

A Missing Link in Empowerment Program in Indonesia

A Case of Coastal Development Program In Lombok

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Abstrak

Pemerintah daerah telah diberikan otoritas untuk melaksanakan program pemberdayaan. Dukungan regulasi dan keuangan telah diberikan oleh pemerintah pusat dan badan pemberdayaan masyarakat juga telah di bentuk. Namun dampak dari program pemberdayaan masih rendah. Apa yang menyebabkan hal ini terjadi? Untuk menjawab pertanyaan ini survei dengan wawancara langsung dan wawancara mendalam dengan stakeholder kunci telah dilakukan di tujuh desa pesisir di Lombok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, walaupun berbagai upaya telah dilakukan oleh pemerintah untuk memberdayakan masyarakat pesisir, namun aparat pemerintah yang diharapkan melaksanakan program pemberdayaan tidak dilatih tentang pemberdayaan itu sendiri. Akibatnya aparat tidak mempunyai pengetahuan, keterampilan, dan prilaku yang memberdayakan sehingga mereka tetap mengimplementasikan cara lama yang top down dan pendekatan target. Hal ini berakibat pada gagalnya program.

Kata kunci: missing link, empowerment programs, coastal, Lombok.

Abstract

Local government was given authority to implement empowerment programs. Support including regulations, and financial were also provided by the central government. Empowerment bureau was established to accelerate empowerment programs. However, the impact of the empowerment program was low. What missing in government effort to empower coastal community in Lombok? To answer this question, a survey with face to face interview and in-depth interview with key stakeholders was carried out in seven coastal villages. The results indicate, even though various efforts have been carried out by the government to empower coastal communities, government staff who implement empowerment program were not trained on empowerment. As a result there was no change in government staff members' knowledge, skills and behaviours, and staff continued practising the old top down mode of delivery and target focused approach to development processes. This had led to program failure.

Key words: missing link, empowerment programs, coastal, Lombok.

Introduction

After more than thirty years of ruling Indonesia, the centralised and authoritarian new order regime ended in 1998. The economic crisis and political turmoil created a chaotic situation resulting in the resignation of President Soeharto and the emergence of a reformed government. In this era the word empowerment started to become popular but its use was only token. The powerful voice of democracy and empowerment could not be easily accommodated without a clear and strong legal and regulatory foundation upon which to build a new government.

Among the voices was a call for a complete reformulation of the division of power and authority between central and local governments. The central government responded with the introduction of laws regarding the regional government (no. 22/1999) and regarding the fiscal balance between the central and regional government (law no 25/1999). These two laws established the framework for a radically decentralised form of government in Indonesia. The hastily prepared laws fundamentally alter the relationship between the central government in Jakarta and regional governments, delegating significant decision-making and implementing powers to district and municipality governments. Law no. 22/1999 replaced both the hierarchical government law no. 5/1974 and the village government law no 75/1979.

District and municipal government are now empowered to set resource use and spatial planning policy, and manage revenue and budgets. Many decisions that directly affect local peoples' access to and use of local coastal and marine, forest and land resources have been delegated to the local district and municipal governments. Laws are still being drafted to specify obligations and service standards for local and regional governments, including their role in managing natural resources. District and provincial parliaments are faced with the task of issuing scores of new regulations and decrees to administer local governments' new responsibilities. After a long preparation period, the new decentralisation laws officially came into effect on the 1st of January 2001.

Indonesia perceives decentralisation as an instrument for improving the social, political and economic situation of the country. However, decentralisation is not a panacea; many studies have documented the failure of decentralisation in achieving its started objectives (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983, Ribot 2002). To be truly successful decentralisation requires certain conditions to exist (Litvack, 1998). Democratic decentralisation can be the promising means of institutionalising and scaling up popular participation, which can make community- based development programs more effective and accountable to local people.

The decentralisation act also provided room for local government to utilise coastal and marine resources as expressed in laws no. 22/1999, where the districts and municipalities are given authority to manage coastal and marine resources in their region. In addition to this, local governments were also obligated to empower communities in coastal areas.

For these purpose a national government act regarding integrated coastal management (no. 25/2000) was implemented. It requires local government to carry out integrated coastal management, and the empowerment of coastal people is the essential part of this activity. This law is aimed at empowering the local government

and providing more authority and responsibility to develop coastal and marine development programs that are more profitable to communities and sustain natural resources. Based on the study carried out by Suadnya (2006) indicate that the impact of empowerment program in coastal area of Lombok was low with the score below 3 within the Likert scale 1 to 5. (more details see suadnya, 2006). The question then, why this happen? This paper describes missing link in government empowerment process that leads to program failure.

Methodology

This study was carried out in seven coastal village of Lombok using survey methods with face to face interview. To gain local parliament members' perceptions about the process of empowerment as well as factors inhibiting and supporting the process, five members of local parliament were selected as respondents using purposive sampling method. Similarly, to gain information from others with perspectives on empowerment, five policy makers, six field workers, two people from NGOs, and two business people were also interviewed. A set of questionnaires was developed for parliament members at provincial and district levels, governor, heads of districts, heads of Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs at districts and provincial levels, Heads of Community Empowerment Bureaus at districts and provincial levels, Heads of Planning Boards at district and provincial levels, heads of Family Planning Bureaus at districts levels, heads of Department of Agriculture, program leaders, fieldworkers, NGOs, heads of villages and Businessmen. The questions were mainly about government policies and effort to empower community in coastal areas of Lombok. The total of 29 groups that participate in the *PEMP* program were selected using random sampling, as a sample and 174 individual respondents were selected from those groups using simple random sampling technique. In addition a review of document such as project guidelines and other document was also done. Data was analysed using descriptive statistic.

Result and Discussion

Empowerment as a National Policy

Based on the People Consultative Assembly decision number 4/1999, the reformed government was ordered to implement the Broad National guidelines (*GBHN*), which contained the mission and vision of the country as well as policy guidelines to achieve the country's goals. In this the people assembly (*MPR*) clearly indicated that empowerment should be used as a methodology to achieve the goals. "The government should implement regional autonomy in broader terms in order to empower community, economic, political, legal, and Custom (*adat*) institutions within the Republik of Indonesia".

Driven by the Broad National Guidelines, the national five year development plan (*propenas*) 2000-2004, clearly indicates that the strategic policies to improve people's welfare are decentralisation, improving community including private

business sector involvement, community empowerment and strengthening institutions (*Propenas*, 2000-2004).

The national five years development plan clearly states that community empowerment can be achieved by facilitating communities' access to information and development resources which will enable them to mobilise their potential to participate, control and benefit from the whole development process. The empowerment strategies include women's empowerment, family empowerment and strengthening institutions (*Propenas* 2000-2004).

Based on this policy each government agency under the ministries at the national level has developed its own strategy putting emphasis on the use of the empowerment concept in process of government program implementation. As this will be carried out in difference provinces and districts in Indonesia, the concept of empowerment embedded in the program will be implemented in those regions. Empowerment has thus become a national policy in Indonesia, and can also be seen in the wide range of government activities and development programs and the process of national, provincial and district development plans. The planning process has shifted from top-down to a more empowering process combining the top-down and bottom up process.

In addition, some Departments within the national government body have established their own empowerment bureaus to implement their programs. The Agriculture Department of Indonesia has established the Centre for Community Food Security Empowerment, the Trade and Cooperative Department established Small and Medium Enterprise Empowerment Bureaus and the Department of Internal Affairs established Community Empowerment Bureaus in provincial and district level.

To implement empowerment policies the national, provincial and district level government administered some empowerment projects, for example the Coastal Community Economic Empowerment Program (*PEMP*) implemented by Coastal and Marine Affairs, the Coastal Community Empowerment Project carried out by West Nusa Tenggara Community Empowerment Bureau, Small Enterprise Empowerment Program belonging to Cooperative and Small and Medium Enterprise Department and the farmers and fisheries empowerment programs belonging to Department of Agriculture. In short, the Indonesian policy to implement the empowerment concept in development programs has been broadly adopted in all sectors of development in the entire country.

Empowerment Policy Implementation

The implementation of the empowerment policy started in 1999 when the act of decentralisation was signed by the national parliament. Since then the local government has had more power and authority to develop rural development programs based on the needs and aspirations of local people.

The Decentralization Act

District and municipal government are now empowered to set resource use and spatial planning policy, and manage revenue and budgets. Many decisions that directly affect local peoples' access to and use of local coastal and marine, forest

and land resources have been delegated to the local district and municipal governments. Laws are still being drafted to specify obligations and service standards for local and regional governments, including their role in managing natural resources. District and provincial parliaments are faced with the task of issuing scores of new regulations and decrees to administer local governments' new responsibilities. After a long preparation period, the new decentralisation laws officially came into effect on the 1st of January 2001.

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Ideal Process of Coastal Community Empowerment Program (*PEMP*)

The ideal process of empowerment program written in *PEMP* guidelines is an example where it should go through several stages, starting from a national level where the central government provides the mandate and funds to the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs national office to carry out the *PEMP* program. With this mandate the national office should coordinate with other departments at national level to make sure the program does not overlap with other programs.

At the provincial level the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs, on behalf of the Governor, is responsible for the program implementation. Its tasks are to develop coordination with other government agencies, promote the program at provincial level, provide technical advice to district level, monitor and evaluate the program and report its implementation to the national Department Marine and Coastal Affairs.

At district level, the head of Marine and Coastal Affairs is responsible for implementing this program on behalf of the district head (*Bupati*). The task is to appoint a NGO, coordinate with other government and non government agencies as well as monitor and evaluate program implementation. The NGO is responsible for the program activities in coordination with the district program leader.

At the village level, the NGO must appoint NGO fieldworkers. They should be trained in *PEMP* philosophy and methodology. The reason for employing NGOs is to improve the service to the communities and meet the funding body requirement.

To implement *PEMP* the district Marine and Coastal Affairs in collaboration with the NGO must develop economic institutions for Coastal Development *Mikro Mitra Mina (LEPP-M3)*. The management of *LEPP-M3* should be selected from representatives of groups from the selected villages. The structural approach of the *PEMP* program is shown in Figure one.

According to the *PEMP* guidelines the NGO should start the empowerment process in local areas by identifying local potential and problems, community needs, manpower, fishing industries, infrastructure, social and economic institutions and local government policy. The data gathered should then be analysed to be used as the basis of program development which should include economic, social and environmental development.

The program is then introduced to other government agencies, informal leaders, targeted communities and other stakeholders to inform them and get feedback and response for program revision. According to *PEMP* guidelines, synchronisation and coordination with other government programs is crucial to make sure the program does not overlap with or contradict others. The Head of Marine and Coastal Affairs explained an overlapping or contradicted program could lead to disempowerment. On the basis of the feedback from stakeholders the program is revised

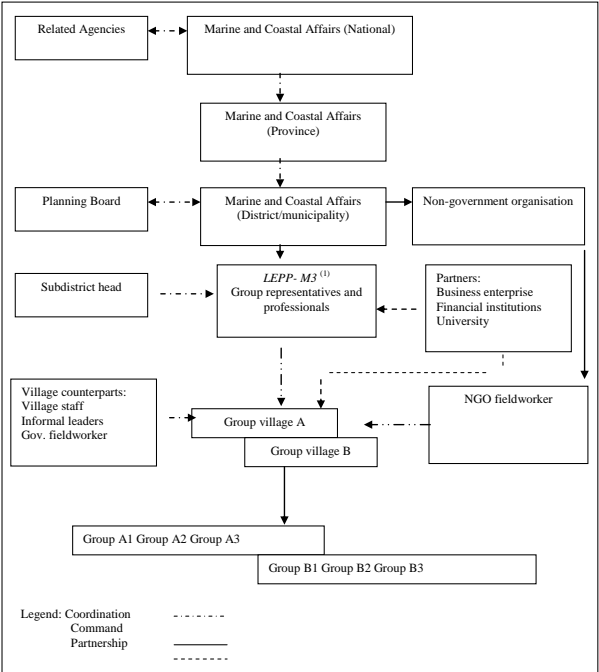


Figure 1. Structural Approach of Economic Empowerment for Coastal Community Program

Source: PEMP program guidelines 2002.

(1) *LEPP-M3* is a microfinance institution developed in the *PEMP* program to manage the revolving fund.

The implementation of this revised program is done through several stages by the NGO. It starts with the formation of “village counterpart” which consists of village government staff, informal leaders and representatives from the Marine and Coastal Affairs fieldworkers; then the formation of the groups such as fishermen, fish farming and fish processing groups; and selection of the *LEPP-M3* Management staff.

The village counterpart members are appointed in various ways. The head of the village appoints the village government representative and informal leaders and the Marine and Coastal Affairs fieldworker is appointed by the head of the district level Marine and Coastal Affairs. The organisation structure of the village counterpart at least should consist of leader and secretary and should be approved by the head of village.

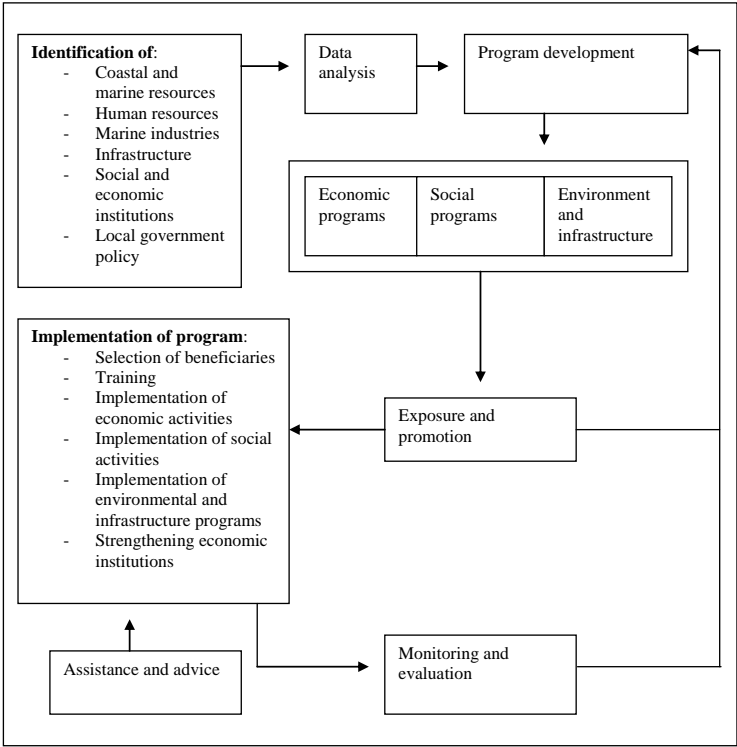


Figure 2. Diagrammatic Approach of Economic Empowerment For Coastal Community Program

Sources: PEMP guidelines 2002

The NGO fieldworker facilitates the formation of the groups. The process of group formation occurs through stages. This includes identifying the beneficiaries according to criteria, e.g. eligible small fishermen, small traders, small fish industries are poor (non permanent house, no or very limited assets such as boat, net etc, and low income (less than Rp 20,000 = AUD \$3 per day).

The group formation starts from selection of group members and verification of their poverty status; then group and group management development, training and group business plan development. After the groups are formed, the NGO fieldworker facilitates the selection of the *LEPP-M3* management. The structure of this institution consists of leader, secretary and treasurer, selected from members involved in this program. The head of the district should approve the management of the *LEPP-M3*. This institution is expected to be a microfinance institution for coastal communities that will increase the access of the group to a financial support system.

Finally, the community and the district office of the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs should monitor and evaluate of the program. Thus empowerment can be achieved at all levels.

To empower the groups some further steps should be carried out in this program. According to the guidelines, the NGO fieldworker should facilitate in developing group proposals, action plans, and facilitate *LEPP-M3* to get funds from Government and disburse these to the groups.

As the government perceived that the social, economic and cultural status of the coastal community is low and backward the NGO fieldworker should assist the groups during the program lifetime. Most importantly, training and other forms of educational activities should be carried out to ensure that the group and group members have sufficient knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out productive activities to increase their income and welfare.

The NGO and the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs at the district level should facilitate the groups to get capital, technology and information access through the partnership with other related companies and markets. This is essential to ensure the sustainability of the economic activities of the group.

Therefore, the NGO should select professional fieldworkers who must live in the village so they are available at all times and able to advise and assist the group. They must be able to act as motivator, administrator and facilitator in the process of empowerment.

All these arrangements were designed to ensure the program principles such as participation, self-reliance and partnership, and principles including acceptability, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, quick disbursement, democracy, sustainability, equity and competitiveness are implemented properly to achieve an empowered community.

The guidelines also suggest that the success of community empowerment must be supported by locally based economic activities with the involvement of the local community. The locally based social and economic institutions must be developed to support economic and social activities carried out during the program. This is important to avoid social conflict in the utilization of common property. What were the results of the government effort to empower coastal community? The

following section describes impact of empowerment on feeling of being empower of the people in coastal area of Lombok.

Effect of Empowerment Process on Feeling Empowered

The results of the study indicate that effect of empowerment process within the *PEMP* program was low. This was shown by the mean score gained by the member of empowerment groups (groups involve in empowerment program in coastal Lombok) was less then three (2.72) which was lower than the non empowerment groups (community initiated groups) who scored 4.49. This is because the empowerment process did not happen in empowerment group (government initiated groups), while in non empowerment group (community initiated groups) it occurred naturally, initiated by the community itself.

The findings in the first phase also demonstrate that in all groups, a minority of group members feel more empowered than others. This is because only few people within a group have access to external agents, information and resources. The second phase findings indicate that those with a higher feeling of being empowered were the informal (religious) leaders, heads of sub-village who become members and civil servants who live in the village and the innovator (contact person). They were usually more prosperous than the others, more educated and religious leaders, and became contact persons for the external agent who wanted to implement the program in the village. These people felt able to influence decision making in groups or in the village, and were perceived as progressive persons by external agents and were usually the point of entry to the community.

The first phase survey findings indicate most of those members of community initiated groups feeling empowered provide scores of three, four and five, while most government initiated groups (empowerment) felt less empowered and provided scores of one and two. The high feeling of being empowered of community initiated groups was due to the group establishment process and empowering group processes. The people became members of these groups because they felt a need to be in the group; they experienced empowering processes where their participation was valued and they could exert their influence in group decision making. Their contributions to the group were meaningful and they perceived they would get the same level of service from their group. They believed the group would help them when in need. On the contrary, members of the government initiated groups experienced a disempowering process in group establishment and group processes. They were perceived as an object in the development program; they were ordered and were not given a chance to participate in group processes. Their membership in the group was to obtain government support. After support was given they did not expect the group would help them again.

These facts indicate that the empowerment program could not achieve it objectives, even though the government from national to the district level tried to implement empowerment processes in their entire program as it mandated by the law. This left some questions to be answered.

Missing Links in Government Efforts to Empower Communities

The study indicates that despite efforts carried out by the government there were missing links in the empowerment process. The national government had initiated and implemented measures to empower communities through regulations, policies, institutions and development programs. The district level government which holds the authority to govern the region autonomously also made serious efforts to empower communities, for instance under the economic empowerment for coastal community (*PEMP*) program. At least nine activities were carried out by local government to implement economic empowerment for coastal communities in Lombok (see ideal process). This is because the government realised that the previous government with its centralistic mode, top down and target-driven approach to development had failed to achieve the development objectives (Muktasam, 2000, Suadnya et al, 2004).

Although the current government was aware of the problems of the past and took measures to solve them by introducing the empowerment concept to development programs, it was still only a token effort and was not implemented properly at community level.

One of the reasons was, although the government had changed, and regulations, policies, institutions and programs were also changed, the staff, the people who carried out the work and their work culture had not changed. Government staff who had worked with the previous government for more than three decades (1965-1998) hardly changed their habits and ways of delivering services to communities. Therefore the old cultures which were centralistic, autocratic, top-down and used a target approach to development were still implemented at local level.

Unless the habits and work culture of government staff change, empowerment will not occur. The introduction of regulations, policies and empowerment programs are not enough to change the work culture. Acquisition of knowledge and skills are equally important. Therefore, training for government staff about empowerment philosophy, concept and methodology is essential. If government staff are not retrained and do not understand the philosophy, concept and empowerment methodology, the old paradigm will still influence their mindset and approach to implementing government programs.

The missing link in the government efforts to empower communities is therefore acquisition of knowledge and skills. According to Hall (1992) and Kindervatter (1979) empowerment processes start when people become aware they have problems to solve. This leads them to have felt needs to obtain necessary knowledge and skills to solve the problems, which in turn drives them to take actions and continuously increase their knowledge, skills and self-esteem.

Bandura (1982) suggests that there is a positive interactive effect between the strengthening of personal ability through knowledge and skills acquisition and the development of self-confidence. Knowledge and skills can be learned through training and capacity building, direct experiences, observing others or modelling. Lord and Hutchison (1993) suggest that knowledge and skills acquisition are also important to increase interpersonal influence and political power.

Therefore for government staff to be able to empower the community, empowerment knowledge and skills are crucial for them. Kindervatter (1979) suggests informal education is the means for empowerment and wide social change. She suggests that knowledge and skills acquisition should be carried out in groups so it encourages group solidarity and collective actions. That empowerment process must have both content and process. Content means skills and information needed and process refers to necessary abilities to gain more control over decision making, social interaction and working collectively. Therefore the learning process should not be designed to gain skills and knowledge alone but also increase participant's influence in the communities.

Thus before participating in community empowerment programs the government staff should gain experience in the empowerment process themselves by training or informal education processes. Their participation in empowerment learning processes will influence the way they implement empowerment processes at the community level. This is because empowerment occurs through practical application (praxis) as a cyclical process of participation and reflection. As Zimmerman et al (1992) and Chavis and Wandersman (1990) suggest, participation and empowerment have a positive association. Zimmerman et al (1992) found that participation in community activities has a positive relationship with perceived control.

Kolb (1984) suggests that knowledge and skills accumulation happen only through a cyclic learning process where a repetition of cycles of plan, act, observe and reflection occur. Participation in empowerment training will stimulate new understandings; critical thinking which in turn will provoke new and more effective skills to implement the empowerment process at community level. The knowledge, skills and commitment developed in the staff training program together with government policies, regulations and programs on empowerment will create an empowering process. This process will sharpen and improve self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-determination of the staff and that will lead to empowerment within communities.

These processes were missing from the government efforts to empower communities, so that government staff did not implement the empowerment programs properly. For instance, in the economic empowerment for coastal community (*PEMP*) program, the good governance principles that were clearly suggested in the program guidelines including participation, democracy, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and following the rule of law (*Direktorat Pesisir dan Pulau-Pulau Kecil, Departement Kelautan dan Perikanan, 2002; Loina, 2003*) were not implemented. This is because government staff were instructed to implement an empowerment policy without an understanding of what empowerment is. As a result the old culture development process was still practised. This led to improper implementation of the empowerment program, influencing the meaning and concept of empowerment held by various stakeholders such as policy makers, implementers and communities in Lombok.

Conclusion and Implication

Efforts carried out by the government to empower communities, the government had taken measures to empower communities in coastal areas by including empowerment policy in national broad guidelines, forming a national strategic plan, and developing necessary legal frameworks and legislations to provide legal basis for the government to act. It had also established a Community Empowerment Bureau from the national to the district level and implemented programs intended to use an empowerment approach. But training for the government staff about empowerment philosophy, methodology and approaches, essential to implement empowerment was not carried out (missing link), even though the Ministry of Internal Affairs had issued a decree to require this. Government did not experience with empowerment process that should be carried out in the training process. As a result there was no change in government staff members' knowledge, skills and behaviours, and staff continued practising the old top down mode of delivery and target focused approach to development processes.

Until now, the empowerment programs have been delivered in a top down way following a target approach to development from national government to the grassroots level. The government of Indonesia needs to promote true empowerment processes. Fundamental change is needed in paradigm, work culture, knowledge and skills of government staff members from national to village level, to be able to implement empowerment programs successfully. It is a challenge for government staff to involve existing empowered groups in government programs without lessening their social function while meeting funding body requirements

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