

# Making all voices count

## Case study: Increasing women's voice in governance in Indonesia

### PROJECT NAME

Suara Kita

### IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTION

Women and Youth Development Institute of Indonesia (WYDII)

### FUNDING INSTITUTION

Making All Voices Count Programme (MAVC)

### LOCATION

Tunjungtirto village, East Java, Indonesia

### BUDGET

£69,000 grant

### AIMS

- Empower women to play a role in shaping policies and programmes through a mobile phone application that allows them to communicate needs to local government through anonymous feedback.
- Improve village authorities' capacity for inclusive and participatory governance and to promote transparency and accountability in relations with constituents.

## PROJECT CONTEXT

The 2014 Village Law entitles villages to extra revenue from central government, with regulations requiring 70% of spending to be allocated to poverty eradication, health, education, infrastructure and agricultural programmes. While this offers potential for increased local community participation on how to use these funds, fears have been voiced that it could lead to increased opportunistic behaviour and elite predation.

The Musrenbang is an annual forum that offers suggestions on priorities for budget allocation at village levels and above. Citizen participation in the planning system is limited, while official consultation forums such as the Musrenbang are attended by members of the elite. Women tend to be severely under-represented in Musrenbang forums, resulting in lack of prioritisation of their needs.

## EVALUATION DETAILS

Qualitative research based on initial analysis of project theory of change and assumptions with project staff and subsequent informal ethnographic methods (with semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions) and some limited closed (quantifiable questions).

This was undertaken over seven days in the project village at baseline and six days of follow-up with previous and new interviewees, key informants (including leaders and officials at village and higher Rukan Warga and Dusan levels) and the project team. The research was undertaken by Dr Cecilia Luttrell, Yunie Nurhayati and Ibrahim Ukin.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Citizens' confidence and trust

Confidence levels increased significantly, particularly among project community 'coordinators', who are predominantly middle-class women. Some survey participants also reported increased confidence levels and had become more active in sub-village level forums. One coordinator estimated that 40% of those involved in the SMS survey had increased their confidence level. Many, but not all, reported an increase in the number of women prepared to talk at these forums. However, confidence tended to be limited to interaction at the level of their own Rukun Tetangga (RT), which are sub Rukan Warga (RW), and RW or to reporting anonymously by SMS, and not to the extent of speaking out at village-level fora.

As in the baseline survey, many poorer respondents said they were afraid to attend or speak up in meetings. The survey also led to respondents identifying that planning should recognise more people, and we identified an increase in knowledge about the Village Law and associated budget implications. There was a marked increase in trust levels by the community in the village government (and village leader in particular) in comparison to the baseline. These outcomes were mostly limited to those involved in the survey (mainly women). The poor were less involved in the survey, partly due to low levels of access to mobile phones, but also as a result of elite domination of formal decision-making fora (RW, Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga [Women's group] and other sub village level meetings) used for the face-to-face engagement process. Exclusion of the poor appeared to be a much more difficult political issue for this local government to discuss than exclusion of women.

### Citizens' confidence and trust

Over the year between baseline and endline, the village government and Badan Permusyawaratan Desa (village legislative consultative body) has placed much more attention on the voice of women and their role in development and planning processes, and seems to be taking pride in being seen as more inclusive. Village elite were much more aware of the exclusion of women and the issue of confidence among women to speak out. Village government was notably more open about the budget. One visible example was a budget summary displayed on a banner in front of the village government office. However, full budget details were not shared publicly and were not published online. The Suara Kita project has certainly contributed to inclusion of women's views and increased discussion of the budget, but it is not the only driver of change. Pressure for oversight and transparency has come from national government and local government fear of being accused of corrupt use of new village budget funds. Other NGOs such as INFEST and KOMPAK also work in this area.

### Sustainability and scaling opportunities

In April 2016, a 160-person high-profile workshop was organised by Suara Kita and hosted by the Deputy Regent, a prominent regional leader. The personal connections of the project designers were crucial. A respondent from the invited institution responsible for policy related to empowerment of village communities and government (BPM) said this opened the eyes of the village leaders to the fact that not all people are brave enough to speak out in meetings. However, she considered it a sharing event, and BPM would not undertake any follow-up. She made the point that in normal circumstances a facilitator such as Suara Kita is not available, and that without donor funding it would be difficult to implement this programme in other villages. In April 2016, the village leader announced that village government would establish an SMS call centre inspired by Suara Kita. However, by the time of the evaluation visit in October 2016, it was clear that the call centre would not be implemented without further external advice and resources.

### Project success factors and challenges

The director of project partner LPKP has good relations with the village leader and introduced WYDII to her. However, when WYDII first entered the village, people were suspicious, and the project was resisted by certain sub-village leaders. Many people refused to take part in the survey, fearing it was only for WYDII's benefit, or that it had a political agenda. The role of 'off-line' coordinators as intermediaries was crucial to give people confidence to answer survey questions and to facilitate the use of the ICT (SMS) system. The original project design naively included little community facilitation, but was rapidly adapted in the face of low initial response rates. In the local context, coordinators with a higher social standing in the community were able to mobilise respondents more effectively. Significant practical problems resulted from the internet provider initially being located in Canada (rather than locally). Problems included:

- Many SMS and phone credit were either received with significant time lags or not received.
- When some people did not receive the SMS survey, the question was sent to all recipients again, which resulted in some people receiving multiple versions of the same questions.
- The SMS messages were sometimes sent at inappropriate times such as the middle of night or during electricity failures.
- Respondents' requests for assistance and feedback were sent to Canada and responses were delayed due to time differences and two different languages (Javanese as well as Indonesian).

The project adapted by using a local consultant to train the WYDII team to handle the technical issues and moving the database to a local internet provider. As a result, survey response rates increased from 40% to 75%.