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# MENDAHULUKAN Si MISKIN

Buku Sumber bagi Anggaran Pro Rakyat



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## Profile of Binny Bintarti Buchori

# How should Politics Work?

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**B**inny Bintarti Buchori is a well-known name in the Indonesian democratic activism. What makes her joined a political party? When Binny Buchori is busy “joining in an Election Area (*Daerah Pemilihan*),” *Jurnal Perempuan* approached her to talk about her representation in politics as legislative candidate. Binny is a candidate of DPR-RI 2014-2019, East Java VII Election Area, Golkar, number 1. She was born in Bandung, March 1, 1958. She was a student of English Department in Gajah Mada University Yogyakarta, and then she continued her study to UK by acquiring Master’s Degree scholarship on Librarianship and Information Studies in University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom. In UK, Binny saw a political, social, and student movement blended into fight against the apartheid politics in South Africa. Her interest in Civil Society Organization (CSO), education, and politics probably was the influence of her family. Binny is the daughter of Mochtar Buchori, ex-Rector of IKIP Muhammadiyah Jakarta Yogyakarta and ex-member of DPR RI, he was also known as an expert in education. Binny’s interest in politics

emerged since she worked in INFID (International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development), which doing advocacy on various policy. Binny sees there is a missing link of what she dreamt as a civil society organization's and the society's vision about justice and prosperity with what the policy makers decided on. Finally, Binny thinks she has to step into politics. She never mentions it as practical politics, instead she calls it as a decision to do politics, whether with or without the political party.

Binny had her opportunity of being a Chairman of Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa on 2005, but she rejected the offer because she just established a Civil Society Organization *Perkumpulan Prakarsa*, which focuses on research. Binny realizes the importance for an activist to join a political party to avoid the domination of elitist in a political party. DEMOS study in 2004 stated that pro-democracy groups have to enter the political arena to ensure that the Act made by the government is in the favor of the society. She has wide experience as a leader such as the Executive Director of International NGO Forum on Indonesia Development (INFID), Executive Director of *Perkumpulan Prakarsa* Jakarta, and she also led Ashoka, a non-profit organization that bequeath a reward for people who have innovative idea in public sector. Binny started her career in *The Jakarta Post* from 1983 to 1986. She left her steady career as the mass media at that time could not accommodate people's concern on social justice, and her critical ideas did not receive much response. Her enlightenment process went on when in 1986 she continued her study on Librarianship and Information Studies in University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom. She saw public participation in policy making, the activities ranged from boycotting South Africa's product until *Free Mandela Movement*. She brought the passion back to Indonesia, fortifying her desire to join people who dared to work outside the box and believed in what they did.

Binny considers herself as an activist who is already involved in political world. Even though statistically saying, it is rare for an English Department student chooses to be an activist. Before she finally joins a political party, in reunion Binny's friends often asked why she wants to be an activist while she already had a stable job. Her friends often said, "it is like you have nothing you need," meaning Binny does not

need the money, does not need to work. For her, getting involved in activist world, particularly in advocacy, enable her to have closer connection with the policy makers such as the government and legislator. Even before she became an activist, she already joined a lot of discussions with other female activists such as Maria Pakpahan and Gung Ayu in 1993 or 1994 on what if in the future Indonesia changed with new political parties? Will they be ready to be involved? It was inconceivable, but after 1998, Binny considered of joining a political party, because our Nation management relies on the Acts and Policies. By joining a political party it also means that she will have the chance to make a change in the policy. When she was a journalist, Binny felt she did not have much space to convey her opinion, for example on writing news, she could not even give a slight interpretation for the readers due to the situation and the journalists needed to be careful on writing a news. Editors were very strict so that the published news did not seem tendentious. There was a slight freedom on writing feature on arts and culture. That was the unstable time due to Bill on Societal Organizations of 1985 (*UU Ormas tahun 1985*), when there was only one rule for media to write news and there was a law to enforce it. Many of Binny's family members had experience of working in Civil Society Organization, especially related with studies on society's understanding. Binny wanted to join the professional world when more people were excited to join group discussion and wanted to make a significant change. "When my friends excitedly discussed about their passion to make a change, I got my first salary and my life became more stable." Binny admitted that it was a bit slower for her to finally participate in activist world compared to her other friends, but when she went to UK because of her teaching responsibility as a lecturer, Binny learned about political actions and helped the activists network there.

She got scholarship and only stayed for two years in UK. As she got scholarship from the government, she was restricted of doing some activities and she had to be extra careful. But she has strong will to join the students' movement there, moreover when she looked at her friends who were active in Amnesty International, picking up phones, sending telegrams, making releases, and Binny helped them a bit. The

first week she started her study, she was introduced to student groups through exhibition; some of them are Amnesty International, a group with train riding as their hobby, social solidarity group, and a group that accompany senior citizens. That was when Binny saw those as political movements.

What she learned on librarianship in UK could also be a distinctive political action in Indonesia. In UK, there was an Act on library named Public Library Act, which was ratified in the 1500s. It stated that the local government and every district need to have a public library funded by the tax. The librarians also contributed to democratize the knowledge by serving people related to their citizen's advice biro rights. "Usually they will release a brochure on 'borrowers' rights.'" Most of the librarians are volunteers, and that is how politics supposed to run, and the lesson they teach there are according to what they learn in the society. "I saw how politics worked, and what they learned about library became alive in the society." Binny is interested in public library concept, which is the state when the Nation becomes the provider like Civil Society Organization and many people are willing to be volunteers to help people, including the homeless with smelly clothes as they rarely shower, who want to lie down or read newspaper in the library. The librarians cannot kick them out. They should get the similar treatment as the other citizens do. Compare it to our library, if the homeless goes into the library, the security guard will be the first to kick them out. Binny saw this as democracy and this politics model excites her. As soon as she returned from UK, she wanted to build a local public library. She often reminds her librarian friends that library is supposed to be a place to spread information and to educate people; they should not stick to technical problems and contain a lot of rules, except for the standard rules. There, Binny saw in practice how society service works, since information and knowledge is also a part of political commodity.

### **If She Becomes a Legislative Member**

What would Binny want to do if she becomes a legislative member? Binny answers, a legislator or parliament member has three main tasks: making Act/Bill, monitoring and formulating the National Budget.

Binny aims to make the Meeting of Public Hearing as a discussion forum with the government to plan more proportional National Budget. "We have a lot of funds, but the problem is not how we allocate the money, we also need budget politics. There never has been a Meeting of Public Hearing that shows the existence of budget politics." This is something she aspires to do. Another thing, there needs to be a serious initiative of DPR about food policy, the implementation of the Social Security Administrative Body (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial/ BPJS*) that shows the extent of the law reflecting framework welfare regime, and the effectiveness of DPR's monitoring on the information of BPJS progress. When she was asked about the public's interest, Binny answered that the society and the Nation have not realized that we need to be resourceful, take control of the information. They have not realized that there are laws protecting them. "I heard there are a lot of vagueness from the government on which one is public information and which one is not."

When she was asked about her opinion on education, she quoted her late father that education is supposed to prosper life. Therefore, the government needs to think of the needed policies and institutions. "Future-oriented education. Our educational budget is abundant, but what about the budget allocation? For example, we have plentiful amount of educational budget, but why there are a lot of dropped out students?" Binny explained that in her Election Area, there are 33% of Elementary School graduates and 18% of Senior High School graduates. The main root is poverty. The second one is access, how people can access the education. The next aspect is the school facility such as the library and the librarians. The librarians should have the knowledge and skills on how they can develop the library qualities. Also, the laboratories on technology and language. "For example, in an elementary school, there are six classes and there are about 300-500 students, how many computers they need. And they should also think about the language laboratory, because language is the window of the world."

Binny thinks, budget politics is how the budget is composed and managed; we have to closely observe whether the arrangement is prosperity or if it is pro-the rich. And our budget politics, according to

Binny, is still far from that goal. "If we talk about budgeting, there are actually some options on the policy, on where we put the money. After that, we can see whether the arrangement is pro-society or pro-the rich, while we still have extractive income source or we still depend on the natural resources. The fact is, our income should have been from the tax." Binny further explains that our routine budget focus on routine purchasing and item purchasing not capital. "If the government did capital purchase, it was for the rural infrastructure. Up until now there are some islands without piers, and we should also buy ferry ship for crossing between islands, which should be bought in good quality standard and under reliable supervision. Or perhaps, the lack of infrastructures is caused by corruption practices."

### **Women in Political Party**

When she was asked about the obstacles in joining a political party as a woman, Binny answered that she did not receive discrimination; it was rather on age-basis. The obstacles often happen to young female politicians or to young mothers because they have limited time to join meetings, which usually start at evening till late at night. "Because usually Indonesian women are car-giver, while men are not. Political parties are gender-blind, not necessary gender resistance, but there is no understanding about the difference of men's or women's life. As the result, there is no awareness of making pro-gender rules. We have to be able to talk and ensure the chairman of these political parties about this. The most important thing for them right now is the existence of women in political parties. They do not have any vision for what these women are involved in. If it is true that a party really intend to empower women, it will be obviously seen from recruitment system and how women are given the opportunities to attend the internal party forums. In reality, they recruited old-visional women and use the 30% quota to rule the others, making the purpose unacceptable. Sometimes she feels uncomfortable with the not political correct jokes on women expressed by her political party colleagues. She usually protests directly, but she thinks it is not too frontal when they say, "Well, where are my ladies?" Binny will explain that she is not his 'ladies' but his colleague. "They do not understand that it is a humiliation and sexist, and they think there

is no thing such as sexist in this world.” She can totally understand that, “but probably because I do not get the sexist joke directly, because I am already a middle-age.” She also pity beautiful and potentially-able women but they are not appreciated as assets, rather the men will think of a way to tease them. In women-specific policies, Binny wants to encourage gender budgeting and focusing on the rising number of maternal mortality, and of course on reproduction health. She thinks the number of maternal mortality is worse than 10 years ago due to lack of health facility and counseling.

### **Women Regeneration**

Regarding women recruitment in political party, Binny does not have direct authority on woman regeneration in the political party, because the one who has the authority is in woman field. But of course as the Chairman of *Pengelola Lembaga Kaderisasi* will always be able to coordinate and encourage them to put women as the priority. She sometimes stressed over the fact that most women became the host of a show/event, not as the speaker, or they just need to write meeting minutes, moderator, or as food committee. “There is a hierarchy problem in a political party, and the seniors will always be the speakers while it is impossible for the juniors to be senior. They need to think of a way to make a progressive movement on women.” Binny gives an example of how important it is to make a woman group in a political party, which can be used to voice their concerns/ideas on woman-specific problems. “We create a woman group where we can help each other with our ideas, and then we present our group discussion result to the public.” Women cadre in political party does not only fight for a seat, but also for some public policies such as on environment. “Therefore, we should encourage activism within a political party.” Binny emphasizes that political party does not only work for five years, we should work continuously to do public education, thus politics become the public’s interest. She recounts her experience when she studied in UK, and that they give service to everyone without any discrimination, even to the poor who walked into the library. “Political party should not only work for five years party.” She wishes, the 2014 Election will be for the people, which enable a more transparent and



better politics. Furthermore, there will be a guarantee for the people to keep expressing their concerns, and the independent media, which is not less important. "Now, it is very hard to have an independent media," she adds. For the future president, Binny hopes the elected will be able to prioritize the public's interest such as health and education. The government should pay more attention to this, as example, there should not be region in Indonesia with 33% of the citizens who are merely as Elementary School graduates.