introduce participants to American education and America's socioreligious pluralism. In so doing, the program also aims to deepen participants' appreciation for freedom, democracy, and pluralism. The program combines classroom instruction with visits to American schools, houses of worship, and government offices in different cities across the eastern United States. The program also aims to deepen participants' familiarity with teaching methodologies, curricular materials, and management techniques used by American educators and to explore their relevance for Indonesian Muslim schools.

At a time of serious policy tensions between Muslims and the U.S., it is inevitable that a program like the Pesantren Development Program will face challenges. The program's aims are further complicated by the fact that the Indonesian participants, while all Sunni Muslims, come from a variety of doctrinal and educational backgrounds. Some are teachers in traditionalist schools emphasizing instruction in classical traditions of religious knowledge. Others are reform-minded traditionalists aiming to combine classical religious education with modern general education. Others are modernist Muslims intent on providing their students with a non-specialized religious and general education.

Despite the diversity of the program's clients, this evaluation report concludes that the program has succeeded at achieving its stated aims. The INSIST and ITD staffers manage the program with enthusiasm, consideration, and intelligence. The participants report that they emerge from the program with important lessons on how to improve the quality of education in their schools. Although when they come to the program most participants tend to be more democratic-minded than mainstream Indonesians, most come away from the program with a deepened commitment to democracy, pluralism, and a measure of gender equality. It is only with regard to the

contentious issue of secularism – i.e. a formal and total separation of religion from politics and public life – that participants’ views diverge markedly from those of secular Americans. However, it is important to remember that many religious Americans would agree with this divergence.

The single most striking finding from this evaluation, however, concerns the success of the program in providing participants with a favorable and sophisticated impression of the United States and democracy. Participants state that they come away from the program with a deeper understanding of democratic principles and practice. They also come away with a deep-felt and favorable impression of the American people. Most participants report that they convey some of these impressions to their students and communities back in Indonesia. Participants are unanimous in their condemnation of U.S. policies in the Muslim Middle East. But the great majority make clear that they distinguish government policy from the American people. Equally interesting, most also report that the program gives them a more balanced impression of U.S. governance.

In light of the program’s achievements, the evaluator’s recommendations are straightforward and modest in scope:

1. **Maintain Classroom and Site-Visit Balance.** Maintain the program’s current mix of in-class discussion and visits to American schools, houses of worship, and government offices. The mix has a positive and enriching effect on participants’ educational methods and understanding of American society.
2. **Heighten Classroom and Site-Visit Synergy.** However, so as to heighten the synergy between classroom instruction and site visits, explain the purpose of each site visit clearly and in a manner that demonstrates the site’s relevance for understanding educational methods, democratic pluralism, or American society. Consider providing additional counsel on the relationship between the study program in the U.S. and the mini-grant project back in Indonesia.
3. **Maintain Current Group Size but Add One Additional Group Per Year.** Maintain the emphasis on small groups of 18 participants for each of the visiting groups. However, expand the program’s impact in Indonesia by 50% by adding a third visiting group to each year’s class. Such an expansion would be welcomed

by the many Indonesian teachers who have expressed an interest in participating in the program.

4. **Include Teachers from Madrasas as well as Pesantrens.** Encourage the INSIST staff to continue to expand the ranks of the invitees beyond pesantrens, so that one-fourth to one-third of participants come from madrasa day-schools or independent Islamic schools without ties to pesantrens.
5. **Add Second Stage to Mini-Grant Program.** Strengthen the long-term impact of the mini-grant program by adding a more selective “second stage” competition for a maximum of four or five grants at an additional \$3000-\$4000 each. These additional grants should be reserved for programs designed to have an enduring impact on the teaching of civic and democratic values.
6. **Strengthen Alumni Association.** Maintain and expand the resources available on the Pesantren Development Program web-site. Include alumni reflections on teaching innovations with which they have experimented in their schools. While recognizing that final responsibility for the alumni association must lie with the alumni, encourage INSIST to support efforts to vitalize the Forum Pesantren.

In sum, the Pesantren Development Program is a well-managed and impressively effective program that deserves to be continued. Funding for some of its constituent elements, like the mini-grants programs, should be expanded. Equally important, the Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs of the U.S. State Department should give serious attention to expanding the program size from its annual target of 36 participants to 54. The rationale for these adjustments is compelling and clear. Assessed in terms of its stated ambitions, the Pesantren Development Program has been a resounding success.

## **Appendix: Evaluation Preparations, Survey, and Site Visits**

**ITD Discussions & Survey Preparation.** The evaluator first discussed the program with Mr. Mark Protti (ITD Director) and Ms. Kris Engstrom (Pesantren Program Director) in Boston on December 21, 2005. During February and March, the evaluator read proposals and reports on the project prepared by the ITD staff. During April and May, the evaluator worked with Ms. Engstrom to prepare a 50-question survey to be distributed to program participants in Indonesia by the INSIST staff. Thirty of the thirty-one third-year participants in the program completed and returned the survey.

**Site Visits and Interviews.** The evaluator met with and interviewed INSIST staff on July 3, 2006, and conducted additional discussions with the program coordinator, Nena Lemanah, and the assistant coordinator, Muhammad Ishom over the next two weeks.

The schools and individuals listed below (1-11) were visited between July 3 and July 14, 2006. Six of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. In addition to meeting with individual participants, the evaluator met separately with a larger group of teachers and administrators at each of the following schools with the exception of #1 and #9, where only individual interviews were conducted. The purpose of these larger meetings was to assess the program's broader impact on school administration, curricula, and program development.

1. July 3, 2006. H. Abdul Muhaimin, Pesantren Putri Nurul Ummahat, Yogyakarta.
2. July 4, 2006. Azhar Arsyad, Dewan Darul Irsysad, Makassar City.
3. July 4, 2006. Arsyad Mapawelle, PP Darul Arqam, Gombara, Makassar.
4. July 5, 2006. Nashirul Haq, PP Hidayatullah, Balikpapan, East Kalimantan.
5. July 7, 2006. Nina Hasnayati, PP al-Mannar, Medan, North Sumatra.
6. July 8, 2006. M. Faisal bin Ali, Pesantren Mahyal Ulum, Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar.
7. July 10, 2006. M. Jazuri, PP Al-Muttaquien Pancasila Sakti, Klaten, Central Java.
8. July 11, 2006. Imam Baehaqi, PP Ma'hadulilmi Al Syari'i, Lasem, Rembang, Central Java.
9. July 12, 2006. Abdullah Munif MZ, PP Langitan, Tuban, East Java.
10. July 13, 2006. Choriun Nisa, PP Roudlotun Nasyin, Mojokerto, East Java.

11. July 14, 2006. Mu'tasshim Billah, PP Sunan Pandan Aran, Sleman, Yogyakarta.

**Alumni reunion.** The evaluator also attended the reunion of participants from the third year of the program in Yogyakarta, on July 18-20. The evaluator conducted formal interviews with eight more participants, and held shorter discussions with all but one of the remaining program participants in attendance.