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Forced Assimilation and Development: The Chinese-Indonesians
under Soeharto's New Order (1965-1998)

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Abstract

Chinese Indonesians are an ethnic minority who have settled in Indonesia since at least the 15th century who comprise 1.2% of the Indonesian population. From 1965-1998, Chinese-Indonesians became subject to various assimilationist laws under the rationale that this ethnic minority had failed to integrate into Indonesian society. Under Soeharto's administration, Chinese-Indonesians had to give up their political and cultural rights, although they were allowed to participate widely in the economic sector.

This desk-based research studied assimilationist laws and their impact on the 'development' of Chinese-Indonesians by studying various laws and through the use of an online questionnaire to a sample of Chinese-Indonesians. At first glance, this ethnic group can be classified as 'developed' at least economically, however when investigated further, systemic political and cultural exclusion has harmed their full human development. The case of Chinese-Indonesians reflects Amartya Sen's argument in *Development as Freedom* (1999), that wealth is only one aspect of human development. However care should be taken when considering the Chinese-Indonesian case. Generalisations should not be made about the harms that can result from assimilation policies as they were formulated during the Cold War. Assimilation is still important but should not be coercive and ensure multiple identities (such as ethnic and national identity) can coexist. This research report also uses right to development as framework. It concludes that the right to development may not be inclusive to Chinese-Indonesians' situations because it still narrow down development as 'growth'.

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List of Abbreviations

ASPERTINA	<i>Asosiasi Peranakan Tionghoa Indonesia</i> (The Association of Peranakan Tionghoa Indonesia)
BAPERKI	Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizens
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTI	<i>Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa</i> (The Chinese Indonesian Association)
MATAKIN	<i>Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu</i> (The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
PITI	<i>Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia</i> (The Chinese-Indonesian Islamic Association)
PSMTI	<i>Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia</i> (The Chinese Indonesian Clan Social Association)
PSTI	Paguyuban suku Tionghoa Indonesia
RBA	Right-based approaches
SBKRI	<i>Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia</i> (The Certificate of Indonesian citizenship)
SNB	<i>Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa</i> (The Solidarity of the Nation-State)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRD	United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank