ORGANISING DIVERSE RURAL COMMUNITIES INTO FUNCTIONAL GROUPS IN INDONESIA: THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Mengorganisir Masyarakat Majemuk Kedalam Kelompok-Kelompok Fungsional: Gap Antara Teori, Kebijakan dan Praktek

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ABSTRACT

Since Mass Guidance (Bimas) in the 1960s, it was realised that community organising is the way to achieve rural development. The focus of this paper is to discuss how community organisations played their roles and what factors contributed to their performance. A longitudinal study using Modified Parti-cipatory Action Research was conducted in West Lombok-Indonesia. The study found that even though the policies on groups are theoretically sound, most groups failed to perform their expected roles and few succeeded**.** The agency practices used in esta-blishing groups were focused on projects, in a top-down and rushed approach. Field staff support and training of personnel are needed to translate the policies from rhetoric to reality. Another lesson learned from this study is that formation of functional groups should take into account the existence of diversity within the community and agencies.

ABSTRAK

Sejak dilaksanakannya Bimas, pemerintah menyadari bahwa mengelompokkan masyarakat kedalam kelompok-kelompok fungsional menjadi salah satu cara dalam membangun masyarakat pedesaan. Fokus dari tulisan ini adalah mengkaji bagaimana kelompok-kelompok fungsional memainkan perannya dalam pembangunan dan faktor-faktor apa yang mempengaruhi kinerja kelompok. Studi longitudinal ini dilaksanakan di Lombok Barat-Indonesia dengan menggunakan metode Modified Participatory Action Research (MPAR). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar kelompok gagal memainkan perannya sebagaimana diharapkan. Upaya pembentukan kelompok lebih difokuskan pada pendekatan "proyek", "top-down" dan "terburu-buru". Dukungan dan pelatihan bagi petugas lapangan diperlukan dalam rangka menterjemahkan kebijakan dari sekedar "diomongkan" menjadi "realitas" sosial. Pelajaran lain yang diambil dari kajian ini adalah bahwa proses pembentukan kelompok-kelompok fungsional seharusnya memperhatikan kemajemukan masyarakat serta lembaga yang terlibat dalam proses pembangunan.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, the largest archipelago and the fifth most populous nation in the world, has a total of 17,508 islands, of which about 6,000 are inhabited. Indonesia extends 3,198 miles (5,150km) between the Australian and Asian continental mainlands and divides the Pacific and Indian Oceans at the Equator. With a total land area of 767,777 square miles (1,919,443 sq. km), more than 200 million inhabitants are made up of 300 ethnic groups who speak an estimated 583 different languages and dialects. From development perspective, it is recognised that the western Indonesia has developed well such as Java, Bali and Sumatra while the eastern islands are left behind such as Timor, Irian Jaya and Lombok.

Socio-cultural diversity of the area: Lombok, where the study outlined in this paper was conducted, is the second major island of the two big islands of West Nusa Tenggara province. Lombok has a unique socio-cultural diversity because of its ethnic, religious and other socio-economic characteristics. The population consists of several ethnic groups, namely Sasak, Balines, Mbojo, Samawa, Javanese, and Bugis (from the Celebes Island). Every ethnic group has its own language which remains as a major means of intra-ethnic communication. From the religious perspective, the diversity of the Lombok population is obvious. About 90 percent of the population practice Islam, while the others practice Hinduism, Buddhism, *Wetu Telu*[1], and Christianity. Historically, these community diversities may be attributed to social and political developments that have taken place in Lombok Island over the last few centuries (Cederroth, 1992).

It is believed that there was an influx of immigrants to Lombok from Java some time in the 14th century following the collapse of the *Hindu Majapahit* (Java Kingdom). They brought Hinduism to Lombok Island. The existence of Hinduism had been strengthened by the occupation of the Island by the Balinese Kingdom in the 17th century. The Dutch arrived in 1894 (Cool, 1897), colonised the entire island and introduced Christianity. "It seems that from the very beginning, [each] new religion took on a highly harmonised character, frequently mixing animist and the other religions such as Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and Islam" (Cederroth, 1992) and this led to *watu telu* syncretism. Although Islam had been introduced in the 15th century to Lombok Island, at the end of the 19th century, a stricter version of Islam began to gain ground, first among the nobility, and then spread slowly to broader sectors of the population. The political situation also contributed to the spread of orthodox Islam. In the early decades of the 20th century, Islam had spread to most villages in Central Lombok, while the south and the north were still overwhelmingly *wetu telu*.

Muktasam and Chamala (1998) found that communities in the study area were diverse in their occupations, gender, educational level, social participation and social economic status. Diversity in these aspects is presented under the term *group composition* as discussed later in this paper.

Organising diverse communities into functional groups: Indonesian rural development has been promoted through various approaches and policy initiatives. The Mass Guidance *(Bimas)* approach[2] – the Green Revolution – was introduced in the mid 1960s and it was considered as the most important development in rural production (Sajogyo, 1979). This approach had successfully increased Indonesian annual rice production by 4.8 percent. This approach, however, failed to reach poor and smallholder farmers, and had widened the gap between the poor and the rich farmers (Sajogyo, 1973). To address these issues, national policies and programs to organise diverse rural communities into functional groups, based on community development theories, were introduced under the name of *Insus* (Special intensification)[3], *Supra Insus* (Super Special intensification)[4], *Kelompencapir* (Mass media study group development), *Perkumpulan Petani Pemakai Air* (Water users association) and *Inpres Desa Tertinggal* (the Poverty alleviation program) - just to mention some of them.

It is believed that these functional community groups may play significant roles in promoting development within diverse communities. The challenge for community development agencies is to discover how to promote effective development within a diverse community through functional groups, and how these diversities affect policy implementation at the organisational and grass-root levels. Discussion presented in this paper is based on research conducted in West Lombok district of West Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia.

Why do we need to organise communities into functional groups?

Community development is a process through which people change their economic, social, cultural, and/or environmental situation (Christenson and Robinson, 1989). Principles such as participation, empowerment, community ownership, self-reliance, community building, process and outcomes, inclusiveness and cooperation should form the basis of community development (Ife, 1995; Lauer, 1993). Organising a diverse community into functional groups is often intended to fulfill these principles. Esman and Uphoff (1988) state that local community organisations (functional groups) could perform four critical tasks: inter-organisational, resource, service, and extra-organisational tasks. Chamala (1990) highlights three types of roles that the local community organisation may perform: downward, horizontal and

upward managing roles. Research on the roles of local community organisations (such as many community groups in rural areas) revealed that they could improve group members' *learning process*; this has been seen as a key factor in achieving sustainable agriculture and rural development (Bond and Hulme, 1999; Chamala, 1999; Pretty, 1998; Somers, 1998; Woodhill and Roling, 1998). Community groups also facilitate *sound decision making* (Salazar, 1995), encourage *participation,* develop *commitment and responsibility* (Buckland, 1998; Schneider and Libercier, 1995) and act as intermediaries in service delivery (Janvry et al., 1995). However, while group methods are used in extension education for agricultural development, there has been a failure to move from the group approach to the establishment of empowered community groups (Chamala, 1995).

Policies on Community Groups – Local Organisations

The group approach has been used successfully in Indonesia to increase rice production under the *Insus and Supra Insus* programs. Special Intensification (*Insus*) was introduced in 1979; this program focused on organising communities into functional groups to increase rice production. This led to Indonesia's self-sufficiency in rice in 1984 (Ministry of Agriculture, 1992). However, because rice production reached its leveling off point in 1985, but rice demand continued to increase, the Indonesian government then introduced another policy named Super Special Intensification *(Supra Insus)* in 1987 (Ministry of Agriculture, 1988). This is a development of the *Insus* approach, which integrates functional groups in agricultural intensification, which is based on intra and intergroup cooperation within an area of 600 to 1000 hectares (Ministry of Agriculture, 1988). This approach increased rice production by an average 0.8 tonnes per hectare in 1992/1993, when the average national rice production achieved was 5.5 tones per hectare – this was much higher than rice production gained by other approaches (Mass Guidance Controlling Board Secretariat Jakarta, 1995). The success of rural development through agricultural development in the first twenty-five-year long-term development program may be attributed to technical innovations (e.g., high yield varieties, fertilisers, farm credit, irrigation, and pesticides) and social innovations (e.g., community groups and extension management).

With government recognition of this strategic role of groups, organising diverse rural communities into functional groups has become a main mode of rural community development for all the government departments in Indonesia. Consequently, many types and large numbers of groups such as poverty groups, mass media study groups, water users associations and conservation groups, have been established. These groups have been used for poverty alleviation programs, information dissemination

and management, water and irrigation management and land conservation programs. As an illustration, by April 1996 in West Nusa Tenggara province, about 9,629 farmer groups alone were recorded. At the same time, the number of other groups such as mass media study groups, water users associations, and poverty groups had reached 536; 727 and 1279 groups respectively.

Policy analysis indicates that from the viewpoint of community development principles, the policies on groups for rural development in Indonesia are sound. The policies highlight *reasons for using groups*, *how the groups should be established*, *what roles the groups should perform, and how service agencies should help the groups,* as reflected by the following policy statements.

Poverty Alleviation Program: *At the village level, poverty groups through which participation, learning and empowerment could be promoted… implement the program* (Presidential Instruction no.5, 27th December 1993, p.2).

Agricultural Development Program: *Through groups, farmers are encouraged to work together - in the mode of teaching and learning process - to improve their knowledge and skills, achieve economies of scale, and for better farm management* (Agricultural Extension and Training Centre, 1996, p. 2-3).

Irrigation Development Program: *To increase community participation in irrigation channel management through the formation, development, and supervision of water users associations* (West Nusa Tenggara Department of Information, 1996, p. 95).

On the basis of the policies regarding these community organisations, this paper focuses on the questions: To what extent have the groups been effective in rural development? What lessons could be learned from the study?

METHODOLOGY

A three-year longitudinal study using a Modified Participatory Action Research method was conducted in West Lombok district, West Nusa Tenggara province of Indonesia. *The first phase – a "snap shot" survey* (Dec 96 – Apr 1997) - was conducted to collect data from nine community groups, 332 group members, and 42 field agents and policy makers. Group role performance was assessed in this phase based on individual perceptions of group members in term of *role types* and *role intensity.* Two

major questions were used, *"What roles do you perceive the group has actually performed?"* and *"How would you rate the group performance in that type of role?"* Responses to the first question are presented in Columns 2 and 3 of Tables 1 to 5 (Column 1 shows policy expectations – "roles the group should perform"). Investigation of group roles continued to the second and the third phase of the study. *The second phase – workshops* (Dec 97 - Apr 98) - was carried out to bring the tentative results to the groups and other stakeholders to confirm and to gain further insights on various issues of groups; through this, the scientific rigour or the trustworthiness of the findings/study could be increased (Pretty, 1995).

Six participatory workshops were conducted during this phase where participants were encouraged to perform critical self-reflection on group problems, and to develop solutions and action plans. Brainstorming, SWOT analysis, small group and plenary discussions were used to facilitate the workshops. The researchers took facilitation roles and bridged these multi-layer workshops to promote information flows from groups to field extension staff and to policy makers. The results of *group workshops* were presented at the *field agent workshop*, and all these workshop results were presented at the *policy maker workshop*.

The third phase – evaluation (Jan 99 - Aug 99) – was completed in the third year to evaluate and to observe groups' and agencies' action after the workshops.

Although significant benefits have been obtained from the use of MPAR, three issues were found, namely, this research approach was time consuming, and involved more work and higher cost, compared to the use of a 'snap shot' survey (that is, if the study had stopped after the first phase). The use of two additional stages had added time, work and costs to the research process. In-depth and continued investigation of only nine community groups at the two selected villages was considered as another limitation of the method, since a generalisation about the many groups formed across Indonesia, in many diverse situations, could not be made from this small sample. However, this limitation may be mitigated by the fact that this study also included determining the perceptions of field agents at sub-district level and policy makers at district and provincial level. The policy makers based their perceptions on the more than 10,000 groups in the province. Perceptions of both field agents and policy makers are consistent with the findings from the groups.

RESULTS

On the basis of group members' perceptions of group role performance, this study found that the majority of community groups investigated was not very successful. During the three years of this longitudinal study, six out of nine community groups remained inactive (see Tables 1 to 5). Moreover, at the two selected villages, 85 per cent of 55 groups were inactive. These findings support the previous secondary data that only 2.6 per cent of 536 mass media study groups in West Nusa Tenggara province were active (the Provincial Department of Information, 1996). We present the results and lessons learned from the less successful and the successful groups in the following sections. How community diversity needs to be taken into account in establishing effective and sustainable functional groups is presented later in this paper (Lessons learnt).

The less successful community groups

Water users associations (WUAs)[5]

Most members of these associations, interviewed in the first phase of the study, expressed fewer group role expectations (Table 1) and about 30 to 40 percent members had never even heard about the groups' existence. *Effective water distribution, maintaining irrigation facilities and performing inter-group decision making* are the expected roles mentioned by the members. It was found that the group leaders were more likely to express more role expectations than the ordinary members.

Group role performance was measured based on the responses provided by only 43 and 59 (out of 73 and 87) members of the two associations respectively. About 90 percent of the members of each group claimed that no such roles were played by the groups, and only a few members stated that the groups performed roles, such as water distribution, irrigation facilities maintenance, and inter-group decision making.

The second and the third phase of the study have consistently revealed that these associations no longer performed any roles. There was no action taken by the associations in the last two years. Water and irrigation maintenance was traditionally done by the traditional water users associations called *Subak*.[6] These traditional associations still carry out these tasks and although the government agencies have attempted to include the Subak into the new associations, the people perceived the functions as being carried out only by the traditional association, as before.

Table 1. Perception of Group Role Expectation and Role
Performance-*Water User Associations (WUAs)*

A. **Role Expectation:**				
Policy statement	WUA1 (n:43)	%	WUA2 (n:59)	%
1. *Promote effective water distribution* 2. *Irrigation and irrigation facilities maintenance* 3. *Medium of learning* 4. *WUA socialisation* 5. *Rule development & implementation* 6. *Develop annual plan* 7. *Water management & problem solving* 8. *Collect fees from members* 9. *Help government agencies* 10. *Help extension process*	Effective water distribution (69.8) Maintain irrigation facilities (51.2) Inter-group decision making (9.3) Don't know (27.9)		Effective water distribution (57.6) Maintain irrigation facilities (16.9) Inter-group decision making (5.1) Don't know (33.9)	

B. **Role Performance:**				
	Perform no role (88.4) Effective water distribution (11.6) Maintain irrigation facilities (6.9) Inter-group decision making (4.7)		Perform no role (89.8) Effective water distribution (6.8) Maintain irrigation facilities (6.8) Inter-group decision making (3.4)	

Poverty Group (PG)[7]

Interviews with group members in the first phase of the study found that the group members expressed two expected roles of the group. Provision of *credit* was mentioned as the main role (raised by 100 percent members). Only 9.1 percent members expected the group to *promote behavioral changes*, especially in acquiring *skills* (Table 2).

According to group members, providing credit was the only role performed by this group. In this regard, about 32 percent members perceived that the group had played an important role, while most members expressed a less favorable perception of the role of the group. The group never had any activities to improve members' technical and management skills as required

by the policy. Group learning outcomes generated through the workshop indicate that since it was established, the group received no technical help from field extension agents or other technical departments; this also clearly was inconsistent with the policies. This contrasts with the way the Grameen Bank succeeded in alleviating poverty through the "credit plus" approach (Berger, 1989). This study identified that diversity within the group (as measured in term of group's composition index using six indicators, namely, age, gender, education, occupation, social participation and socio-economic status) had led to the group leaders' and field agents' difficulties in promoting appropriate training for the group. The group members were diverse in their occupations (small farmers, farm and off-farm labourers, cattle producers, small traders, metal workers, and unemployed). The village head also stated "We found difficulty in promoting specific (technical) training for these diverse group members"

Table 2. Perception of Group Role Expectation and Role Performance- *Poverty Group (PG)*

A. **Role Expectation:**		
Policy statement	PG (n:22)	%
1. *Human resource development*	Behavioural changes (9.1)	
2. *Capital formation (saving, credit)*	Provide credit (100)	
3. *Employment opportunity creation*		
4. *Group empowerment*		
B. **Role Performance:**		
	Provide credit (100)	

Note: None of these roles was performed in the third year of the study

The third phase of the investigation found that the economic crisis has multiplied group and group members' difficulties, especially in obtaining and repaying credit. The group leaders, field extension agents and policy makers stated that because of the crisis, they were not able to force group members for whom it was difficult to fulfill even basic needs, to repay loans advanced. They also could not help the group through training, because of the lack of budget funds as well as the lack of their own knowledge and skills in technical and group management.

Mass Media Study Groups (MMSGs)[8]

Fewer role expectations were expressed by the members of MMSG1 compared to MMSG2. Few members of MMSG1 expressed the idea that the group was expected to *improve their access to mass media*, while most group members had *no idea* about the group role. In contrast, members of MMSG2 mentioned three expected roles such as *improving members' access to media*, promoting *behavioral changes*, and *promoting actions* (Table 3).

Table 3. Perception of Group Role Expectation and Role Performance-*Mass Media Study Groups (MMSGs)*

A. **Role Expectation:**		
Policy statement	MMSG1 (n:36) %	MMSG2 (n:27) %
1. *Medium of information transfer*	Access to media (30.8)	Access to media (96.3)
2. *Promote productive action*		Promote action (14.8)
3. *Medium of learning*		Behavioural changes (92.5)
4. *Social function (community participation & policy development)*		
	Has no idea (69.2)	
B. **Role Performance:**		
	Perform no role (100)	Perform no role (100)

From a group role performance perspective, both groups have not played any roles for rural development. There was not any action promoted by these groups from the first to the third year of the study. To these groups, the ideal roles written in the policy were not seen as the members' felt needs. Again, diversity of group members (low group's homogeneity indices) was claimed by the group leaders as one of the factors contributing to group difficulties in calling for meetings and promoting specific actions in which all could participate. The members of MMSG2, for example, consisted of farmers, government employee, construction workers and unemployed villagers.

Farmer Group 2 (FG2)

This three-year longitudinal study found that this farmer group (FG2) has not performed any roles in rural development (Table 4). Investigation on the group profile revealed that the group was established by the field extension agent for agricultural extension purposes. However, there was no action promoted either by groups or field extension agents.

Data presented in this section show big gaps between policy expectations on groups *(Column 1 of Tables 1 to 5)* with the groups' actual performance *(Columns 2 and 3 of Tables 1 to 5)*. The group failed to perform its expected roles for rural development. Not only that, the group members' knowledge (toward groups' objectives and leaders) was very low and some group members did not even realise their membership/the existence of the group.

The successful community groups

Farmer Group 1 (FG1)

The members of this successful farmer group, FG1, expressed more role expectations (Table 4). All members perceived *providing agricultural inputs* as the first major role for the group while around 36 percent of members perceived the group as the *medium through which they get technology/innovation - Transfer of Technological or TOT role*.

Table 4. Perception of Group Role Expectation and Role Performance – *Farmer Groups (FGs)*

A. **Role Expectation**		
Policy statement	FG1 (n:36) %	FG2 (n:30) %
1. *Intra-group plan*	Provide agric.inputs (credit) (100)	Extension medium (100)
2. *Inter-group agreement*	TOT medium (36)	
3. *Internalised relation with Rural Cooperative*	Social function (13.9)	
4. *Capital formation (saving and credit)*		
5. *Adoption of innovation*		
B. **Role Performance:**		
	Input (credit) provision (86.1)	No role (100)
	TOT medium (36.1)	
	Social function (86.1)	

Table 4 indicates that the group has performed some roles stated in the policies by providing agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and seeds, facilitating members' getting credit from Banks, and providing social services (helping group members with cheaper beef by the end of fasting month). The third phase investigation revealed that this farmer group has even expanded its activities. This farmer group has established a farmer cooperative to serve its members as well as the wider village communities. Also the farmer group has developed a plan for activities such as tractor rental, setting up a mechanical workshop and a kiosk for daily needs, cattle fattening, local chicken rearing and establishing a plant nursery.

Cattle Fattening Groups (CFGs)[9]

All of the members of the cattle fattening groups perceived that the main expected role of their groups was to *promote cattle security*. Some members perceived another expected role such as promoting a clean environment, particularly expressed by group leaders. These two expected roles were consistently performed by the groups (Table 5), where the security role was perceived as the more important role. To these groups, *the need for cattle security* was claimed to be the *glue* that was responsible for the high degree of cohesion in each group. All members of these groups expressed a strong desire to stay in their groups.

Security and *environmental* roles had brought the groups into activities such as regular night inspection and *gotong-royong*[10] (working together to clean up stables). Both groups have an inspection schedule and have developed group norms.

Table 5. Perception of Group Role Expectation and Role
Performance-*Cattle Fattening Groups*

A. **Role Expectation:**		
Policy statement	CFG1 (n:30) %	CFG2 (n:17) %
There is no specific policy on this type of group	Promote security (100)	Security (100)
	Promote better environment (43.3)	Environment (29.4)
	Learning medium (33.3)	
B. **Role Performance:**		
	Security (100)	Security (100)
	Environment (43.3)	Environment (29.4)
	Learning medium (6.6)	

Factors contributing to failures and effectiveness of group role performance

This three-year longitudinal study indicates that there are common perceptions by group members, field agents and policy makers regarding the factors contributing to the groups' failures. These factors are: Group leadership, group members' knowledge and skills, government approaches to the groups, and inter-agency coordination. Investigation of the group formation process indicated that the less successful groups were established by the government through top-down approaches. Terms such as *groups for projects* and *groups for competition,* expressed by field agents, as well as the policy makers during the workshops, indicate how the groups were established. For example, when the government of Indonesia launched the Poverty Alleviation program in 1994, village leaders were asked to form 'poverty groups' and as result, in one of the villages investigated for this study, 27 poverty groups were established in less than one month. This was against the participatory and sustainability principles of group establishment (Chamala, 1995; Rouse, 1994) and community development (Ife, 1995; Lauer, 1993).

Among 33 factors associated with group role performance (Muktasam, 2000), group composition (which indicates level of diversity within groups) had a significant association with group role performance. The more heterogeneous groups tended to perform limited actions and even failed to act. This finding is consistent with the cases reported by Rouse (1994), Esman and Uphoff (1988), and Prasad (1995) where groups that were heterogeneous with regard to descriptive attributes tended to be less successful/ineffective.

Issues of diversity were also raised by the head of the successful farmer group, especially in regard to field agents' religious and ethnic background. He said that differences in religion to some extent have restricted the field agents from participating in group meetings, which are incorporated into the regular religious activities. He added that the field agents (who come from Javanese and Balinese ethnic groups) should learn the local language 'Sasak' in order to communicate with group members effectively.

For the successful groups, effective group leadership and homogeneity of group members'perceptions of issues and needs were most likely the major determinant factors. The leader of the successful farmer group was also the religious leader at the village to whom villagers as well as development agents went for advice. Moreover, investigation on group formation process shows that both cattle fattening groups were established by

community initiative due to social problems (cattle were stolen). This common problem and need has brought the villagers together to work as groups.

The study indicated that several principles of community development were not applied in the less successful groups, especially the principles of empowerment, sustainability, self-reliance, community building, defining needs, participation, and process and outcomes. The successful groups on the other hand followed the principles of empowerment, sustainability, community ownership, independence, participation and defining need.

Need for Paradigm Shifts and Support for Staff Training: Lessons Learnt

The learning outcomes generated in the series of workshops conducted in the second phase of the study (see Table 6) demonstrated a need for paradigm shifts in promoting groups for effective and sustainable rural community development. These shifts are:

- Shift from instruction to social learning
- Shift from dependency to people's empowerment
- Shift from amateur to professional field extension agents
- Shift from parallel approach to a coordinated and participatory approach
- Shift from supervision to facilitation
- Shift of leadership style from individual to group commitment

Table 6. Field Extension Agents' perceptions of Problems and Solutions to Help Groups-*Workshop learning outcomes*

Problems	Approaches (Solutions)
1. *Gov. policies (implementation)*	• Avoid unrealistic "target" • Better coordination • Based on real situation
2. *Group leadership & management*	• Training for group leaders (in group establishment & group management, entrepreneurship).
3. *Coordination*	• Better environment for coordination • A need for simple bureaucracy and coordination. • A need for better understanding of coordination it self. • Real actions from related departments
4. *Resources & feasible activities*	• Training to improve skills of group members. • Encourage group saving. • Conduct feasibility study. • Cooperate with technical departments. • Training in management (in business).

Organising Diverse Rural Communities ……. (Muktasam)

To facilitate these shifts, organisational support such as human resource development through training is needed, especially in the areas of community development principles, group process and methods of establishing sustainable groups. This is in line with groups' and agencies' learning outcomes where lack of knowledge and skills in either technical or group management were identified as two major factors contributing to groups' failures (Table 6).

However, diversity within groups (as measured through groups' composition) was seen as a barrier to promoting specific training. Therefore, there is a need for development agents to re-think their approaches to group formation to address some related issues of diversity.

CONCLUSION

Even though the policies of organising small diverse communities into functional groups are sound from a community development perspective, the study found that most groups investigated failed to perform their expected roles while few groups were successful. Gaps between theories, policies and practices were found. Groups such as the *mass media study groups* and *water users associations* were found inactive during the three phases of the study. The same situation was found in the Poverty group.

Causes of failures: Investigations on groups' profiles and the outcomes of groups, and agencies' critical self-reflections indicate that there are several *common factors* perceived to be responsible for these groups' failures. Government approaches to the establishment of groups and group action were perceived as top-down, project- and/or competition-based, sometimes as rushing through the motions to meet a deadline, and suffering from a lack of coordination and continuity. These implementation approaches go against some principles/theories of groups and community development and the stated policy guidelines. In addition, group internal factors such as ineffective leadership, diversity of group membership (measured through group composition indeces), lack of knowledge and skills, lack of awareness of issues and needs were also perceived as contributing to the failures.

Factors supporting success: The successful groups such as the *farmer group* and *cattle fattening groups* continued to perform their strategic roles to meet members' needs. In the case of the successful farmer group, the group expanded its roles by promoting a farmer cooperative, doing more business activities, and servicing more agricultural inputs to more villagers. The *cattle fattening groups* were also found to

perform their critical roles in promoting cattle security. This study highlights the implication that the *key to their success was effective leadership and the existence of felt needs* among the group members.

This study found that diversity is one of the factors affecting the group success. The successful groups have demonstrated that diverse communities can be organised into functional groups. However, there is a need for paradigm shifts in promoting and facilitating effective and sustainable functional groups. Working with local functional groups needs to be based on the social learning process, empowerment, professional, participation, facilitation and other principles of community development. The gaps between theory, policy and practice can also be reduced by providing adequate budget and support for such as training. Training is needed to improve group members', group leaders' and agents' knowledge and skills for translating the sound policies of rural community development into reality. Another lesson learned from this study is that formation of functional groups should take into account the existence of diversity within the community as well as within agencies.

Notes:

1. *Wetu telu* is a 'religious' syncretism practised by some of the population of Lombok Island; it mixes animist beliefs and those of other religions such as Hindu-Buddhism and Islam.
2. *Bimas* (mass guidance) was an approach used by the Indonesian Government to increase rice production. It was introduced in the Mid 1960s. Through this approach, farmers were recommended to implement a package of technologies that consisted of five rice production technologies, namely, *high yield rice varieties, fertilisers, pest and disease control, irrigation and cropping distance.*
3. It is a *group approach* to increase rice production by implementing a package of technologies (as in *Bimas*). A large numbers of farmer groups were established and involved in this program. *Insus* is all about working together among farmers within the farmer groups.
4. This is a further development of the *Insus* program. It focused on intra and inter-group cooperation (working together amongst farmers within and outside the groups in a given area of *Supra Insus*) to create efficiency and effectivity in the implementation of the technological package.
5. *Water User Association* is a new formalised association introduced by the Indonesian Government to organise farmers in order to improve water distribution and to maintain irrigation facilities. Members of this association are those who use water from the same irrigation channel (tertiary) or the same water source. Usually one association is established in every village.
6. *Subak* is a traditional water user association at village level (could be more than one in one village). Its roles are to help farmers in water distribution and

irrigation maintenance. It has some unwritten rules such as fee for water where farmers paid in kind of rice or cash.

7. *Poverty group* is a group introduced by the Indonesian Government to implement the Poverty Alleviation Program in early 1994. The members of this group consist of the rural poor who meet the poverty criteria such as having no job/income, or being a small farmer, or farm and off-farm labourers.

8. It is a group of rural people introduced by the Indonesian Government (Department of Information) to help them access to mass media programs such as television, radio and newspapers. The group members are recommended to meet regularly to discuss various issues/topics presented in the mass media. According to the government policy, every village should have one *Mass Media Study Group*.

9. *Cattle Fattening Group* is a community-initiated group found at village level. Originally, farmers individually reared their cattle for fattening. When they found a problem with their cattle security (some cattle were stolen from their stables), then farmers realised their need for working together. As a result, they decided to get together in a group and brought their cattle to one collective of stables at a certain corner of the village. Then the group was established. There is no particular policy developed by the government for this type of group.

10. It is a traditional way of working together where rural people *share their work and/or materials* for either individual or public goals such as when a member of a village passes away, a marriage takes place or when constructing public facilities such as roads and mosques.

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