

LINKS TO:

Stage 2, Module 13

Learning Object 4: Help your community

Exercise 1

- 1.1 Do some online research on the Indonesian concept of *gotong royong* and define the essence of this important cultural principle.**

Gotong royong is Indonesia's traditional system of reciprocal labour exchange, or mutual cooperation, and is an ancient social principle that is still widespread in villages throughout Indonesia and Malaysia. It can be described as the concept of doing things together and helping each other, in the spirit of goodwill with little or no payment given (or expected) in exchange.

An example of *gotong royong* is when the whole community or a group will assist a family to build a home or building on their property. Other examples include communities assisting with planting and harvesting. Villagers will come together to help with security measures or with elaborate village ceremonies, such as a mass Hindu cremation ceremony in Bali.

- 1.2 Describe the lifestyle of Indonesian teenagers, and how it is influenced by where they live. Compare their lifestyle to that of Australian teenagers.**

I think the lifestyle of teenagers in Indonesian cities is similar to our lifestyle in Australia, except that they might have a little more time than Australian teenagers for leisure activities because their school day is shorter. Likewise, the lifestyle of Indonesian teenagers in rural areas is similar to that of rural teenagers in Australia. Teenagers in both countries might have to undertake farm work as well as many household chores, such as washing clothes, cooking, cleaning and tidying. However, teenagers in very remote outback areas of Australia might attend a boarding school and only go home in the school holidays.

- 1.3 How much responsibility are Indonesian teenagers expected to have within the family?**

In urban areas, Indonesian teenagers are generally not expected to take too much responsibility for domestic chores within the family. Their parents want them to spend their time studying so they can enter university and get a good job in the future. Depending on the teenager's gender, some parents might ask them to

help with simple jobs such as washing dishes and taking responsibility for keeping their bedroom neat and tidy. In rural areas of Indonesia, where people still do a lot of manual housework, teenagers are expected to assume more responsibilities.

- 1.4 How are teenagers expected to help in the home in Indonesia?**

In urban areas, Indonesian teenage girls are expected to help with simple duties such as sweeping the floor, taking out the rubbish and washing the dishes. This is because, culturally, it is the men who have the responsibility of financially supporting the family while the place of women and girls remains in the home where they are responsible for running the household. In rural areas, expectations for boys and girls are not very different. Both boys and girls are expected to do farm work, while girls might have the additional responsibility of domestic chores such as helping with cooking, washing, cleaning and tidying.

- 1.5 Are Indonesian teenagers rewarded for helping at home?**

As can be seen through the communal and familial ethics such as such as *gotong royong* and through cultural expressions such as *rajin pangkal pandai*, it can be inferred that Indonesian teenagers help around the home, not in the hope of obtaining material rewards, but out of a sense of family duty or obligation.

- 1.6 How do the expectations change depending on gender and social standing?**

In urban areas, parents expect both boys and girls to achieve equally in their studies and careers. However, Indonesian girls are expected to be more diligent and helpful and have more of the domestic responsibilities around the house as well as working harder at their studies. Lazy girls are frowned upon in Indonesia. Many middle class and more affluent families in Indonesia have a live-in domestic helper, or *pembantu*, and sometimes as many as three, in addition to full-time babysitters. In these households children aren't required to do any housework and can focus their efforts on other pursuits, such as their education, and extra-curricular or social activities.

1.7 Indonesians think that the concept of *gotong royong* is unique to Indonesian culture. Do you agree that *gotong royong* is something that is uniquely Indonesian? Give examples to justify your opinion.

I think that although the term *gotong royong* is Indonesian, the concept of mutual assistance for no tangible reward exists in many cultures. It comes to the fore, for example, when disasters hit and the unfortunate victims require the assistance of the community. In the Australian context, a classic example of *gotong royong* was the massive community clean-up in Brisbane and Ipswich after the 2011 Brisbane River flooding. The public desire to assist in the clean-up was unprecedented in Australia, and was the cause of intense community pride in a job well done, by an army of highly motivated and selfless volunteers. Australians have also demonstrated the same spirit of *gotong royong* in Indonesia when we undertook a role in the clean-up and reconstruction of the city of Banda Aceh and surrounding villages after the region was devastated by an earthquake and a tsunami on 26 December 2004.

2.3 How might the role of Australian teenagers in the home be perceived in Indonesia?

Both Indonesian adults and teenagers would be impressed by the organised way that Australian teenagers, both male and female, complete their chores. However, they would also be surprised, and perhaps even shocked, to learn that Australian teenagers usually receive pocket money for this work.

2.4 How might the role of Indonesian teenagers in the home in Indonesia be perceived in Australia?

Australian parents would probably be impressed by the willingness of Indonesian teenagers, particularly girls, to assist their parents in a wide range of domestic situations, without ever expecting anything in return. As far as teenage Indonesian boys are concerned, Australians may feel that they should be better educated in domestic matters so that they don't develop an attitude that assumes the domestic duties in the household should be reserved solely for their female siblings.

Exercise 2

2.1 Compare the jobs that teenagers typically undertake in their homes in Australia and in Indonesia.

Just like in Indonesia, Australian teenagers are expected to help parents by doing a range of chores such as taking out the rubbish and doing the dishes. Teenagers in Australia and Indonesia are also asked to share other chores, such as keeping their bedroom clean and tidy, setting and clearing the dinner table, and so on. In Australia these chores tend to be evenly divided between boys and girls, whereas in Indonesia they are generally reserved for girls.

2.2 How do the mainstream values, attitudes and beliefs in both cultures influence the roles expected of teenagers in the home?

In Australia, doing household chores is often used by parents to teach their children that each member of the family should contribute to the running of the household and that they need to work to obtain tangible rewards, such as pocket money or some special long-term goal, such as a bicycle or computer. On the other hand, in Indonesia, teenagers will perform household chores out of a sense of familial obligation, or *gotong royong*, and would never hope for, nor expect, any reward for their efforts. In large cities like Jakarta, however, there are many children from wealthy families to whom the concept, and example, of *gotong royong* is foreign because their wealthy parents employ several *pembantu*.