

COMPLETION REPORT

Role of Tonarigumi in the Implementation of Decentralization in Indonesia

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Tonarigumi or Neighborhood Group (*Rukun Tetangga/RT* in Indonesian language), an association of fifties households living in the same areas, is expected to promote participatory development in Indonesian decentralization. This study aims to analyze whether it could promote participatory development. To do so, a case study was conducted in three villages, namely Kedarpan, Serang and Sumilir, in Purbalingga district of Central Java province. Totally 240 household heads in 24 *tonarigumies* were randomly selected to be the respondents. Data were analyzed through qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Three main findings emerge from this study. Firstly, community involvement was pseudo participation emphasizing more on resource mobilization but less in generating idea and controlling the government. Although periodic meeting exists in most *tonarigumies*, the essence of participation is not real. Secondly, capacity of *tonarigumi* heads was good enough in term of informativeness, encouragement, fairness, creativity, responsiveness and submission to consensus, but slightly poor in term of accountability. Although it is still far from being clear, this phenomenon indicates that *tonarigumi* heads are not able to transform themselves to practice the principle of modern organization. Thirdly, *tonarigumi* was not able to empower community, so community understanding to decentralization terms, development programs and village governance was generally poor. Community does not experience an upgrade of capacity on issues related to decentralization and development programs in their village. On the other words, community may be not aware about the change happening in the decentralization system.

Yet, some potentialities are identified. For example, most *tonarigumies* hold scheduled meetings, and substantial number of respondent perceived that participation is increased in the last ten years. Although some potentialities were found, it can be generally concluded that *tonarigumi* is not completely successful in promoting participatory development. Complexities of institutional problems, which include weak capacity, trouble in technical regulations and lack of support from government, are among the factors hampering *tonarigumi* to play its role.

What the government should do is to optimize the potentialities of *tonarigumi*. Looking at the current conditions of *tonarigumi*, there are two options can be done for improving the success of decentralization. The first is to develop the capacity of *tonarigumi* head, so that they can practice accountability, improve creativity and transfer their knowledge on decentralization to community. As far as capacity development was delivered to them, and accountability is shared to them, it will be very probably that they will share to community. The second, hand in hand with capacity development to *tonarigumi* heads, the government should not limit the bottom-up proposal and participatory development only through *tonarigumi*. The other institutions in rural areas should be involved to help playing the roles that cannot be played by *tonarigumi*.

Theoretically, this study also suggests that preparing the technical regulations, improving the capacity of local institutions and restructuring rural institutional setting should be an important step before decentralization is launched. To be successful in promoting participatory rural development, decentralization requires strong commitment and continuous support from the government to overcome the problems of implementation at grassroots level.

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