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Limited access to assistive technology costs the economy up to 7% annually
Millions of Indonesians with disability lack access to assistive technologies

JAKARTA, 26 September 2023 – Many of the 23 million Indonesians living with disability cannot access the essential assistive technologies nor holistic services needed to fully participate in work and in their communities, and based on World Bank research, this has the potential to cost an economy up to seven percent of GDP annually. That is a key takeaway from a recent public dialogue on disability inclusion, led by Katalis, an Indonesia-Australia government-backed business development program, in Jakarta (26/9).

People with disability in Indonesia, of which women and elderly are more represented, consistently have less education, worse health, less access to public services and fewer economic opportunities compared to people without disability. In fact, Indonesia ranked just 115th on a 2020 index of inclusiveness, behind neighbouring countries like Singapore and Thailand.

Hosted in collaboration with Australian program INKLUSI, the event, “Disability Inclusion Matters: A Trade and Investment Public Dialogue” explored ways to improve access to assistive technology and ensure more equitable participation of people with disability, while also seizing significant trade opportunities in Indonesia. It focused particularly on availability, access, affordability, and quality, which participants noted were key barriers to access.

“Assistive devices covered by National Health Insurance are only 7 out of the 50 types recommended by WHO. Even then, the financing coverage is minimal, with a significant portion still being out of pocket for users. Moreover, there is no coverage for assistive devices for the visually impaired. As a result, people with disabilities face difficulties in accessing education and employment due to the lack of assistive technology,” said Suharto, S.S., M.A., Ph.D., Executive Director of SIGAB, one of INKLUSI’s partner organisations focusing on realising equality of rights for people with disability.

Prices for assistive technology in Indonesia, such as glasses, hearing aids and wheelchairs, are far higher than in comparable countries and generally only affordable for the richest 20 percent of households.

“Closing the inclusion gap for people with disability in Indonesia will lead to positive social and economic impact, including the potential to boost trade in assistive technologies. The Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is enabling our two countries to identify opportunities and challenges to support efforts by the Government of Indonesia to reduce barriers and facilitate inclusion of people with disability,” said Paul Bartlett, Director, Katalis.

Outcomes from the discussion will be used to inform current research underway by Katalis on trade in medical devices and assistive technology between Indonesia and Australia, which will be released in early 2024. More information is available at katalis.org.

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About Katalis

IA-CEPA ECP Katalis (Katalis) is a unique, five-year (2020-25) government-backed business development program unlocking the vast potential of economic partnership between Australia and Indonesia. Katalis was established under the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Economic Cooperation Program (IA-CEPA ECP). The program complements other Australian development programs with a commercially oriented, bilateral approach and places gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) at the centre of everything we do.

About INKLUSI

INKLUSI – The Australia-Indonesia Partnership Towards an Inclusive Society, is partnership between the Government of Australia and the Government of Indonesia. An 8 year investment from 2021-2029, with a total value up to \$120 million it will support government and civil society partners to ensure No one is left behind – more marginalised people participate in and benefit from Indonesia’s sociocultural, economic, and political development. INKLUSI works with 11 National CSO’s and 8 research partner institutions and their networks to implement across 32 provinces, 136 districts, and 599 villages in Indonesia.

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