

Community Participation in Decentralized Rural Development: A Case Study of Three Villages in Purbalingga District, Indonesia

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After a long time practice of centralized rural development, the government of Indonesia in 2001 applied decentralized system and transferred the authorities on planning, execution and evaluation of rural development to village government. Designed to promote community participation, the system aims to replace the state led rural development previously applied. However, after the authorities were transferred, there is a question whether the system can really facilitate community participation. This study analyzes community participation in Indonesian decentralized system by focusing on rural development planning, execution and evaluation. Case study was conducted in Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir villages in Purbalingga District. Data were collected through interviews, informal discussions, observations and documentary studies. Data analysis shows that the inexistence of guideline on how to involve community in decision making has resulted in the differences of the type of planning meeting. While Serang and Sumilir village apply open meeting, Kedarpan village prefers to apply representation meeting. In execution, community involvement is prominent, yet the system cannot fully abolish the practice of coercive mobilization of local resources. Finally, in evaluation stage, community is not involved much to evaluate the projects and accountability practice is still weak. Overall, this study finds that village head is the main actor determining what mechanism will be conducted to involve community in rural development.

1. Introduction

After the collapse of New Order regime (President Suharto administration from 1968) in 1998, there was a significant change in rural development mechanism in Indonesia. Through the enactment of Law 22/1999 on Regional Governance¹, the government in January 2001 started to apply decentralized system. The system was applied by giving village government not only the authorities to execute, but also to plan and to evaluate rural development projects. It is obviously the opposite of state-led rural development system previously applied by New Order regime. During New Order regime, rural development initiatives mostly came from upper village levels and community acted more as the object of development (Antlöv, 2000; Bebbington, et al., 2006; Evers, 2000; Widianingsih, 2005).

As it is argued that government will perform better through decentralized system (Rasyid, 2002; Rondinelli & Cheema, 2007), the expectation to the system was high. It was expected to pave a way to participatory rural development. According to Rasyid² (2002), the government aimed to encourage local initiatives by bringing the power closer to community and by placing the center of decision making at the lowest level of government. There would be a greater space for community to participate in designing, executing and monitoring rural development projects. At the end, it was expected that under decentralized system, community would act not only as the beneficiary but also as the active subject of rural development.

Yet, despite those expectations, there is still a concern about the viability of Indonesian decentralized system in facilitating participatory rural development. This is because the regulations of decentralized system in Indonesia explain more on transfer of authorities but less on how to involve the community in executing them. As there is no such blue print nationally standardized, the ways to involve community will depend on a locally developed mechanism. Such a concern is unavoidable and quite relevant. Several studies conducted in the initial years of decentralized system show that majority of village governments had a little understanding about the new rules and what the role they should play in rural development (Alatas et al., 2001; Antlöv, 2003; Dharmawan, 2002; Widianingsih, 2005). In this connection, there is a possibility that the purpose of decentralization cannot be achieved and participatory development just becomes something elusive in practice.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Indonesian decentralized system to see how it facilitates community participation in rural development. In order to understand the context of this study, Section 2 will discuss literature review on rural development in Indonesia and how the design of decentralized system tries to facilitate participatory rural development. Section 3 will be about research method. Section 4 will present the socioeconomic and administrative condition of research location. Section 5 will discuss the main findings of this study, which are how community participates in planning, executing and evaluating the rural development projects. Finally, Section 6 will draw conclusions and policy implication.

2. Rural Development Mechanism under Two Regimes: New Order Vs Post-New Order

During New Order regime, rural development mechanism was a mix up of bottom-up and top-down model. According to Regulation of Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) 9/1982 on Guidelines for Local Development Planning and Monitoring, rural development stages began from a meeting of village assembly that at the time was still named *Lembaga Musyawarah Desa* (LMD). The meeting would result in a list of development proposals to be hierarchically proposed to the upper level of the government. Government then selected the proposals and determined which one would get funding. However, the mechanism in reality failed to create a real participatory development. LMD was an undemocratic institution as the members were not elected by people but appointed by the village head, thus village proposals reflected more the interest of village elites rather than that of the villagers (Antlöv, 2000). Moreover, since the power of decision making did not belong to village government, there was no guarantee that the proposals would get funding. Only 5-10% of the proposals could get funding, and most of the projects coming to village reflected more the priority of central government rather than the aspirations from the village (Usui and Alisjahbana, 2005).

Several studies illustrate the implementation of rural development under New Order regime. Studies by Antlöv (2000), Bebbington, et al. (2006) and Widianingsih (2005) show that rural development had been supply driven, which means that the programs delivered by the central government were less accommodating community aspiration. Antlöv (2000) and Dharmawan (2002) describe that the technical aspects of the projects like the design of building and the utilization of fund were even so strict and did not provide the space for local modification. Evers (2000) concludes that villager's capacity was underestimated while district officials and village head dominated the decision-making process. Still, according to Evers (2000, p. 14), village decision making was characterized by "allow the villagers a role, but give the village head the final word, and just to make sure, give the district head the right to 'veto' everything". In general, most of the studies pointed out that the practice of participation during New Order regime was limited to passive forms such as receiving information and either being voluntarily or coercively mobilized to execute the projects having been decided by the government.

In the post-New Order regime, the government decided to decentralize rural development through the legal framework of Law 22/1999 on Regional Governance. Antlöv (2003, p. 200) simply regards the law "constitutes nothing less than a quiet revolution". It principally liberates village government from the domination of district and central governments. Village government now does not need the approval of the district government to formulate the village budget. Through this system, it is expected that rural development will change from supply driven to demand driven. Not only is the authority to execute, but also to plan and to evaluate the projects is devolved to the village government. To support the decentralized system, the government introduced a new institution of Village Legislative Body or called as *Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* (BPD) to replace LMD position. Different from the LMD members who were appointed by village head, the community elected the members of BPD. In connection with the rural development, this institution functions to legalize village budget, monitor village government and be the institution to which village head should be responsible to. This means that the decentralized system also aimed to shift the orientation of accountability of village head, from the district head to the villagers.

As shown in Table 1, the differences between rural development under New Order and that of post New Order regimes are in planning (No. 1, 2 & 3), evaluation (No. 6 & 7) and institutional arrangement (No. 8). This is how the design of decentralized system tries to facilitate participatory rural development. The government devolves the power of decision making

Table 1: Rural Development Mechanism under New Order and post New Order Regimes

No	Aspect of Rural Development	New Order Regime	Post New Order Regime
1	The type of infrastructures will be built	Decided at upper village level	Decided at village level
2	The utilization of development fund	Strictly marked by the government	Can be utilized as according to local needs
3	Village budget	Drafted by village head, approved by district head	Drafted and approved by village head together with BPD
4	Project execution	By village government	By village government
5	Mobilization of local resources	By village government	By village government
6	The evaluation of project	By district government	By both district government and community
7	Responsibility of village head	To district head	To community through BPD
8	Village assembly	Namely LMD, appointed by village head	Namely BPD, elected by villagers

Source: Adopted from the Regulation of MoHA 9/1982, Government Regulation 72/2005 and Regulation of MoHA 37/2007

to village government and increases community control of the development projects. In execution stage (No. 4 & 5), there is no significant change, as village government under New Order regime also had the authority to execute the project. However, as it is argued that community participation in development stages is interconnected with each other and the increase in the participation in one step has a potential to increase the participation in the other step (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980), it is hoped that the nature of project execution under decentralized system will be more participatory than that of under centralized system.

However, after being accustomed to centralized system for about 32 years, the change did not occur smoothly. According to Rasyid (2002), the government was late in issuing most of the technical regulations needed to implement Law 22/1999. This resulted in serious disillusionment of many district and village governments in conducting rural development. Two studies conducted by Antlöv (2003) and Widianingsih (2005) can be used to compare how the changes occurred at different locations. While study by Antlöv (2003) in Bandung district, West Java, shows that district and village governments were able to fulfill the vacuity of regulations through several innovations and experimentations, study by Widianingsih (2005) in Solo District, Central Java, shows that the old pattern of rural development was still strongly embedded and practiced. Overall, most of the studies conducted at the initial stage of decentralized system point out that village governments faced difficulties to understand and adapt with the new mechanism of rural development (Alatas et al., 2001; Antlöv, 2003; Dharmawan, 2002; Widianingsih, 2005).

In 2005, the government issued Regulation 72/2005 on Village to provide the general guideline on village budget management. According to the regulation, the source of village budget consists of internal revenues, transfer from central government and grants from other parties. The regulation makes compulsory for district government to transfer block grant to village government, from which the later may utilize for various purposes according to its priorities. Article 63 of the regulation clearly stipulates that all activities financed by village budget should be openly planned, executed and evaluated by involving the community. Yet, it did not clearly mention which part of community that should be involved and in what mechanism to involve them.

3. Research Method

The study was conducted in Purbalingga district, Central Java province. Central Java was purposively selected as it is the



Figure 1: Map of Central Java Province Showing Purbalingga District

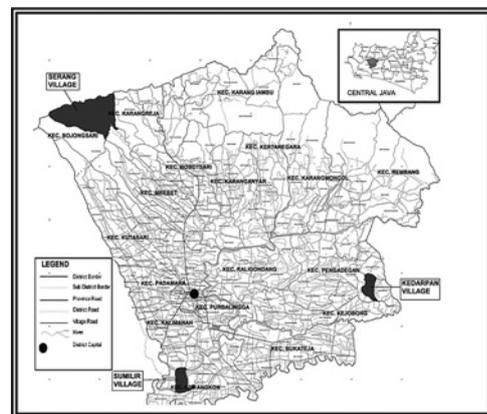


Figure 2: Map of Purbalingga District Showing Three Researched Villages

province with the second largest poor people in Indonesia. It is a home of 5,369,160 poor people³, of which about 58% live in rural areas (CSA, 2010). It is also relatively far from big cities and industrial areas. Through those considerations, research location is deemed to be able to portray the phenomena of poverty in rural areas. As poverty and the needs of development are closely related to geographic conditions, this study divided Purbalingga territory into three geographical zones, which are, upland surrounding Slamet Mountain in the north, lowland with dry land areas in the east and lowland with wet paddy field areas in the south and west. One backward village, village having low score of some aggregated indicators of infrastructure availability and socioeconomic condition of the villagers, was selected from each zone. The study used a list of village score published by the district government, and selected Serang in Karangreja sub-district in Zone 1, Kedarpan in Kejobong sub-district in Zone 2, and Sumilir in Kemangkon sub-district in Zone 3 as researched villages. Their elevations vary from 1,100 - 1,600 meters above sea level in Serang, 500 - 700 meters in Kedarpan, and 100 - 200 meters in Sumilir.

The data of this study were obtained through interviews, informal discussions, observations and documentary studies during the period of February-March 2011. In-depth interviews were conducted with officials from village governments and village assemblies. Semi structured interviews and informal discussions were conducted with villagers. The first author conducted face-to-face interviews to the respondents in their houses, work places as well as in the other places frequently used for gathering. Moreover, participant observations were conducted through a direct involvement in a village meeting in Serang on 7 March 2011, a village meeting in Kedarpan on 19 March 2011, and a hamlet meeting in Bojongsari in Kedarpan on 28 March 2011. After the meetings, discussions were held to gain the information and opinion from the attendants. Information from secondary data like project documents, local statistical reports and other government office documents were collected as per need.

4. Socioeconomic and Administrative Conditions of Research Villages

In terms of livelihood, farming is the main occupation in three researched villages. About 65% of the household heads in Serang, 44% in Kedarpan and 50% in Sumilir earn income mainly from farming. Yet, farming alone is not sufficient to meet the livelihood needs for those having small size of cropland. To sustain their life, the farmers also develop the side jobs like part-time livestock, working in others' land, becoming mason or going to urban areas as temporary migrants. The other sectors of occupation mainly include industry, trading, construction, transportation, running small and medium enterprises and becoming civil servant, army or police. Some of those working in industry, construction and transportation stay in urban areas like Jakarta as migrants. Those running small and medium enterprises mostly produce foods like coconut sugar, snack or tofu. This study also finds that many villagers in Sumilir work as civil servant by becoming the cleaning road workers in Purbalingga city. The other categories are retired person and those having no job. While retired persons are mostly ex of civil servants that will earn monthly allowance from the government, those having no job rely on remittance and help from their families.

As briefly mentioned before, Serang is mountainous, Kedarpan is dry land and Sumilir is wet land areas. Adapting with the existing cropland condition, each village has its main farming commodities, which are vegetable (mostly potatoes, cabbage and carrot) in Serang, cassava in Kedarpan and paddy in Sumilir. The average of landholding per household is 0.6 ha in Serang, 0.23 ha in Kedarpan and 0.39 ha in Sumilir. Larger landholdings and the relatively high price of vegetable products makes most farmers in Serang able to earn better income than those in Sumilir and Kedarpan. In Sumilir, with the existence of irrigation network, most farmers are able to plant paddy twice a year. Among three villages, the farmers in Kedarpan seemingly face the most difficult condition. Their landholding is small and the price of cassava is lower than vegetable or paddy. The farming condition implies to the share of poor household in the three villages. As it is shown in Table 2, Serang has the lowest share of poor household while Kedarpan has the highest one.

In terms of infrastructure, some basic education and health infrastructures like kindergarten, elementary school and village polyclinic have been available in all three villages. Electricity network exists in all villages with household coverage above 90%. Clean water facility is also available, but covers less than 30% of households. Most of the villagers are still relying on the private and common wells for clean water. Junior and senior high schools, public health center, traditional market, public transportation, post office and branch of local banks are available only in sub-district. The villagers mostly access them by foot, bicycle or motor cycle. The main roads in the researched villages have been asphalted and passable by car.

In Indonesia, the formal structure of village government consists of village head and his officers, which include secretary, staffs and hamlet heads. Below village level, a system of sub village units exists to organize the households. Village is divided into several hamlets, which is villager's settlement bordered by natural boundary such as river, hill or field. Hamlet is a traditional structure of Javanese villages, and the head is a direct subordinate of village head. Hamlet is then divided into

Table 2: Socioeconomic Condition of Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir Village, 2010

No	Condition	Serang	Kedarpan	Sumilir
1	Demography and territory			
	a. Number of population (person)	7,665	2,264	2,163
	b. Number of households	1,426	585	447
	c. Size of territory (ha)	1,309	225	226
2	The occupation of household heads			
	a. Farmer	65%	44%	50%
	b. Industrial laborer & private enterprise worker	7%	20%	22%
	c. Trader	7%	10%	2%
	d. Carpenter, mason, electrician & construction sector	4%	6%	1%
	e. Running small & medium enterprises	4%	3%	5%
	f. Driver, pedicab driver, motorcycle taxi driver & transportation sector	1%	5%	0%
	g. Civil servant, army & police	2%	2%	5%
	h. Retired person	0%	1%	4%
	i. Having no job	4%	5%	8%
	j. Others	6%	4%	3%
3	Poverty rate			
	a. Percentage of poor households ⁴	15%	26%	23%
	b. Poor households based on occupation			
	Farming	96%	73%	61%
	Non farming	4%	27%	20%
	Having no job	0%	0%	19%
4	Physical infrastructures and accessibility			
	a. Number of elementary schools	6	2	2
	b. Number of kindergartens	3	2	1
	c. Number of village polyclinic	1	1	1
	d. Household coverage of electricity	92%	97%	91%
	e. Household coverage of water pipeline	22%	24%	26%
	f. Average distance to sub-district capital (km)	5	2	4

Source: Purbalingga CSA (2010a; 2010b; and 2010c) and the database of poor people per village, 2010

Note: Point 2.j. includes healer, helper, mechanic, priest, tailor, artist, black smith, breeder and barber.

several Communal Groups or *Rukun Warga* (RW), which is divided into several Neighborhood Groups or *Rukun Tetangga* (RT). RW and RT are basically group of neighborhoods, and every household automatically becomes their member. These two institutions were introduced in 1960s by inspiring from the institution of *Tonarigumi* during Japan occupation in 1940s. The heads of RW and RT are formally not the subordinate of village head, yet they in practice execute the orders from village head. The other institutions playing important role in rural development are Village Legislative Body or *Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* (BPD) functioning as village parliament and Community Resilience Body or *Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa* (LKMD) functioning as the organization to execute physical projects within village. BPD, LKMD, hamlet, RW and RT are government mandated organizations, hence they exist in all villages throughout Indonesia (see Annex 1 for the relationship among village level institutions). A large village like Serang has 9 BPD members, 12 LKMD members, 5 hamlets, 8 RWs and 33 RTs with average 43 households per RT. Small villages like Kedarpan has 5 BPD members, 12 LKMD members, 3 hamlets, 5 RWs and 11 RTs with average 86 households per RT. Similar to Kedarpan, Sumilir has 5 BPD members, 12 LKMD members, 3 hamlets, 3 RWs and 9 RTs with average 93 households per RT.

5. Community Participation in Rural Development

As participation and rural development are very broad concepts, this study needs to narrow the scope of discussion. Following the scholars conceptualizing participation as active involvement of community in every stage of development programs (Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Oakley, 1991), this study will focus on three elements of community involvement, which are planning, executing and evaluating rural development projects. At the same time, in defining rural development, this study will focus only on the projects managed by the village governments⁵.

5.1. Development Planning

Free information dissemination and inclusive decision making are the first step to make rural development participatory. Even, many argue that the inclusive decision making and the freedom of choice are politically the essence of participation

(Cohen & Uphoff, 1980; Oakley, 1991). Several studies show that the openness of planning meeting has a positive correlation with the sense of ownership of the community over the program (Alatas, et al., 2001; Dharmawan, 2002). Considering the purpose of rural development to alleviate poverty, active involvement of the poor in decision making is crucial to ensure that their needs are well accommodated in development projects.

Analyzing the type of planning meeting is one of the ways to categorize whether the decision making has been inclusive or not. For this purpose, this study differentiates open meeting from representation meeting. If the meeting is held by inviting a substantial number of villagers other than those who are institution heads (like BPD and LKMD members or RW and RT heads), the meeting is categorized as open. On the other hand, if the meeting is held by mainly inviting those who are the institution heads, the meeting is categorized as representation. This categorization is considered important to see how the villagers channelize their voice. The study, by going through the list of meeting attendance from the village annual development reports, categorizes the planning meetings in Kedarpan as representation while those in Sumilir and Serang as open. Data of meeting attendants in village planning meeting is available in Table 3. Although the table is about 2010 planning meeting, the data of previous years show similar tendency.

Table 3: The Attendants of Village Planning Meetings in Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir Village, 2010

No	Village	Number of attendants	Background of attendants
1	Serang	41 people	5 village officials, head of BPD, head of LKMD, 13 RT and RW heads, 5 representatives from women group and 16 villagers
2	Kedarpan	36 people	8 village officials, 5 BPD members, 7 LKMD members, 12 RT and RW heads, 2 representatives from women group and 2 representatives from youth group
3	Sumilir	51 people	10 village officials, 4 BPD members, 2 LKMD members, 10 RT and RW heads, 5 representatives from women group and 21 villagers

Source: Kedarpan Village Government (2010); Serang Village Government (2010); Sumilir Village Government (2010a)

Village head is the main official determining whether a planning meeting will be open or be representation. This is because he is the one deciding who will be invited to the planning meeting. Based on interview with the headman of Kedarpan, the main factor discouraging from applying open meeting is its inefficiency in terms of budget⁶. According to him, open meeting will spend more operational costs to provide logistics for the attendants, something considered as the wastefulness amidst the scarcity of village budget. However, this study argues that budget efficiency is not strong enough to be the main reason to reduce the number of meeting attendants. This can be seen from the case of Sumilir, in which the village head involves more villagers in the meeting. According to the headman of Sumilir, he prefers to invite many villagers to increase the legitimacy of the decision and to minimize the complaint from the communities⁷. At the end, it is clear that the decision whether to apply open or representation meeting is not strongly motivated by cost saving of the village budget. The actual reason can be traced to the history of Indonesian rural development itself. The long time application of centralized system during New Order regime had placed village head as the most powerful figure within the village government (Antlöv, 2000; Evers, 2000). Currently, although the system has been changed, village head is still holding the highest power within the village. The current decentralized rural development is practically executed in the environment where village head can decide the mechanism deemed better to involve the villagers.

While in open meeting, villagers have the opportunity to propose the idea on the meeting directly, in the representation meeting, it is the institution heads that channelize the aspirations of the villagers. In practice, RT and RW heads play the most important role in channelizing the aspirations of the villagers. Most villagers interviewed in this study agree that they felt more comfortable to approach RT and RW heads rather than to BPD, LKMD and village officials. Intensive interaction due to the neighborhood similarity has minimized the communication gap between villagers and RT or RW heads. Village heads in three researched villages are also very aware to the vitality of RT and RW heads in representing the villagers in their areas. As shown in Table 3, RT and RW heads always constitute significant portion of the meeting attendants in three villages. Even in Kedarpan and Sumilir, the village head always invite all RT and RW heads to the planning meeting.

The study also finds that in the village meeting, the participants tend to speak in the name of hamlet. The existing natural boundary separating each hamlet has made rural development to some extent localized per hamlet. Each hamlet will develop its own public infrastructures such as, elementary school, main road, mosque and borrowing and lending groups. Such informal agreement exists to prevent the social jealousy and to create the development equity among the hamlets. There is a practice to divide the development funds equally or to turn project location per hamlet periodically. The practice is taken for granted as it is perceived the best way to create development equity and to maintain harmony among the hamlets. Without this agreement,

the process to get funding in the village meeting will become competition among hamlet delegations that has a potential to result in the winner and the loser among them.

The more inclusive decision making itself occurs at hamlet level. Different from the meeting at village level, the meetings at hamlet level are more open by involving more villagers⁸. As the meeting is held in the informal atmosphere and there has been intensive interaction among the people before, the attendants can more freely propose the idea. The discussion among the attendants is more dynamic in hamlet meeting rather than in village level meeting. The hamlet meeting can be conducted through a special meeting to discuss a development projects or by utilizing the meeting of some existing community group. Up to the time of data collection, community organizations like farmer groups, Koran recital groups or *arisan*⁹ groups have well existed in three research locations. There are nine such groups in Sumilir, 11 in Kedarpan and 16 in Serang that have periodical meetings. These groups play important role in disseminating information as well as in formulating the aspirations of the community, and village officials sometimes come to these group meetings to socialize the development projects.

The representation system exists at hamlet meeting through one vote for one household. Several villagers are still excluded from the decision-making process, especially the female household heads and those who are not the member of any community groups. They are excluded from the decision making process either because they are not invited by hamlet head or they are intentionally refusing to join in the meeting. Especially for the female household heads, customs still becomes the main barrier discouraging their involvement in hamlet meeting. When asked whether they would go or not if they received invitation, most of them preferred to stay at home rather than to attend the meeting. The reasons vary from considering the meeting as man's business, the meeting is always held during the night that is customarily inappropriate for women to go out of home, or feeling not able to speak in front of the public. This social exclusion is contradictory with the fact that the female household heads constitute significant portion of poor households within the community. The portion of the poor with female household heads on the total poor households constitutes 15% in Serang, 14% in Kedarpan, and 37% in Sumilir.

Up to now, community tends to utilize village budget for physical projects. Although formally the budget can be utilized for non-physical projects like establishing community managed enterprises or conducting job training, the physical projects always dominate the proposals from the communities. This is mainly because poor physical infrastructures are the needs that community can identify easily. Considering the budget limitedness and the ability of local mason to do technical drawing, the infrastructures built usually consist of small-scale infrastructures like village road, small irrigation channel, small bridge, kindergarten and village polyclinic. Documentary study, as shown in Annex 2, shows that road improvements were the most frequent project.

5.2. Project Execution

Villagers participate in project execution mainly by becoming the paid workers, contributing *swadaya* and engaging in *kerja bakti*. *Swadaya* is the practice to contribute to self-supporting fund or other building material while *kerja bakti* is the practice to become voluntary worker. Both *swadaya* and *kerja bakti* have existed in Indonesian rural areas since a long time ago and became the integral part of rural development in Indonesia.

Project execution is coordinated by LKMD, whose members in the three villages, mainly consists of villagers mastering construction and technical drawing and RT and RW heads. The LKMD usually sets the wage for project execution below the wage standard for the same type of job in the non-government sponsored project. In Sumilir, the LKMD set the wage of a laborer at IDR (Indonesian Rupiah) 20,000 per day for road asphaltting project in 2010 when the normal wage was about IDR 25,000. Data from several project documents in Kedarpan and Serang also confirm similar policy. Although may be considered unjust, it can ensure that the workers of government-sponsored projects are the poor households. The non-poor are reluctant to become the worker in those projects since they still can earn more income from the other jobs. In agricultural community like in the three villages, the jobs providing daily wage are very rare and the income from the farming usually comes during the harvest season. Working in the government sponsored projects has contributed in absorbing their working days and in providing the temporary income sources. However, this still does not apply for the female and the elder poors since the job provided as such are quite limited.

The other forms of community participation in project execution are *swadaya* and *kerja bakti*, which have been unavoidable since the village budget cannot cover all project expenses. The amount of *swadaya* fund that the community should contribute can be decided either voluntarily by each household or mandatorily through the meeting. While contributing *swadaya* is not difficult for the non-poor, it can be a financial burden for the poor especially when the amount is mandatorily decided. The amount of *swadaya* and activeness in *kerja bakti* is practically influenced by the expected benefit from the project, local leadership and the openness of planning meeting. For example, as shown in the Annex 2, community contribution to the project of poor's house renovation in Sumilir village was quite high, as the project was deemed to benefit the poor

directly. All village institution heads, from RT to village head, play role in mobilizing the resources from community. So far, community will be more active if their leaders have set a precedent by contributing much more *swadaya*, by joining together in *kerja bakti*, or by orally asking each villager to work in the project sites. Village officials in Sumilir are seemingly more successful in increasing community contribution than the other two villages. This may be related to the decision of the Sumilir headman to involve more villages in planning meeting. Although there is no formal punishment for those not contributing *swadaya* or joining *kerja bakti*, such social punishment exists to regard them as not mutually helpful. Similar as that of in planning meeting, community participation in the execution stage is disaggregated per hamlet, which means that villagers tend to participate only for infrastructure building in their hamlet.

As Evers (2000) completely describes, cases of coercive mobilization of local resources to support the projects during New Order regime were profound. Although democratization spreads over Indonesia since the fall of the regime, this study still finds a case where *swadaya* and *kerja bakti* become compulsive rather than voluntary. In the road building project of Kedarpan village in 2007, the LKMD by approval from the village head cut the wages of the workers by IDR 1,500 from the wage of IDR 18,500 per day per worker to be counted as *swadaya*. The LKMD needed do this cutting to increase the amount of *swadaya* fund since the community insisted the village government to lengthen the road up to about 1 kilometer while the available fund was only about IDR 81 million, which was only enough for building the road with a length of 600 meter¹⁰. In this case, not only the community should contribute more in *swadaya*, but also the quality of material should be decreased to fulfill the need on quantity. At the time, the LKMD also clearly allocated each household several days for becoming the voluntary workers. Of course this case is not simply an issue of coercive mobilization since it was also affected by community insistence to lengthen the project quantity. From the other perspective, this case can also be regarded as a policy to seek a way out of the problem on fund limitedness. Yet, when looking at the lowness of wage rate, contribution in *swadaya* and involvement in *kerja bakti*, it seems that the poors are the parties contributing to the project more than the non-poors. This case shows that decentralized rural development cannot fully abolish the practice of coercive mobilization of local resources. If community contribution inflicts disservice to the poors, the sustainability of rural development will be questionable.

5.3. Project Evaluation

Decentralized rural development also aims to increase the control of community to the development fund in order to promote the clean government. For this aim, transparency in the fund utilization and clear mechanism of complaints are compulsory to improve community involvement in project evaluation. However, this study finds that project accountability is still weak. Such project transparency like presenting the report in public information board does not exist. There are no public information boards in research locations, except one in each village office without updated information. The village governments actually always make a project report, but they keep it safe in the office and submit only to the district government via sub-district head. The responsibility meeting, which is supposed to be a forum to present the fund utilization and to hand over the outputs to the community, is not implemented except in Kedarpan village through a representation meeting. In this connection, most village governments still orientate the accountability to the upper government level rather than to the community.

To where village government will be accountable is related to the issue on power relation. So far, community has no power to press the village head be accountable and transparent to them. On the other hand, although under decentralized system there is no direct command line from district to village government, the former is still powerful than the later. The other reason is the incentives of giving report to the district government. If village government fails to submit the report on time, the district government may delay the next transfer of funds as well as give punishment by reducing the amount of the next year transfer. The existence of punishment motivates the village head to submit report routinely, as it will also show that village government can execute the project well. The punishment itself is a crucial threat because up to now, the main source of village budget is transfer from the district government. Although village government can look for the internal revenue from the local sources, none of the researched villages is able to earn. The facilities like village market and motorcycle pedicab pool, from which village governments usually collect charge, or village government's enterprises that can provide profit are not available in the researched villages.

So far, there is no clear mechanism on how to complain if there is something wrong within the project. Directly asking the village officials is the most possible way that community can do. However, not all villagers, especially the poor has the bravery to complain openly, as they do not want to be regarded as troublemakers or are afraid that it will hamper when they administer official letters in the village office. Some kind of indirect protests are expressed through the inactiveness in the village government sponsored activities such as reluctance to join *kerja bakti*, contribute *swadaya* or pay the tax of land. The villagers themselves unintentionally have developed some kind of tolerance to fund misusing. They may sometimes be aware that

several projects suffer from the corruption just by seeing the construction quality or by comparing the quantity of project to the other projects using the same amount of fund. As far as they think that it is only a petty corruption, they will not openly complain. "Corruption may still occur, as the pipe will be wet from the water (aphorism, I emphasize). Yet, it should be not so much" said one villager in Serang¹. This statement implicitly reflects that community involvement in evaluating the projects is still weak.

Among three researched villages, there was a case of fund misusing reported in Serang in 2007. At the time, the village development team was suspected to misuse about IDR 10 million from village budget. As community protest resulted in no settlement at village level, the community then reported the case to sub-district head. Instead of bringing the case to the police for legal settlement, the sub-district head preferred to issue administrative sanction for the doers and to ask them to return the fund. The case was finally closed in 2008 after the doers returned the fund.

6. Conclusion and Policy Implication

This paper has presented the design of decentralized rural development in Indonesia and how it is executed at village level. There is no doubt that the design of decentralized system has provided more space for community participation in rural development. While under centralized system of New Order regime the village government has only the authority to execute the projects, currently it has also the authority to plan and to evaluate the projects. Furthermore, by using case study of Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir villages, this study concludes that community has been involved in planning and executing but less in evaluating the projects.

Without undermining the progress of community participation taking place in rural development, this study finds some phenomena need to be addressed for improving the decentralized rural development in Indonesia. In planning stage, unless being well managed, the representation meeting system may have potential to diminish the poor's voice within village decision making. In execution stage, decentralized rural development still cannot fully abolish coercive mobilization of local resources. Finally, in evaluation stage, the village government still orients the accountability to the upper level of government while community cannot fully control the projects. Furthermore, this study also concludes that village officials, mainly village head, are the main actor determining what mechanism will be conducted to involve the community in rural development.

All of the empirical facts found in this research put in mind that participatory rural development is a process of learning and no instant result will be achieved in the short period. Sustainable participatory rural development through decentralized system requires more than just transferring the authorities on planning, execution and evaluation to village government. Perhaps more important, it also requires a clear mechanism to be applied by considering local social and political context, and even a mindset changing of village officials to see community involvement as something compulsory in every rural development activity. In this connection, it is important for the government to develop a clear guideline on the mechanism to involve villagers in rural development, especially in planning and evaluation stages. Despite that, some monitoring to ensure that village government will comply with the guideline being issued is also needed.

End note

¹ In 2004, the law was revised into law 32/2004 on Regional Governance.

² Mochamad Ryas Rasyid was the main conceper of decentralized system in Indonesia. He became Minister of Regional Autonomy from 1999 to 2001.

³ The number is a result of survey conducted by Central Statistic Agency, which defines poor people as those whose income cannot provide 2,100 kcal of food per day and some other non-food needs. In 2010, rural poverty line was IDR 6,412 per people per day, which was a sum of IDR 4,965 for food needs and IDR 1,447 for non-food needs. Measured by Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) standard, Indonesian poverty line is equivalent to US\$ 1.55 per people per day (CSA, 2010).

⁴ Different from the number of poor people at national level that is a result of survey on the respondent expenditure, the number of poor people in this table is a result of census by using 14 aggregated indicators of poverty. A household is categorized as poor if it meets at least 11 indicators. The 14 indicators used are: 1) The width of house floor is less than 8 m²; 2) The house floor is from earth or poor wood; 3) The house wall is from bamboo/poor wood/un-cemented brick; 4) Having no private toilet; 5) Having no clean water facilities; 6) Having no electricity; 7) Cooking by using wood or gasoline; 8) Only able to consume meat once per week; 9) Only able to eat twice a day; 10) Only able to buy new clothes once a year; 11) Not able to get medical treatment when sick; 12) The education of household head is elementary or less; 13) Having no asset worth more than IDR 500,000; and 14) Having land less than 0.5 ha or income less than IDR 600,000 per month. The last indicator, which is about income, is more or less equivalent to rural food poverty line for a household with 4 family members.

⁵ In Indonesia, it is very often that community builds some infrastructure, mostly religious facilities, without any government involvement on funding and management. Because the motivation and the management of this kind of infrastructure building are different, the discussion in this paper does not include it.

⁶ Summarized from the interview with Kedarpan village head in 19 March 2010

⁷ Summarized from the interview with Sumilir village head in 26 February 2010

⁸ Observation and discussion in hamlet meeting in Bojongsari in 28 March 2011

⁹ *Arisan* is group where the members collect some amount of money and take turn at winning it periodically.

¹⁰ Interview with Mr. Margono, the LKMD head in Kedarpan Village, in 19 March 2011

¹¹ Mr. Dono, a youth in Serang Village, express this aphorism during interview in 8 March 2011

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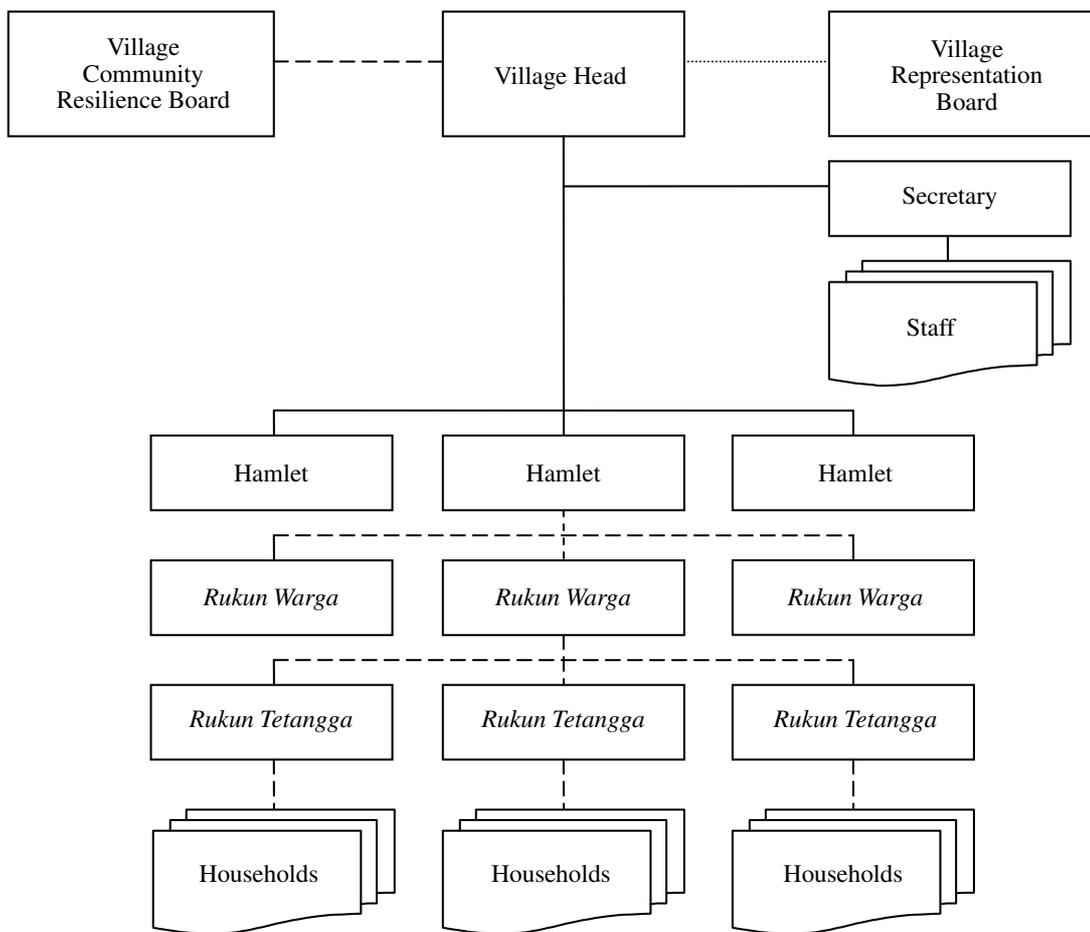
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Annex 1: The Relationship among Village Level Institutions



Notes:

1. _____ : Command line
2. - - - - - : Coordination line
3. : Controlling line

Annex 2: Some of Village Projects in Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir Village, 2009-2010

No	Village	Year	Project financed for	The amount of budget (IDR)	Contribution from community	Name of project
1	2	3	5	4	6	7
1	Serang	2009	Road improvement and village office reparation	108,576,000	7,746,600	VAF
			Road improvement	278,590,000	11,426,000	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	10,000,000	n.a	PHRP
		2010	Madrasah building	107,576,000	n.a	VAF
			Madrasah building	148,306,000	4,380,000	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	7,000,000	n.a	PHRP
2	Kedarpan	2009	Road improvement	101,719,000	n.a	VAF
			Road improvement	50,265,000	5,061,000	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	10,000,000	n.a	PHRP
		2010	Riverbank improvement	102,567,000	4,238,000	VAF
			Capital assistance for borrowing and lending group	10,000,000	n.a	NPCE
			Kindergarten building	101,439,000	2,200,000	NPCE
			Kindergarten building	67,059,000	2,000,000	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	7,000,000	n.a	PHRP
3	Sumilir	2009	Absorbing well building, riverbank maintenance and irrigation channel improvement	95,937,000	4,917,000	VAF
			Road improvement	72,726,000	16,100,000	NPCE
			Capital assistance for borrowing and lending group	13,684,000	n.a	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	10,000,000	16,650,000	PHRP
		2010	Road improvement and absorbing well building	96,785,000	1,380,400	VAF
			Road improvement	77,384,000	15,575,000	NPCE
			Capital assistance for borrowing and lending group	8,947,000	n.a	NPCE
			Poor's house renovation	7,500,000	n.a	PHRP

Source: Kedarpan Village Government (2009, 2010); Purbalingga District Government (2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b); Serang Village Government (2009, 2010); Sumilir Village Government (2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b)

Note:

- Column 6 is a sum of *swadaya* collected from the villagers and the days of *kerja bakti* equalized to labor wage
- Abbreviation:
n.a : The data are not available
VAF : Village Allocation Fund (*Alokasi Dana Desa*)
NPCE : National Program for Community Empowerment (*Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*)
PHRP : Poor's House Renovation Program (*Program Stimulan Pemugaran Rumah Keluarga Miskin*)