

## 9. Driving Change

### Policies favouring poor people in Indonesia



*'Driving Change' partners march for the right to participate in government planning and budgeting processes*

**This paper shows how the 'Driving Change' project in Indonesia used advocacy and capacity-building to ensure that the voices of poor people, especially women, became part of government planning processes to alleviate poverty. It focuses on people's participation at village level as a key entry point, leading to advocacy for policy change at district and national levels. It also shows the successes and challenges of this kind of work for pro-poor policy development, and the need for deeper participatory approaches on poverty reduction.**

## Introduction

Indonesia has come a long way since the 1998 Asian financial crisis drove many millions of people into poverty. It has moved from low-income to middle-income status. It is now 107th out of 177 in the United Nations Human Development Index,<sup>1</sup> and is progressing well towards its 2015 Millennium Development Goals. It has also undergone some major social and political changes – the World Bank notes that it is: ‘emerging as a vibrant democracy with decentralised government and far greater social openness and debate.’<sup>2</sup> The current government has been in power since 2004.

However, one authority notes that: ‘For the large population of poor, especially urban poor and landless farmers, social and economic rights are compromised and opportunities for control over key aspects of their own welfare are severely restricted.’<sup>3</sup> Today, more than 55 per cent of the population (115 million people) live on less than \$2 per day. Many more remain vulnerable to poverty, or lack access to crucial services such as health and education. There are also huge disparities between regions, with areas of eastern Indonesia being poorer. In addition:

- Twenty-five per cent of children below the age of five are malnourished.
- The maternal mortality rate in 2005 was 420 deaths of mothers in every 100,000 births, which is much worse than that of other comparable countries in the region – the figure for Viet Nam was 150, and for Thailand 100.<sup>4</sup>
- Fifty-five per cent of the poorest fifth of the population do not complete junior secondary school, compared with 89 per cent of the richest fifth.<sup>5</sup>
- Only 48 per cent of the poorest people living in rural areas have access to safe water and less than 1 per cent of them have access to piped sewerage services.<sup>6</sup>

Findings from seven districts identified government policies as a major cause of regional poverty.<sup>7</sup> Initiatives to improve food security, education, and environmental sustainability are slow, and poverty initiatives are not being carried out at local and district levels, despite a process of decentralisation. This is partly due to a skills shortage among staff at these levels, and partly due to government cuts which resulted in a real reduction in the support provided by the state to marginalised and excluded populations, especially in the fields of education and health. In addition, lack of public participation in the design and implementation of government policies, particularly by

civil-society organisations (CSOs), makes those policies less effective in tackling poverty.

Research revealed four major problems with government policy formation and implementation around anti-poverty issues:<sup>8</sup>

- 1 Government development plans at both local and central levels are not based on an analysis of poverty. Policies and plans more commonly reflect the interests of institutions and agents within state institutions than the interests of poor and vulnerable people.
- 2 There is a disjuncture between planning and budget-monitoring processes. Decisions about budget allocations are often not linked to any assessment of the performance of local government in terms of improving the lives of poor people. As a result, local governments which do not perform well continue to be funded.
- 3 There is little transparency and accountability in planning, decision-making, or resource flows targeted at poverty reduction by government and institutional donors.
- 4 Civil society and community-level organisations are largely marginalised in the process through which development interventions are designed, implemented, and assessed.

## The 'Driving Change' project

The 'Driving Change' project was set up by Oxfam to address some of these problems. It aimed to reduce poverty, improve access for poor people to quality services, and reduce gender disparities. Using Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and other tools, the project worked with local CSOs and poor and vulnerable community members to improve their skills in engaging with decision-makers. It aimed not just to make it easier for poor people to negotiate with those in power, but also to give them their own say in how negotiations take place.

Funded by the British government's Department for International Development (DFID), Driving Change was based in four provinces: South Sulawesi, South-East Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, and East Java (Island of Madura), combined with national-level activities in the capital city, Jakarta. The four provinces were selected because they were considered the most vulnerable on a number of measures in relation to human development, poverty, and gender.

The project, which ran between April 2005 and April 2008, was implemented with six NGO partners at local levels (district and village) and through one partner at national level.<sup>9</sup> The role of the implementing partners was to organise the communities and to engage them in government planning, monitoring, and evaluation of pro-poor policies. The project targeted poor people and those vulnerable to poverty, according to criteria set by the Indonesian

government.<sup>10</sup> It reached a total of almost four million: 1,412,100 poor people and 2,294,863 vulnerable people.

## Building capacity – Participatory Poverty Assessments

Driving Change saw capacity-building as one of the best ways of engaging key stakeholders, including the government, local network partners, and local communities. Capacity-building of local partners included a range of methodologies and skills development, such as gender mainstreaming, advocacy work, and financial management, as well as community organising, Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), policy reviews, and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

### **Participatory Poverty Assessments**

A Participatory Poverty Assessment is a process for including poor people's views in the analysis of poverty and in the design of strategies to reduce it.

A PPA starts from the point of view of poor and very poor people, giving voice to their concerns and in this way counter-balancing the top-down approach of most policy thinking. It also provides a set of local case studies – rich in contextual detail that emphasises the multi-dimensionality of poverty and the complexity and dynamics of local coping and adapting strategies. This complements the information from other poverty-related surveys. The combination of statistical information and voices from a PPA provides a good basis for innovative thinking about reducing poverty.<sup>11</sup>

PPAs were the main tool and organising framework of the project. They provided a platform and opportunity for poor people, both women and men, to analyse the local situation with regard to poverty. They also 'mapped' the social context in relation to the rights of poor people, and prepared advocacy strategies and action plans. They helped to:

- 1 identify drivers of poverty that are specific to local contexts, relevant given the diversity of the project areas; and
- 2 strengthen the credibility of local NGO partners and ensure that their interventions are increasingly evidence-based.

However, since partners were often faced with a range of issues that emerged from the PPA exercises, they found it difficult to identify intervention strategies where they could have an impact. In response, Oxfam supported partners by facilitating partner-specific advocacy assessments. The aim of the assessments was primarily to survey the external context in which partners were operating in order to identify opportunities for engaging with government and influencing local policies and practices. The findings of the advocacy assessments, paired with the PPA findings, helped shape what partners decided to do next.

This work increased the ability of civil society to learn from, and work with, poor people, especially on the issues of basic rights and gender. Saleh, Programme Officer of FIKORNOP (Forum Informasi dan komunikasi Organisasi Non Pemerintah Sulawesi Selatan), a Driving Change partner, said: 'Though working with poor communities was not new for us, in the Driving Change project we gained a new experience working with Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs). The PPA not only helped to fight for the rights of the poor, but also helped us to develop new, fairer, social relationships. We first thought that the advocacy using PPA would be soft, but in fact, we realized that it has a strong message, because it involves working with a clear methodology and finding out facts with the poor about their poverty issues'.

## Strengthening the voices of poor people and women in local forums

There are many factors that prevent poor people, especially women, from participating in Indonesian society, and especially in forums where decisions are taken. Indonesia is a patriarchal society dominated by strong religious and cultural norms, and with fixed views about women and their social status. This also extends to poor people, who are not seen as capable of participating in government or society.

These views stem from a number of other beliefs – that government is the work of bureaucrats and politicians and not of the people; that only educated people can contribute and talk in public forums; that women's place is in the home; that men's role is to represent women; and that poor people cannot become leaders. This is also true of the *musrenbangs*,<sup>12</sup> which have a traditional leader; village leaders; spiritual leaders; teachers; and landlords – all of whom are men with status in the community.

### **The *musrenbangs***

Poor people and women normally have few possibilities for participating in the *musrenbangs*. It is not surprising then that the need to participate in *musrenbangs* was seen by many Driving Change participants as the most important opportunity for poor people to make their voices heard and to influence pro-poor planning and budgeting.

As a result of the project, *musrenbangs* began to be seen as effective forums for poor people, especially poor women, to participate in. Their proposals began to be included in planning and budget allocations. For example, with the help of Yayasan Pengembangan Studi Hukum dan Kebijakan (YPSHK), a Driving Change partner, farmers in Wawombalata were given a sprayer machine and a well-drilling machine; the rubbish-collection community received an

incinerator for waste treatment; and fisher people in Petoaha, a fish stall. The struggle of the Nanga-Nanga people, who fought for land certification, is another successful example.

#### **Nanga-Nanga's dreams**

In 1965, more than a million people were killed and many more sent to jail without any legal process in the name of fighting 'communism'. Nanga-Nanga today is an isolated village of 52 families of these ex-political prisoners. The road that connects the village to the nearest town was only laid two years back. Road construction is still not completed; it is dusty and bumpy in dry seasons, and muddy and wet in the rainy seasons. There is no electricity.

The families survived by trying to nurture the infertile land, which did not belong to them, but which they dreamed of owning. But this presented a problem, says Aco, the representative of local NGO YPSHK. 'On one side they want to develop the land's agriculture potential and harvest maximum crop, on other side they are afraid if they produce too much, the land will be snatched by the private landowner or the government'.

In May 2006, with the support of Driving Change, an organisation was formed in Nanga-Nanga to campaign for ownership of the land. It was called *Permin*, the Union of the Nanga-Nanga Community.

After a relatively short time, Resman, the vice-chair of this organisation, was optimistic about gaining official ownership of the land: 'the government has promised to give us the land certificate over 20 hectares for each family. We will wait!' By 2008, around 20 families had received land certification. The inhabitants of Nanga-Nanga now have reason to believe their dream will become a reality.

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Women were able to raise issues in the *musrenbang* and ensure their access to public services such as education, health, natural resources, and economic services. In Rakateda 1 village, for example, 80 per cent of women's proposals at the village-level *musrenbang* were given planning priority. These proposals were seen to meet not only women's needs, but those of children and men as well. They included proposals for a local child-care centre, environmental sanitation, and technical assistance to agricultural extension workers. Mrs Genoveva, from Flores village, said that they used to produce only one bag of soya beans every six months, which became 2.5 bags after technical guidance from the agricultural extension worker who had been approved as a result of women's participation in the *musrenbang*.

Darmawati Daeng Kobo, a woman from Bontokassi-Takalar district, said: 'During the Driving Change project, I became aware; before, our image and voice was buried. Our voice was never heard because we are poor. In this project, I came forward, I attended meetings, we formed a group and presented ourselves everywhere, we went to the village government office, to the district government secretary office, Village Community Empowerment office, Department of Trade and Industry'.

Several groups of women managed to change the traditional structure of marketing; for example a group of craftswomen in Takalar district gradually broke the *papalele* structure of middlemen and women, and sold their work directly.

**Takalar craftswomen: courage is the real capital**

In Takalar District, craftsmen and craftswomen get credit from a *papalele* (middleman or woman). The *papalele*, being economically stronger, has access to capital. He or she takes loans from the bank and provides these to the craftspeople, either in the form of money or raw materials. Once the product is ready, the *papalele* purchases it from the craftsmen or craftswomen at a rate the *papalele* decides, and sells it in the market, earning more profit.

The Driving Change project enabled craftswomen, who previously used to work individually, to form groups and build their access to institutional credit and the market. In this way, women could take control of their own products from production to marketing. It broke the traditional *papalele* structure. Darmawati Daeng Kobo of Bontokassi, a member of a craftswomen's group, said: 'There is a *papalele* who always collected *songkok* [a hat used while praying] from craftspeople. He became angry with me. He said I created competition with him. He became afraid because he thought I would cause negative impact in his business. I go everywhere, I know the market now. I took products from my group, participated in an exhibition and displayed the products there. My real capital is not money but courage'.

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However, substantial challenges remain. First, it is still not clear how the *musrenbang* mechanism can be improved to include poor people and women as a matter of course. Second, because the *musrenbang* is only representative of district, sub-district, and municipal levels, it limits the rights of poor people to participate at higher level. Finally, information concerning the *musrenbang* process often does not reach poor communities in the first place.

## Changing gender roles

Changing the social roles of women and men is also about changing individual attitudes and prejudices. The presence of a village head who supports gender equality in the village can have more effect than just lobbying by the women themselves. Frans Laja, a village head in Rakateda 1 village, is one such man.

**Frans Laja: being the change**

Frans Laja, a village head who took part in the capacity-building activities in the Driving Change project, clearly articulated the relationship between gender equality and poverty alleviation: 'Not only do we have to discuss the issue of equality between the sexes, but we have to put it into practice too', he said.

According to Laja, poverty alleviation must start in the family by reducing the woman's burden. He added: 'The reluctance of men to work is mainly

caused by a number of taboos. In the past, it was a taboo for a man to fetch water. Around five to ten years ago, it was still taboo. Now the situation is changing. A respectable man is the one who can fetch water, cradle a baby, and carry the food for pigs, and firewood’.

By his own behaviour, Frans Laja has influenced the men of his village to willingly share the household tasks with their wives. He said: ‘I sweep the floor in my house, including the veranda. I want to show my people that the village head can also do household chores. Once I went home from the farm with my wife, carrying the firewood and the pig. The village elders were afraid to give any comment since they knew that I would reply by asking them why they didn’t just help carrying the burdens in their own house too’.

Roni, the head of the Flores Institute for Research Development (FIRD), a Driving Change partner, said: ‘Frans Laja persuades other communities to change their perceptions of roles of men and women, particularly while participating in various meetings’.

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As a result of the Driving Change project, women gained more confidence in their relationships with men and became capable of raising their voice about their rights. This began to make a difference even at an institutional level. For example, one Driving Change partner, Pedagang Kaki Lima (PKL), a traditional forum of small vendors, made violence against women an offence, the punishment for which was that the offender had to give up membership.

The positive changes that happened to women also happened to men, who became more aware of power gaps, which led to increased trust between spouses, and more equal roles in the home. However, this change didn’t happen universally, and sometimes women felt that not only were they burdened by their domestic role, but now had to find time for a more public role as well.

## Making local governments accountable

Through the process of PPAs, communities became more engaged, and this paved the way for a second stage of policy influencing. Driving Change partners built relationships not only with poor communities, but also with policy makers at district, city, and village levels, and in government departments. This created an opportunity for poor people and civil society to help formulate local poverty-reduction strategies, which previously had been dominated by the government and other groups such as business people, donor agencies, academics, and social workers.

People’s participation in these local planning processes meant that they were able to influence the development of various policies affecting them. In the targeted districts, local government gave more benefits to poor people in terms of their rights to identity and protection. For example, the rubbish-picking communities who came from rural areas ten years ago and started living on the periphery of

the city were not recognised as legal residents. They did not have identity cards, and could not have access to basic services like education, health, and clean water. As a result of the project, community members organised collectively to lobby the municipal government, and they succeeded in getting citizenship cards. They also lobbied for clean piped water, which was funded by a block grant from the district-level government. These successes led to the formation of a network that continues to advocate for their rights.

Mothers too were able to lobby for the changes they wanted in their children's schools. Mrs Ernie, of Kampung Sakura, Makassar city, said: 'before we organised ourselves in a community group, we didn't have the confidence to go to school or talk to the teacher. We felt too timid to go to the sub-district to talk to government officials. However, with the support of Driving Change, we formed an organisation and got confidence to meet with teachers, to go to the village head's office and talk to officials from the education department. I can't believe it happened!'<sup>13</sup>

Overall, there was a major shift from a charitable approach, which had traditionally been the mindset of policy makers and poor people alike, to one in which poor people and women began to feel they had a right to have a say and to demand improvements for their groups and communities.

## Lessons learned and recommendations

The Driving Change project showed how work on policy and advocacy has the potential to bring about changes in the lives of poor and vulnerable people, especially women. There are many positive experiences to share, as well as a number of challenges:

- 1 Community-based advocacy, an integrated approach of community empowerment with rights-based actions, proved successful in allowing the voices of the poorest people to be articulated and heard in decision-making forums, and this led to real changes.
- 2 Capacity-building of local-level organisations plays an important role in achieving the desired impact. In particular, PPAs helped and supported all stakeholders, including poor people and women, to understand the drivers of poverty and develop strategies for advocacy. PPAs increased communities' capacity to identify and ask for what they needed to improve their lives.
- 3 The project was a good experience in building collective consensus against poverty. It is a model of how to influence decision-makers to change social and political relationships. The planning and operational process was agreed between the Indonesian partners, Oxfam, and the funder, DFID. More

effective vertical and horizontal links are needed to share experiences and learning.

- 4 As different partners are effective in different contexts and environments, it is important for them to find ways of working together in order to ensure that their actions are sustainable. The quarterly partnership co-ordination meeting planned in the Driving Change project needed to be supported by other mechanisms such as internal exchange visits, formation of thematic groups, more frequent theme-based meetings, and increased communication through newsletters.
- 5 Advocacy and networking with grassroots community-based organisations (CBOs) encourages policy change and puts pressure on the government to be accountable by responding to the demands of poor and marginalised communities. The CBOs engaged with district-level governments and strategic forums for poverty reduction, as well as forums at village level (*musrenbangs*). They used a combination of confrontation and collaborative advocacy processes and approaches. These resulted in the government responding to many of the demands from women and the most vulnerable groups.
- 6 Institutionalising the participation of poor people and women as part of government structures remains a challenge. Driving Change partners tried a dual strategy of influencing reform-minded individuals, and formulating or revising policy regulations. They found that regular follow-up action was needed to consolidate learning, and forward planning in order to institutionalise change.
- 7 Gender issues gained a higher profile among partners and in local government. The advocacy and governance work through the Driving Change project provides considerable evidence of the impact of gender mainstreaming. This work needs to be carried out in ways that are both more systematic and more shared between partners, so that those with less experience can learn from those with more. Men as well as women need to be involved for change to take place.
- 8 The project linked various strategies, from PPAs at grassroots level, and village *musrenbangs*, to the strategic forums for poverty reduction at district level. These were used as a means of putting poor people in a position to propose policies based on their own needs and desires.
- 9 *Musrenbang* village forums still need to find ways of implementing their decisions at higher levels and publicising what they do in the community.
- 10 Oxfam internal learning processes helped in looking at the ways in which the work on policy advocacy and governance is done. It

was clear that a strong national-level presence is needed to work in this sector. While change at local level is important, it needs to be linked to changes at national level.

The Driving Change project demonstrated strong evidence of the impact of advocacy on pro-poor policy change. In all, Driving Change worked on 42 policies across village, district, and provincial levels. It laid a strong foundation for the pro-poor movement in Indonesia. An impact assessment was carried out towards the end of the project and options are being worked out for sharing the ideas and lessons learned with a wider audience. Drawing on the lessons from this project, it will be possible to build a new kind of governance; one that respects the rights of communities, particularly poor people and women.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2007/8) 'Human Development Report 2007/8', New York: UNDP.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2006) 'Making the New Indonesia Work for the Poor – Overview', Washington DC: World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> J. McGrory (2008) 'Indonesia guide', Oneworld.net, <http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/indonesia/development> (last accessed September 2008).

<sup>4</sup> UNDP (2007/8), *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (2006), *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Through Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs).

<sup>8</sup> For the Driving Change project.

<sup>9</sup> The partners were: FIK-ORNOP (Forum Informasi dan Komunikasi Organisasi Non Pemerintah Sulawesi Selatan), YPSHK (Yayasan Pengembangan Study Hukum dan Kebijakan), JPKP (Jaringan Pengembangan Kawasan Pesisir Buton), PIAR (Association of Initiative Developing and People Advocacy), FIRD (Flores Institute for Regional Development), YMM (LSM Madura Mandiri), and Sekretariat GAPRI (Anti-improvement Movement of Indonesian People).

<sup>10</sup> Poor people are defined by the government as those who earn below IDR 130,499 a month in urban areas (municipalities) and IDR 96,512 a month in rural areas (districts). Vulnerable people are defined as those who earn 10–18 per cent more than the poverty line defined in the 'Statistics Indonesia' (Central Bureau), [www.bps.go.id/](http://www.bps.go.id/) (last checked September 2008), and UNDP (2004) 'Human Development Report 2004', New York: UNDP.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Balochistan (2003) 'Between Hope & Despair: Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment', Balochistan report, [www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/ppa-balochistan.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/ppa-balochistan.pdf) (last accessed September 2008).

<sup>12</sup> A *musrenbang* is an annual village-level development-planning process, where local people participate, and their aspirations and needs are presented through submitting proposals to the government.

<sup>13</sup> Focus-group discussion by Driving Change.

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