



Governance Brief

Are Community Aspirations Being Accommodated in Development Plans?

A Lesson from Collective Action in Jambi

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Introduction

The end of the New Order regime, after more than 30 years in power, changed the fundamentals of governance in Indonesia at all levels, from central to regional (provincial, district/municipal). One such change was the transition from a highly centralized to a decentralized form of government, as indicated by the enactment of Law No. 22/1999 on Local Governance, which was then revised by Law No. 32/2004. The change had nationwide implications for the development planning system that, as recognized by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas 2005), had been plagued by problems such as policy inconsistencies, low levels of public community participation, poor synchronization between programme planning and financing, low levels of transparency and accountability in the utilization of public funds, and ineffective performance evaluations. In conjunction with the new powers delegated to the regions, Law No. 25/2004², governing the national development planning system, was passed in order to deal with these issues.

Unlike the top-down approach of the previous planning system, the planning system provided for in Law No. 25/2004 and its implementing regulation³ applies a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches that place greater emphasis on aspirations and participatory processes. Worldwide, growing awareness of the shortcomings of top-down approaches in development and poverty alleviation has drawn attention to the role of community participation and the importance of understanding the dynamics of communities and regional governments and how they interact with higher levels of governance (Das Gupta *et al.* 2003). Having more room for participation motivates communities to act together to express their wishes. In his study in Bangladesh, Mahmud (2001) showed the role of collective action in making community voices heard and opening up opportunities to influence institutions' decisions about public services. Collective action prepares communities for involvement in participatory processes.

The bottom-up and participatory planning approach of Law No. 25/2004 took the form of **development planning consultations** (*Musyawah Perencanaan Pembangunan – musrenbang*, hereinafter referred to as DPCs), taking place in stages from village level through to subdistrict and district levels. The process is one of the efforts to develop annual development programmes and budgets. It provides communities with opportunities to voice their aspirations and participate in producing development programmes that suit their needs.

This paper is based on a collaborative research study by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the West Tanjung Jabung District Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)-wide programme on CAPRI (Collective Action and Property Rights). It looks at the extent to which two of five⁴ development planning approaches, i.e., the participatory and bottom-up approaches, have been taken on and have accommodated community aspirations. The brief also explores the role of collective action encouraging communities to interact with external agents and to engage in DPCs⁵.

The brief is based not only on interviews and discussions with relevant district stakeholders but also on the authors' experiences of facilitating community groups in Lubuk Kambing village, West Tanjung Jabung District, and helping them go through a cycle of planning–action–reflection as part of a participatory action research study.

Development Planning at District Level

Planning is a systematic, coordinated and continuous process closely linked to resource allocation, target achievement efforts and future actions. In terms of approaches, Law 25/2004 makes it clear that a political approach to development planning takes the form of a development agenda offered by the president or a regional head that puts forward medium-term development plans. A technocratic approach refers to planning based on a framework of scientific methods and thinking by an organization or working unit. A participatory approach to planning involves all stakeholders in development. The last two approaches – top-down and bottom-up – take the form of consultations at various levels of government.

The district-level planning process is illustrated in Figure 1. The policymaking process begins with discussions between district government agencies and various components of the community, facilitated by a team of experts. These discussions generate formulations for general policy direction and plans for medium-term development that are then laid out in Regional Medium-term Development Plans (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah*, RPJM) and Regional Administrative Working Unit (*Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah*, SKPD) strategic plans. RPJMs are enacted by a regional head's regulation, whereas SKPD strategic plans are determined by the heads of each working unit.

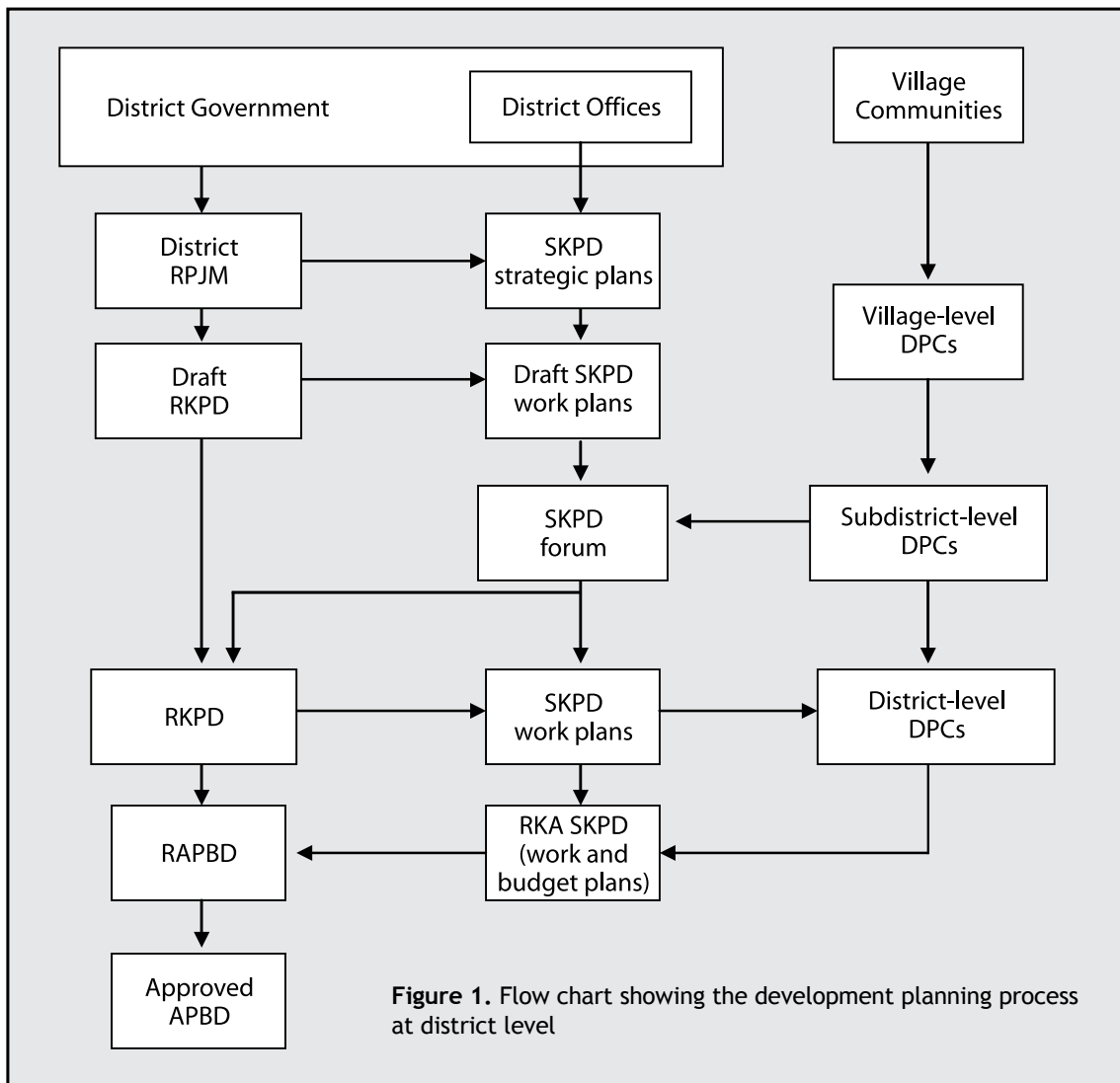
The RPJM is then elaborated upon in a preliminary draft Regional Administrative Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Daerah*, RKPD). Bappeda, the Agency for Development Planning, plays an important role in this annual activity, and coordinates regional planning processes through DPCs held at the village, subdistrict and district levels. Bappeda staff attend subdistrict-level DPCs and explain development programmes and general budget direction. SKPD forums are intended to synchronize programmes among agencies to prevent overlapping, and to discuss community aspirations conveyed through subdistrict-level DPCs. SKPD work plans provide input for a draft RKPD, which becomes the reference point for preparing a District Budget Plan (*Rencana Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah*, RAPBD). SKPD work plans generated in the SKPD forum form the guidelines for preparing SKPD Budget Plans and the RAPBD.

Village Consultation

As a consultation forum at which stakeholders agree on annual development plans, the village DPC becomes an important vehicle for eliciting villagers' aspirations. In terms of timeline and mechanism, a village DPC is divided into two stages: preparation and implementation.

During the preparation stage, men's and women's community groups (such as farmer groups, *dasa wisma* neighbourhood organizations and women's Family Welfare Empowerment groups (*Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, PKK) undertake consultations at the hamlet level. After a presentation team has prepared an implementation timetable, the DPC begins and is attended by community representatives. Usually, hamlet heads or community groups represent all elements of a community, and subsequently voice the aspirations they have discussed during the preparation stage. These forums establish development programme priorities and decide on delegates to take output from the village DPC discussions to the next DPC level.

The DPC in Lubuk Kambing village, the study site, took place on 27 March 2005, which was later than the predetermined schedule⁶. Despite receiving an instruction from Merlung Subdistrict to hold the DPC on 4 March 2005, the village's preparations were apparently insufficient for the forum to be held on time. One reason for this was that the Lubuk Kambing Village Government officials had limited understanding of the implementation mechanisms and techniques required to hold a village DPC. As a result, not all activities that should have been carried



out, according to the rules⁷, could be undertaken. There had been almost no hamlet-level community consultations to discuss development suggestions, and the village government had failed to form a DPC presentation team.

The forum was held in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah building, with 31 participants representing village government, the Village Consultative Assembly (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa*, BPD), PKK, youth, teachers and the customary council. Some participants felt that the village DPC had been held too quickly, and they came to the forum completely unprepared as they had received formal invitations to attend only one day before the meeting took place.

The village DPC was held over two sessions. During the first session the village head explained the intentions and objectives of the DPC as well as the importance of preparing development plan suggestions based on genuine community

needs and wishes. During this first session, all the participants were given the opportunity to voice their suggestions, in turn⁸.

During the second session, all the suggestions were discussed and prioritized after decisions had been made as to which could be funded by the District Budget (APBD) and which could be funded independently by the community or by other funding sources. Decisions to determine priorities were made by voting and raising hands as a sign of agreement. The suggestions were then ranked in order of priority for submission to the government. Indicators for determining ranking were based on levels of need and community interests.

Three development priorities agreed at the DPC were (1) strengthening the 7-km road to Suka Maju hamlet and the 4-km road to Muara Danau hamlet; (2) improving education facilities, which included renovating the primary school and providing study materials for school pupils; and (3) improving

healthcare facilities, building a community health centre and an integrated health service post, and providing medical workers.

During the last stage, the participants agreed to entrust the village government to prepare a report on the outcomes of the DPC, submit it to Merlung Subdistrict Government and fight for the adoption of the suggestions at the subdistrict level.

Subdistrict Consultation

Although the 2005 subdistrict DPC was scheduled for the first week of April, it did not take place until 30 May, almost two months late⁹. Attending the Merlung Subdistrict DPC were the subdistrict head, the head of the local police (*kapolsek*), military subdistrict commanders (*koramil*), representatives of Merlung Subdistrict Government technical agencies (education, agriculture and health services), non-governmental organisations, the press, local leaders and representatives from villages in Merlung Subdistrict. Staff of West Tanjung Jabung Bappeda and the head of the village development office, who represented the district head, also participated. Some members of the District House of Representatives (DPRD) of West Tanjung Jabung, representing Tungal Ulu and Merlung subdistrict constituencies, were also present.

Of the 19 villages in the subdistrict, only 15 were represented, most by their village head. Representing Lubuk Kambing were the village head and two members of the BPD, one of whom was female and the only woman taking part in the DPC. In terms of participant composition, the DPC in Merlung Subdistrict fulfilled the requirement for representation of all stakeholders in the region.

The DPC process was divided into two sessions. In the first, representatives of each village and government office/technical agency submitted their development aspirations verbally and then formalized them in written documents for submission to the subdistrict office. During the second session, development planning suggestions were discussed and prioritized by a formulation team comprising the subdistrict head and his staff, relevant offices/technical agencies and all the village heads. Discussions to determine a priority scale for the proposals proved to be difficult. Five development planning priorities were finally agreed upon: road building, bridge building, educational facilities, increasing people's livelihoods and environmental impact analyses.

District Consultation

The district DPC was attended by heads of subdistricts, heads of district government offices, heads of divisions within the district secretariat office, community figures, and representatives of community organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The staff of the Provincial Bappeda also represented the Governor. In this forum, subdistrict heads presented the outcomes of subdistrict-level DPCs. In addition, government officers also presented the proposed development priorities. The priority programmes were determined according to sector: economic, social and cultural or infrastructure. The output from the district-level DPC was a planning document that included development priorities together with their funding or proposed budgets laid out in a District Budget Plan (RAPBD), which was subsequently submitted to the DPRD for consultation and approval.

DPRD Approval

A draft RAPBD is deliberated within the DPRD through an initial plenary session at which the district head gives an introductory speech and presents a finance note. The Legislative Budget Committee (*Panggar*), together with the executive budget committee, further deliberates the proposed budget. To obtain more detailed sectoral information, the legislative committee asks government agencies to explain their proposed activities and their budgets. If it considers any proposed activity to be unrealistic, the committee carries out physical checks in the field. Any proposal deemed unimportant can be rejected.

According to the mechanisms for determining the RAPBD, any adjustments relating to budget allocation, moving project locations or changing development priorities in already approved planning documents must have the prior approval of the DPRD.

Collective action in development planning

An individual community member will opt to engage in collective action if he or she feels that group members have a shared objective and that there is uncertainty and risk in acting alone.

Various studies show the role of collective action in increasing community access to higher institutions

to demand public services or request protection (Mahmud 2001; Di Gregorio *et al.* 2004). In a decentralized system of governance with some central authority shifted to the regions, as is the case with development planning according to Law No. 25/2004, collective action is necessary for coordinating individual activities, preparing group rules and mobilizing financial and labour resources (Meinzen-Dick and Knox 1999).

Collective action encourages communities to play a social and political role, for instance through their participation in policy processes. Collective action constitutes a mechanism for the community 'voice' to be heard (Mahmud 2001). In a development context, collective action not only mobilizes local energy and improves public services but also reduces the possibility of elite capture (Das Gupta *et al.* 2000, 2003).

When the research facilitation process began in the village of Lubuk Kambing, very few villagers fully understood why village DPCs were necessary or how they could be used to channel the villagers' aspirations. Those who did understand and had previously been involved in similar forums were pessimistic about village DPCs¹⁰. One villager said, for example, '...the first suggestion was proposed several times, but has had no response from the government. But we'll try to propose it again this year; the main thing is activities to support people's livelihoods.' This was natural in view of the fact that their aspirations had not been listened to for years, and they could not see a direct link between the village DPC and the development aid they received.

Have community aspirations been accommodated?

Regional autonomy and the revision of the development planning system have brought policymaking processes closer to communities and given them a greater opportunity to participate in development planning. More important, however, is the extent to which communities care about and have a sense of ownership over the development activities in their region. The sense of ownership will develop when the community's aspirations are among others accommodated in APBD budgets.

Analysis of the West Tanjung Jabung District's APBD budget for 2007 reveals that very few of the aspirations of Lubuk Kambing villagers and of other villages observed are included in activities funded by the district government budget. It is estimated



Building aspiration through group strengthening

that community aspirations account for only some 15–20% of the development activities included in the final documentation. One community proposal being accommodated is road surfacing, while other important proposals relating to education and health are not being funded by the APBD.

Consequently, questions arise such as: Why were some community proposals not included in the final development plan? Did community aspirations reach the district-level forum? Were the processes employed truly participatory? Does collective action encourage communities to become involved in policymaking processes? Reflecting on the DPC process, it is worth assessing what aspects of the process may have led to the community's aspirations not being accommodated.

Outcomes of a combined approach

The low percentage of villager proposals adopted may be less surprising if the factors influencing the determination of development priorities are examined. One such factor is funding. With limited funds, development priorities must be determined and distributed evenly among all villages in the district. Another factor is the input to the forums. At the subdistrict level, for instance, not only were the problems, programme priorities and activities from the villages elaborated upon, but issues brought up by the related subdistrict government offices, as laid out in their SKPD work plans, were also considered. The programmes that were prioritized were those that suited the vision, mission and general district policy direction laid out in the draft RKP. If the



There is a tendency among the communities to propose physical programmes in DPC due to poor infrastructure in their village

impact of development plans on communities is discussed, it cannot be denied that programmes laid out in SKPD work plans and budgets (RKAs) do eventually affect the communities, although perhaps in ways that do not suit their wishes.

Requiring further critique is not only the question of the low percentage of community aspirations being accommodated, but also the proportion of the budget allocated for routine spending, work trips, and goods and services purchased by the government agencies, and the allocation of funds for development activities or public services that impact directly on communities.

Participation

The importance of community involvement in preparing development plans is emphasized strongly in Law No. 25/2004. The participatory approach taken by this law can be seen from at least four articles mentioning community participation in their provisions (Articles 2, 5, 6 and 7). Observations made during the facilitation process showed a high level of enthusiasm among community members for conveying their wishes and being involved in the DPC process. The high level of participation at all the forums also indicated that participatory mechanisms were being used.

In the district-level DPC, a substantial number of participants attended and almost all stakeholders were represented, particularly the related government agencies. The government agency representatives' enthusiasm for attending the

DPCs was due, in part, to their desire to fight for the proposals associated with their offices. However, the community representatives left the forum before the end, and before the government agency representatives left, generally feeling that the programme being discussed was not relevant to their needs.

Irrespective of whether or not the non accommodation of community aspirations was due only to limited funds or to other reasons, it is interesting to consider how far participation clearly mandated in government regulations has empowered village communities. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) looked at participation from two practical aspects: supply and demand. For participation to be effective, the supply side needs to be receptive to input from outsiders, be transparent and open, and have adequate authority. In terms of demand, the extent and effectiveness of the community voice are conditioned by the enabling environment for participation, the existence of a tradition of participation and capability of civil society groups to organize and articulate their demands. Furthermore, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) stated that the number and efficacy of public aspirations accommodated in policy making depends on the economic and political relations between government institutions.

It seems that perceived participatory processes within DPCs have yet to be effective; for example, in terms of attempts to alleviate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Blair (2000) stated that before poverty can be overcome, once 'participation' has taken place there are still other issues to deal with. They are representation, empowerment and the distribution of benefits to all stakeholders.

Representation and capacity to ascertain and convey aspirations

At each stage of the DPCs there was sufficient community representation. During the village DPC, for instance, a BPD member attended as community representative, while community figures and representatives of all the community groups were also in attendance. The same was true during the subdistrict DPC, where community figures also attended. At the time of the district DPC, community figures, NGOs and community organizations were all in attendance.

Nevertheless, attending forums does not guarantee that aspirations voiced at lower-level meetings

will reach or become part of the decision-making process at the next stage. The extent to which community representatives represent their groups and have the strength and capacity to convey aspirations in a supportive atmosphere conducive to making them feel comfortable should also be examined.

Most participants failed to make full use of the opportunity to convey their groups' aspirations when the opportunity arose. Some participants made no suggestions, or simply repeated the suggestions of participants who had spoken before them. This was possibly because the community representatives came to the forums without sufficient preparation at either the community group or hamlet levels. The community representatives' time was limited, but the information they received was also very limited; they were generally unprepared for making systematic written proposals, so their suggestions would sometimes end up as meeting leaders' notes with little chance for consideration in discussions at the next level.

Furthermore, when the forums took place the formulation teams were divided between different sectoral groups and were often in sectors where community proposals were not discussed. This shows the importance of having community representatives in DPC formulation teams in each sectoral group. Another problem was the formulation team's lack of capacity to determine priorities, either for activities funded by the APBD or activities funded independently by the community. Consequently, it was not possible to formulate a clear scale of development priorities.

Elite capture

The changes in the governance system and the revised mechanisms for ascertaining aspirations have not reduced opportunities for abuse of the development planning system. The phenomenon of elite capture¹⁷ was still found to occur in the DPC process. A serious problem in development, elite capture has been pointed out in studies in various countries (see, for example, Platteau and Gaspart 2003; Platteau 2004) in Africa in the context of forest resources management (Oyono 2005) and in Indonesia itself, particularly in West Java and Jambi (Fritzen 2005; Bebbington *et al.* 2006).

Elite capture may be understood as an attitude taken by or action carried out by individuals or groups to influence policy making or decision making so they themselves can benefit from the outcome.



Having engaged in collective action, women have the courage to speak to the forum about their opinions

This relates not only to development systems but also to their benefits, material or non material, such as information and other development aid. The share that should have reached these grassroots communities – generally the poor, who are the most entitled to it – is not received in full: some of it is diverted to benefit the elite individual or group.

Although it should be recognized that it is quite difficult to state outright that there were irregularities during the DPC process, this study – based on observations and interviews with key stakeholders – did, in fact, find indications of elite capture at the village and district levels. For example, although instructions to hold village DPCs were received from the subdistrict in plenty of time, one village head did not actually hold a village DPC but took it upon himself to submit a formal list of nine proposals¹² to the subdistrict DPC, without consulting the village community. It may be that the activities he proposed were necessary for the community, such as those, for instance, that had been proposed in the previous year. Nevertheless, his attitude showed disregard for the community's own aspirations. Others considered it an irresponsible attitude¹³.

Other cases suggest that groups and agencies applied pressure so that their proposals and programmes would be accommodated. Forums dominated by government agencies appeared to show a tendency for a larger portion of agency interests to be accommodated, although, as observed at the district-level DPC, office/agency proposals were sometimes inappropriate to strategic plans, Annual Budget Policy (*Arah Kebijakan Umum*, AKU) and Working Unit Budget



In DPC's, women were inclined to suggest programmes related to education and human resource capacity building

Plans (*Rencana Anggaran Satuan Kerja*, RASK). The budgets proposed for some programmes were often unrealistic, thus closing the opportunity for funds to be allocated to other, needier parties. It should be acknowledged that many errors were discovered, even though technical guidance had been provided.¹⁴

In the final APBD document, it was found that some village development projects were not based on suggestions from the village DPCs. Such projects usually originated from DPRD members, using funds left over from cancellations or cuts in development project funds proposed by technical agencies¹⁵. When unused funds – termed 'savings' in legislative circles – were available, they were usually allocated for new projects. The villages that secured such funds were usually those that were home to the majority of the DPRD members' constituents.

A positive effect of this action is that such development aid tends to suit the needs and wishes of local communities because the members of the legislature can identify and respond to community aspirations when they visit their constituencies. On the other hand, however, this has implications for communities in other regions who have even less opportunity to secure 'development benefits', and there are also questions of justice and the equitable distribution of development funds throughout the district. Community trust in village DPCs will diminish further if they consider such forums to be mere formalities.

The roles of collective action and women in development planning

Traditionally, villagers from Lubuk Kambing and the surrounding villages are used to collaborating and working in groups in social activities such as *arisan*¹⁶, recitals of the Koran and managing farm land or *pelhin*. Prior to *reformasi*, the villagers were also involved in groups including farmer groups, family welfare PKK groups and the Village Community Resilience Council (*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa*, LKMD). However, group activities encouraged by external intervention were often short lived, as the need to engage in collective action was not founded on sincere trust and mutual need but on short-term economic interests or political pressure.

After the collapse of the New Order government, communities became free to express their aspirations and form their own associations. Since the implementation of regional autonomy in 2001, several regional policies have also encouraged collective community action. The IPKR (*Izin Pemanfaatan Kayu Rakyat*, Community Timber Extraction Permit) policy, for instance, under which permits were issued to community groups to extract timber, encouraged the emergence of partnerships between community groups and outsiders. These, however, did not generally last long because they were formed by outsiders and were based on material relationships (timber fees). In some regions in Jambi Province group activities ceased when central government changed its policy and revoked the authority over forestry management given to district governments at the beginning of the regional autonomy era.

Within the framework of the CAPRI research study, village facilitators were actively involved in encouraging group activities, particularly with the farmers' and women's groups that are subjects of the study. The group facilitation process had already been running for some time when the community accepted the plan to present a village DPC. Through processes of debate, planning and action in all the groups, the villagers began learning to identify problems, prepare activity plans and understand the reasons why some groups succeed and others fail to achieve their objectives. Although villagers were uncertain whether or not they should participate in the DPCs, the facilitation process and the visits by district government officials boosted their self confidence and encouraged them to act collectively and express their hopes. The interaction between

group members and outsiders, particularly district government officers, when asking for information and advice about development aid increased the villagers' confidence in their ability to express their wishes through the village DPCs.

A member of the research team acted as facilitator and played a part in activating hamlet-level small group meetings and ensuring that those groups, which hitherto had never been involved in village DPCs, were represented. Prior to this, the village head would involve only village officials and some members of the BPD. However, a desire among the villagers to achieve shared objectives (securing land certificates, donated seedlings and other development aid) through group activities, the facilitators' assistance and the reactivation of community groups all pushed, the village head into mobilizing the village authorities and BPD to prepare a village DPC. The village head also became more active in passing on information to the community.

Women's group activities also showed positive developments: they had rarely or never been involved in DPCs or similar meetings. The courage to speak in mixed, public forums, although initially only in small all-women groups, is one indicator of the success of group facilitation¹⁷. The words of the village head's wife, 'I wanted to take part in subdistrict meetings but the village head wouldn't allow me to; he never invites me to meetings in the subdistrict,' reflect how women's wishes to express their hopes and access information may be obstructed by those closest to them.

In the course of the facilitation process, the village head finally opened the door to participation in the village DPCs not only to the village authorities, BPD and farmer groups but also to the women's group. Although only three women attended the village DPC – an assistant teacher from the Madrasah, a PKK representative and a member of the BPD – at the end of the session the village head actually appointed a female representative to the subdistrict DPC.

From the point of view of women's involvement, it is interesting to look at the types of suggestions they proposed during the village and subdistrict forums. While most community suggestions related to physical infrastructure development such as building roads, bridges and education facilities, the women's representatives suggested developing the capacity of the villagers through education. They proposed training to improve women's skills and argued that education constitutes important capital for improving community capacity and creating a better life in the future.

The processes undergone have yet to provide a satisfactory outcome in accommodating community aspirations through collective action in policy making at higher levels of government. One lesson learned is the importance of outside parties in encouraging community collective action, because, as Meinen-Dick *et al.* (2001) stated, collective action at the local level often remains limited in its impact if it is not backed by external support. Further, Di Gregorio *et al.* (2004) consider it necessary to have vertical links from local collective action institutions to civil society and political arenas to enable community groups to enter policy processes at higher levels and develop power. This action research study has stressed the importance of connecting community collective action to policy actors, and of the need to look for support for collective action at higher levels, namely coordination and collaboration with government agencies in the development planning process.

In closing

The new planning system provides a greater opportunity for the preparation of regional development plans that better reflect community needs. There is still some room for communities to convey their aspirations through collective action. However, making representation and participation really meaningful remains an issue that should be highlighted. Another challenge to community collective action and the accommodation of community aspirations is elite capture. This phenomenon could be reduced (if it cannot be eradicated) by putting multistakeholder processes and openness to the forefront of every decision-making process. DPC participation should be extended to all components of the community, from the planning right up to the evaluation stages of development processes. Performance-based budgets, already provided for in legislation, should be implemented more comprehensively to reduce the possibility of development funds being wasted on unproductive programme activities.

Collective action has a role to play in encouraging communities to improve the effectiveness of group activity and consolidate their aspirations through group activities. With society still in a transitional phase following years of authoritarian rule, external support is vital as a catalyst for group activities and for preparing communities to become actively involved in policymaking processes. Regional governments have an important role to play in encouraging the implementation of participatory approaches that are better able to ascertain community capacity and potential.

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Endnotes

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² Law 25/2004 issued on 5 October 2004 still makes reference to Law No. 22/1999 on Local Governance. According to Article 2 of Law 25/2004, a development planning system aims to: enhance coordination among the development actors, ensure that development is integrated between central and local governments, maintain the consistency of planning, budgeting and control of development programmes, and encourage people's participation and use resources in efficient, effective, fair and sustainable ways.

³ To further elaborate Law No 25/2004, the Head of Bappenas and the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a joint letter within the framework of developing the 2006 Annual Local Government Working Plan, known locally as *Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Daerah* (RKPD).

⁴ As described in the Elaboration of the Law, five approaches are taken: political, technocratic, participatory, top-down and bottom-up.

⁵ This DPC forum is considered to be an important vehicle for examining whether policy development processes have been conducted in a participatory manner. According to one study, before Law 25/2004 was issued, the holding of a DPC was the most common method used by bureaucrats to make decisions. DPRD members were

mostly inclined to choose field visits and community meetings as the means of eliciting the people's aspirations (Dwiyanto *et al.* 2002).

⁶ DPC schedules were set out in joint circular letter No. 0259/M.PPN/I/2005.050/166/SJ from the Minister of Home Affairs and the State Minister for National Development Planning/Head of Bappenas.

⁷ For 2005, the District Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) of West Tanjung Jabung issued technical guidance documents for village and subdistrict DPCs.

⁸ The villagers' wishes were presented by the heads of Lubuk Beringin, Tanah Tumbuh, Suka Maju, Muara Danau and Aur Gading hamlets, followed by representatives of the customary council, youth, the BPD and teachers and women from the PKK. Each neighbourhood (RT) chairperson was also given the opportunity to add his/her development plan suggestions.

⁹ When the subdistrict DPC was being planned, the provincial DPC turned out to have been held in April 2005. At that time, the district DPC had yet to be held as the DPC results from all the subdistricts in West Tanjung Jabung District were still awaited.

¹⁰ Interviews with several parties in the district and villages show that interest in the village and subdistrict DPCs has tended to decline. In 2005, several villages did not even hold a DPC. At the subdistrict level the number of participants has also apparently fallen. One reason for this is that participants feel pessimistic about the likelihood of their suggestions being accommodated. In Bathin III Ulu Subdistrict, Bungo District, the other CAPRI research location in Jambi, the same phenomenon was observed. At the beginning of 2006, when the DPCs were meant to be held, only three of the nine villages in the subdistrict held village DPCs.

¹¹ Here elite refers not only to those that have authority and power but also those who are educated and have considerable access to information networks or capital.

¹² The activities proposed included building a school, a bridge and irrigation, road surfacing, lighting, and training local people in handicraft making and management of cooperatives. The village head was found to have just

prepared the list of proposals once subdistrict staff visited his village and urged him to do so.

¹³ As said by a subdistrict government staff, ".....the village head was negligent in not conducting DPC despite the fact that subdistrict government had sent a letter of notification to all villages long before the deadline. The village head could not claim the excuse that he didn't know the regulations when he failed to implement the procedures." The staff added that the village is the only one of 19 villages throughout the subdistrict which prepared and submitted proposals without going through the DPC.

¹⁴ The initial '*sosialisasi*' stage of Law No. 25/2004 was aimed at all village officials including village heads, village secretaries, BPD members and the subdistrict PKK motivator team. *Sosialisasi*, which had never taken place before, was meant to provide basic knowledge regarding the means and mechanisms for preparing planning. At the national level, *sosialisasi* was also undertaken for relevant agencies such as provincial and district Bappedas to provide them with knowledge regarding the implementation of DPCs in their regions. Furthermore, technical guidance on participatory planning systems was given to provide understanding of the use of lists (*daftar isian*) to ascertain people's ideas about the types of projects that could be proposed. It was hoped that planning would genuinely represent community aspirations rather than being engineered by higher-level authorities/interests. Like the *sosialisasi* sessions, technical guidance had never previously been offered.

¹⁵ Cutbacks occur because agencies rarely check their SKPD work plans when preparing RKAs, and the budgets proposed in RAPBDs are unrealistic. Furthermore, SKPD work plans, which are the reference points for preparing budgets, rarely refer to SKPD strategic plans, which present programme priorities and the outcomes of DPCs. These omissions all provide the DPRD budget committee with the opportunity to cut budgets.

¹⁶ Regular social gathering whose members contribute to and take turns at winning a sum of money.

¹⁷ The experiences of facilitating women's groups via this research project are presented in Wiliam-de Vries (2006).

This brief is part of the findings of a research project entitled “*Collective Action to Secure Property Rights for the Poor: Avoiding Elite Capture of Natural Resource Benefits and Governance Systems*,” which is a cooperative effort between CIFOR, CGIAR System-wide Program on Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Bungo and Tanjung Jabung Barat District Governments, Jambi Province. The research has been funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). ACIAR (Australian Center for International Agriculture Research) has also partially provided funding for translating and editing the brief. *Disclaimer:* The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of CIFOR, partner institutions and the funding agency.



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