

## **Indonesia's Efforts to Overcome COVID-19 Pandemic through International Cooperation**

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### **Abstract**

Indonesia's Efforts To Overcome The COVID-19 Pandemic Through International Cooperation Are Urgent, Considering That The COVID-19 Pandemic Is Relatively New, The Spread Of The Virus Is Very Massive, So That No Country Has An Established Design Yet. The Purpose Of This Paper Is To Identify Various International Collaborations Carried Out By Indonesia In Overcoming The Pandemic. This Study Uses A Descriptive Research Method, Where A Lot Of Data Are Taken From Library Sources, Both Data From Various Government And Non-Government Institutions, International Organizations, As Well As Sources From Various Journals And Mass Media. Research Shows That The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Presented New Challenges For The Expansion Of Cooperation, And Made Indonesia Have To Be More Flexible And Open The Widest Possible Cooperation In Handling COVID, Including Putting Aside Ideology, And Even Making Commitments To Trade Agreements In Return For Vaccine Assistance.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, the COVID-19 Pandemic, COVAX, Multilateral, Bilateral



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### **INTRODUCTION**

The corona virus, like international terrorism, is global in nature, threatening both society and the state and is a humanitarian threat that requires collective cooperation to deal with it (Mahdokht Zakeri (2020). The outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic which later announced by World Health Organization (WHO) turned into a pandemic on March 2020, considering its massive widespread in many countries, has had a wide impact on international relations. The pandemic has brought about a paradox in globalization, those many countries have to close their borders to stop the spread of the SARS-CoV-2, but on the other hand, this situation requires countries to cooperate in handling it. Cooperation needed both to stop the spread of the virus, and to get vaccine, considering that all countries need it, while only a few countries successfully produce the COVID-19 vaccine. The problem emerge for the unbalance between demand and supply. For developing country, with large population such as Indonesia, and has not yet produce its own COVID-19 vaccine, brings new challenges, especially to get vaccine in handling the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and in forming herd immunity. Indonesia has to work properly to secure Indonesia's vaccine supply from all channels through every available mechanism (Retno Marsudi, 2020). This study aims to identify both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, through health diplomacy, especially vaccine diplomacy carried out by Indonesia in overcoming the COVID -19 pandemic.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The COVID-19 epidemic that has been ongoing since late December 2019, and was then carefully designated by WHO as a global pandemic in March 2020, shows the world is in a health crisis situation, that can have very serious impacts and can lead to multidimensional crises. The proliferation of the coronavirus has created a global, regional, national, political, societal, economic and commercial crisis. (Karabag, 2020)

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On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic raises state awareness in health management, especially how to handle it effectively. The European region, for example, has encouraged member states to reduce travel barriers by issuing COVID-19 certificates as a condition for entering and exiting Europe, in addition to visas, where the certificate shows the holder has received the vaccine, it also lists the type of vaccine given, and passports will be issued to all residents who have received the vaccine. European Medicine Agency approved coronavirus vaccine. This certainly raises a paradox, considering that in the beginning, WHO recognized only 4 type of vaccines, namely Corminaty (BioNTech, Pfizer), Moderna, Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca), and Johnson & Johnson. This brings a new dilemma for International Relations. (Time Magazine, March 4, 2021). Besides, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is very easy to spread and easy to mutate, so that various variants appear. Based on WHO data, since the British corona variant B.1.1.7 (Alpha), date of designation 18 December 2020, the virus continues to mutate. Among them, the South African coronavirus variant B.1.351 (Beta), the Brazilian corona virus P.1 (Gamma Varian), the Indian variant B.1.617.2 (Delta), the B.1.525 variant (Eta) (multiple countries), the American variant. United States B.1.429 (Epsilon), Brazilian corona variant P.2 (Zeta), , Philippine variant P.3 (Theta), United States variant B.1526 (Iota), and Indian variant B.1.617.1 (Kappa), Peruvian variant C.37 (Lambda) and lastly the Colombian variant B.1.621(Mu) date of designation 30 August 2021.

The various variants show that, within 8 months, there have been at least 10 variants of the corona virus. To stop the mutation and to establish herd immunity, getting a vaccine shot is a must. This is where the country's ability to carry out health diplomacy, especially to get vaccines, or vaccine diplomacy becomes urgent. Vaccine diplomacy is part of Health diplomacy. The term Health diplomacy was originally introduced by the special assistant to the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter for Health issues, Peter Bourne. According to Bourne, Health and medicine can play an important role as a means to improve international relations. (Seow Ting Lee, 2020). In recent years, health diplomacy has developed into an established field of study that is better known as global health diplomacy. The development of this study was driven by the emergence of awareness that currently there are more and more health problems that have broad implications in the political, social, and economic fields that transcend national boundaries, and require global power to take actions that determine the health of citizens (Seow Ting Lee, 2020). WHO acknowledged, in a pandemic situation, where handling requires global cooperation, the role of Health diplomacy becomes increasingly vital. In other words, Health is an important element in foreign policy, security policy, and development strategy and trade agreements, related to Foreign policy makers, health policy makers, thus requiring new skills to negotiate for Health than other elements. Thus, it is not enough to just solve this problem technically, but also to require political negotiations, involving many actors.

Furthermore, according to WHO, global health diplomacy (GHD), focuses on health issues that require the cooperation of many countries to tackle problems which is a common concern, but health diplomacy can also play a central role at regional, bilateral and national levels

For Indonesia, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the government to make various adjustments, including in health diplomacy. The government should refocussing from military issue with respond on military aspect, including military diplomacy, also cultural diplomacy, to health diplomacy in handling the COVID-19 pandemic effectively.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in this research is a qualitative research method based on documents (document based research) through primary and secondary documents. Primary documents are intended as official documents issued (or released to the public) by countries, organizations or business groups. The document such as full policy reports, speeches, memorandums, budgets. The secondary documents are documents that refer to primary documents or analyse primary documents. The research method is carried out with analytical descriptive research with data collection facilities through literature studies, scientific journals, and various news in the mass media. The next step is to interpret the data, as an effort to prove.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

An important effort in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic is to immediately establish herd immunity so that people can return to 'normal' lives, by vaccinating. According to WHO, vaccination will inhibit the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus that causes COVID-19, and stop mutations that can give rise to new variants. On the other hand, vaccine production and 80% of vaccine availability are still dominated by rich countries, so schemes for equal access to vaccines are vital. In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Global Access for Vaccination and Immunization (GAVI), the French government's Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI) and the European Commission in April 2020 launched 3 accesses for the Accelerator Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) which includes tests, therapies and vaccines for COVID-19. As for access to vaccines, namely through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access scheme, abbreviated as COVAX. COVAX, which was inaugurated on June 4, 2020, currently has 180 members and institutions. COVAX with funding from various countries, international organizations, and philanthropists then makes a category of countries that are considered eligible to receive vaccine assistance.

Of the 3 categories of AMC-Eligible economies, there are 92 countries with low and middle income economies are eligible to have their participation in the COVAX Facility supported by the COVAX AMC. These categories include: Low income, Lower-middle income, and additional IDA eligible, where Indonesia is one of the eligible countries to get the vaccine, because Indonesia, based on COVAX, is categorized into Lower-middle income.

Indonesia's entry into the category that deserves to receive Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment (AMC) to get a vaccine from the COVAX scheme comes from a reply to an official letter sent by President Joko Widodo, on September 18, 2020 through the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Health, after received an official offer from the COVAX Facility. This study found that immediately joining the COVAX Facility was the right decision. In addition to showing seriousness in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, by joining the COVX facility, Indonesia is guaranteed to get the vaccine it needs. When COVAX began distributing the COVID-19 vaccine in February 2021, Indonesia received 1,113,000 doses of the first phase of vaccine assistance in March 2021.

This study also found that Indonesia's seriousness in overcoming the COVID\_19 pandemic was also carried out by conducting bilateral cooperation between Indonesia - China, Indonesia France, Indonesia the Netherlands, Indonesia - the United States, with various types of vaccines including Sinovac, Astra Zeneca, Pfizer, and Janssen. The vaccine obtained and then injected into 69 million people in Indonesia has made Indonesia able to reduce mortality and spread. This is considered a success for Indonesia, and has received much appreciation because it is considered one of the countries that has successfully handled the COVID-19 pandemic because it was able to reduce COVID-19 cases by up to 58% within 2 weeks. Indonesia's success is significant considering that 80% of the total number of vaccines in the world are owned by high-income countries. The success with mass vaccination that exceeded the target, made Indonesia the fourth largest country after China, India and Japan. Success can be seen at a positive rate of 3.5%, below the WHO threshold which sets a positivity rate of 5%.

The Ministry of Health stated that Indonesia was appreciated as one of the countries that was successful in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic because it was able to reduce COVID-19 cases by up to 58% in just 2 weeks.

Indonesia's success can also be seen from the many compliments it has received, including from WHO, IMF, World Bank, Italian and Malaysian governments. At the G20 Health Ministers Meeting in Rome 5-6 September 2021, many countries praised the decline in positive cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia, Indonesia is also praised for providing free vaccines. The World Bank appreciates Indonesia's success in allocating US\$ 14.9 billion for the Health response.

According to the World Bank, Indonesia, with a population of around 270 million and a challenging archipelagic geography, is one of only seven countries to achieve this feat. According to the World Bank, Indonesia's success is mainly due to 2 things: 1) Timely and decisive action – where Indonesia recognizes the importance of timely vaccination to reduce the impact of the pandemic and works quickly to obtain sufficient vaccines for its population as soon as they are available . 2) Adaptive, adequate, and Flexible Financing – that is, coordinating resources to fight a pandemic is expensive, complex, and dynamic, as priorities are constantly changing. The (Indonesian) government has made significant commitments to the health sector, to economic recovery, and to the mitigation of social impacts, totaling more than US\$50 billion so far. This commitment has been obtained from the government budget through re-prioritization, as well as by mobilizing external resources.

Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Elected as co-Chairman of COVAX -AMC on January 13, 2021, he has shown confidence and acknowledgment of Indonesia's success in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially through multilateral channels. This study found that although some critical to the government in handling the spreading of the corona virus, the Indonesian government is more serious in dealing with the pandemic by adjusting policy adjustments with a focus on health priorities during the pandemic. This can be seen in the government doing some various adjustments, which Health has become a priority during this pandemic. This can be seen from the 5 priorities of Indonesia Foreign policy, which 1st priority is to build independence on national health resilience (Retno Marsudi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs' annual press statement January 6, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted Indonesian government to implement health diplomacy, especially vaccine diplomacy properly. Synergy between Ministries, in this case the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health and the full support of all parties is the key to success. The finding that cooperation both multilateral via COVAX facility and bilateral cooperation especially to get guarantee on vaccine access, become new smart strategy for Indonesia, and can be a new platform for Indonesia's health diplomacy. The coming years will be more challenging related to Indonesia's own vaccine production In the long term, the identification of this mapping will contribute for Indonesian government's policy making and especially to develop Health diplomacy in general, to enhance Indonesia's Role in Global Health.

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