

30% of Indonesian Women Get Married at Young Age

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YOGYAKARTA - Indonesian Minister of Health, Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih, clarified that government gets difficulty to achieve one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015 to reduce maternal mortality averagely of 102 per 100 thousand live births. The reason is the difficulty for women to gain access to health services due to geographical and cultural factors.

"Indicator of MDGs which is difficult to achieve is to reduce maternal mortality. It is not only in Indonesia but all countries in the world. We seek to bring closer access to health services for mothers in need," Endang said after being keynote speaker in *The 6th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive Health and Rights* at Grha Sabha Pramana, Friday (21/10).

She believed that the four factors that cause maternal mortality are: too old to get pregnant, too young to get pregnant, too often to get pregnant and too close pregnancy's gap. "If this can be fixed, the maternal death rate could be lowered," she added.

One of the efforts currently conducted by Ministry of Health is campaigning for reproductive health education among elementary to high school students. "Embedding norms and culture that marriage is ideally delayed until the age of 24-25 years. Today 20-30 percent of Indonesian women get married under the age of 20, it is too young," she said.

In addition, access to health care is also the main obstacle in reducing maternal mortality rate in remote areas. Yet despite health care facilities are already available, it does not necessarily make the mothers to use them. "They have no access to health care, perhaps because there is none there. There may be one, but too far away. It may be near, but instead of going to the midwife, they go to a shaman," she said.



In her keynote speech, the Minister said that the Ministry of Health has introduced several programs to improve maternal health, such as increasing the role of husbands in maternal health care, gender-responsive health program and introducing social assistance scheme program called jampersal. "The program provides a free delivery service, health care facilities, post-giving birth care, and post-delivery of family planning services for all pregnant women who are not covered by health insurance," she said.

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