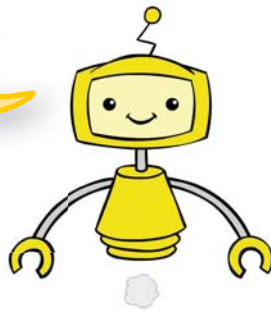


# Helping around the house

Peter and Anna have got me thinking. I know what they are expected to do around the house but I am now wondering if teenagers in Indonesia are expected to do more or less around the house than Australian teenagers. Let's find out!



## LINKS TO:

Stage 2, Module 13

Learning Object 4: Help your community

## Working together

1

### Mutual cooperation

One of Indonesia's strongest social values is *gotong royong*: the principle of 'mutual cooperation'. From a young age, children in Indonesia are taught the value of helping each other, and that it is important to be considerate of others and to help one another whenever possible. In all aspects of their lives, Indonesian children are encouraged to share everything, including food, work and personal belongings. It is also the responsibility of older siblings to guide and help with the education and upbringing of their younger brothers and sisters when they can.

The chores done by children and teenagers are similar to what is expected of them in other countries. For example, young children are taught to tidy up their toys after play. When they're old enough, they may be able to help with sweeping the floor or the yard with a traditional straw broom, watering the garden, washing the dishes and hanging out the laundry on the washing line. Girls are more likely to help their mothers with these tasks, whereas boys help their fathers with more mechanical jobs, like fixing the motorbike or household carpentry.

In Indonesia, it is not common for people to work alone. Traditionally, Indonesian parents believed that having many children brought good luck. It meant that they could share more of the workload at home and, when the children reached adulthood, they would all be obliged to contribute to the ongoing support of the parents in their retirement. Therefore, it is common in Indonesia to share household tasks among all the family members, including children.

### Gender differences

The work expected of Indonesian boys is different from that expected of Indonesian girls: girls are expected to be more diligent and quick with their hands. They are expected to be more helpful around the house as well as being more industrious in their studies. It is more shameful to be a lazy girl than to be a lazy boy in Indonesia. However, when reaching adulthood, it is the men who have the responsibility of supporting the family financially, while the place and the responsibility of women and girls remains largely in the home.

## Work, chores and school

2

Most houses in Indonesia have tiled floors that get dusty due to the weather conditions, so they need to be swept and mopped almost daily. Children and teenagers will often do this chore. Other household chores that Indonesian teenagers would generally

be expected to share include setting up and cleaning away the dinner table, washing the dishes, putting the rubbish outside, tidying up their room and toys, and putting out their dirty clothes to be washed.

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In rural areas, the way teenagers help their parents varies according to their gender. Boys help their fathers in the fields, cultivating crops, ploughing and shovelling. Girls also help with lighter farming duties, such as harvesting, in addition to helping their mothers cook lunch and dinner, and taking care of their younger brothers and sisters.

School hours are usually not very long in Indonesia. Students go to school from 7.00 am to noon, or from noon to 5.00 pm. Their mothers usually prepare their breakfast, so in the mornings children do not need to do much except help to set the table and wash the dishes.

## Current trends

3

Most mothers in Indonesia do not have professional work outside the home. *Ibu rumah tangga* (the 'housewife') is responsible for all the work around the house, while the father works for income to cover the family's expenses.

The more affluent Indonesian families have their own modern appliances such as washing machines; and they may have one or more *pembantu* (male or female domestic helpers or maids) to help around the house. Chores such as hanging out the washing, ironing the clothes,

washing the dishes, cooking, tidying up the rooms, and sweeping and mopping the floor, are all done by the live-in or casual *pembantu*. Wealthier households may have two or three *pembantu*, including a babysitter, to take care of all the work in the home. With this extra help, children in these families are not required to do housework.

The majority of children, however, still do their household chores, according to their age and ability, just as in the past.

## Indonesian colloquial expressions

4

### ***Ringan tangan*: Light-handed**

In Indonesia, people who are always ready to help are called *ringan tangan*, which literally means 'light-handed'. The hands of helping children are as light as their readiness to help, to work and to do all those jobs that lazy 'heavy-hands' are reluctant to do.

### ***Seperti kapal pecah*: Just like a shipwreck**

Indonesians believe that their ancestors were sailors who came from across the seas to inhabit the Indonesian archipelago long ago. Often, parents will refer to a child's messy room as being 'just like a shipwreck', where everything looks chaotic and nothing is put away where it should be.

This saying is rather sarcastic, especially if used in front of the neighbours or the child's friends. The intention would probably be to motivate the child to clean their room, in order to avoid such embarrassing comments.

### ***Rajin pangkal pandai*: Diligence is the mother of cleverness**

From a young age, Indonesian children are taught to be diligent in everything that they do to survive the hardships that they may experience when growing up in a vast, developing country. Even by doing small tasks at home, young children begin to acquire the skills and attitudes that will enable them to become diligent and resilient adults.

### ***Bersih pangkal sehat*: Cleanliness is the start of good health**

This expression is often used to remind people of the importance of hygiene: by maintaining habits of cleanliness you will enjoy good health throughout your life. This applies at every level, personal, interpersonal and environmental. In the home, for children, it usually applies to helping with light cleaning and tidying up. This is why children connect this saying with their household chores.



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

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

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

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

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