

MUBYARTO PUBLIC POLICY FORUM:

Navigating Shrinking Middle Class, Lasting Poverty and Vulnerability

"The existence of economic inequality and sharp social disparities does not reflect a fair distribution of national income."

— Professor Mubyarto (2002), Ekonomi Pancasila (translated from Indonesian).



Keynote Speaker

Sharon Bessel

Professor at The Australian National University (ANU)

Rethinking Poverty to Ensure All Indonesian Children Thrive

Sharon Bessell

Indonesia has achieved remarkable progress in reducing poverty, improving the lives and opportunities for millions of people. Yet major challenges remain and gains in poverty reduction appear precarious. Indonesia now faces a 'middle class squeeze', while almost a quarter of the population are identified as vulnerable to poverty. Moreover, rates of child malnutrition, particularly stunting and anaemia, remain very high.

Achievements in reducing rates of poverty at the population level, together with ongoing and emerging challenges, provide a foundation for a new vision with greater ambition: asking not only how poverty rates can be held steady or further reduced, but what is required for every child to live free from multidimensional poverty.

Professor Mubyarto's vision of development placed people, social justice, and shared prosperity at the centre of economic and public policy. This lecture takes inspiration from that vision to consider what a similarly ambitious, people-centred approach to poverty requires when we begin from the experience of children themselves.

Based on research with children, families and communities in Indonesia through the Suara Anak project, and drawing on research from Australia, this lecture introduces the Material-Opportunity-Relational (MOR) Framework. The MOR Framework recognises the fundamental importance of material resources, while showing how poverty also constrains children's opportunities now and into the future and places foundational relationships under pressure.

Indonesia's achievements in poverty reduction create the possibility of raising the bar while current challenges require new ways of thinking. This lecture explores the need to move beyond minimum thresholds towards a child-centred, multi-dimensional understanding of poverty that is grounded in children's own experiences, and centring what they need to develop, learn, participate and thrive.

This series is named in honour of Professor Mubyarto, a prominent economist at Gadjah Mada University, who was one of Indonesia's most influential intellectuals. It aims to stimulate debate on development policy issues in Indonesia.

Event Details

Friday, 13 November 2026
08:30–11:30 WIB

Venue:
Function Hall, 8th Floor
Learning Center, FEB UGM

Hybrid (On-site & Online)

Registration:
https://bit.ly/MPPF2026

Live Streaming:
https://bit.ly/StreamMPPF2026

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Australian National University

Indonesia Project

Discussant



Ririn Purnamasari
World Bank



Ni Luh Agastya
Director of PUSKAPA UI



Wisnu Nugroho
Dept. of Economics UGM

Moderator



Qisha Quarina
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