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INCENTIVES, INNOVATIONS AND REPLICATION – LOCAL GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENTS FOR BETTER SERVICES FOR ALL

HIGHLIGHTS

- Indonesia introduced a dramatic decentralization in 2001 – but local governments (LGs) often lacked sufficient capacity to deliver.
- The USAID-supported Indonesia Local Governance Service Improvement (Kinerja) program focused on incentives, empowering citizens to demand better services; on introducing performance standards and existing innovations; and on replication building on carefully collected evidence.
- The approach of Kinerja succeeded among others in getting more teachers to work in underprovided rural areas by building local government commitment and strong political leadership through stimulus, public attention, supporting regulations, and on-the-job technical assistance.

DEMAND-LED ADAPTATION OF NATIONAL PROGRAMMES TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

The USAID-funded \$25 million Kinerja program was launched in 2010, focusing on improving the local delivery of public services in three sectors: health, education, and business-enabling environment. This was in a context of a dramatic “big-bang” decentralization of planning, budgeting and implementation adopted in 2001, but with district governments still lacking sufficient capacity to deliver high-quality public services. At the same time, many national programs, often developed with donor support in the past, were not implemented on a wide scale, leaving many of Indonesia’s more than 500 districts and cities behind.

The Kinerja program, together with national actors, developed a limited open menu of innovation packages which 20 randomly-selected districts in four target provinces (Aceh, East Java, South Sulawesi, and West Kalimantan) could choose between. A pilot approach was applied with initial implementation in a small number of schools and community health centers. Kinerja provided technical assistance and capacity development support to LGs to help them shape national programs to align with local needs, and to encourage them to work with citizen forums (known as multi-stakeholder forums) to demand quality services. In order to support sustainability, programs were implemented through local CSOs and experts with the hope that they would continue providing technical support to LGs after Kinerja’s closure.

Once a pilot was successful, local policies and regulations were prepared, the program was included in district plans and budgets, technical guidelines were developed, and district-wide replication was facilitated. All programs were performance-based and referred back to the nationally-mandated minimum service standards (MSS), and all incorporated complaint handling mechanisms to support accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.

EXAMPLE: GETTING TEACHERS TO SERVE IN RURAL AREAS

The uneven distribution of teachers between rural and urban areas remains a major issue across Indonesia. Schools in urban areas often employ more teachers than needed, while schools in more remote areas remain underserved. The national government has in the past tried to tackle this, but has met resistance from both political actors and from teachers themselves, many of whom were not consulted prior to being re-distributed to under-served areas.

GENUINE, OPEN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC LEADS TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

In Luwu Utara, a remote district in South Sulawesi, a local CSO conducted a preliminary study of the district’s primary school teachers, revealing severe imbalances in teacher distribution. With Kinerja’s support, this information was widely distributed to mainstream media and citizen journalists. The study was also presented to the government and

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parliament members. However, government employees were reluctant to have the issue come into the public, and the parliament showed little interest. Only after Kinerja and its local partners convinced the Deputy District Head of Luwu Utara through a study tour and several follow up discussions that teacher redistribution would have a significant positive impact on education outcomes, was the government ready to move.

Being aware that the re-distribution of teachers to remote areas needs both political and community support, and in order to minimize resistance, the Deputy District Head held numerous sessions with multi-stakeholder forums (MSFs) and the public to promote a common understanding of the aims of proportional teacher distribution and to simultaneously gain inputs how it should be implemented. Kinerja supported the establishment of a new MSF – the ‘Forum for the Promotion of Education’ – to help oversee the redistribution of teachers from the community’s perspective. The MSF consisted of Village Development Workers, traditional leaders, the head of the Teacher Association, NGOs, and former Education Officers, and discussed minimum quality standards that the local government should provide to its citizens.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND OVERSIGHT, AND DEDICATED LEADERSHIP, HELPS TO LAUNCH POLITICAL SENSITIVE PROGRAMS AND DRIVE A REFORM.

Public attention was essential in driving the reform. Wide media coverage and regular community discussions led to the Deputy District Head making teacher re-distribution her main agenda. She discussed it publicly at events, was regularly quoted in articles, and attended multiple radio talk shows organized by citizen journalists on the topic. One particular series of coffee shop meetings, ‘Warung Demokrasi’, even drew nation-wide attention and received some prestigious awards. The results of this were to lead to a district policy. The many ideas raised by stakeholders resulted in lengthy public discussions over many months in which government staff, teachers, and community leaders discussed their ideas and searched for a consensus. Town hall meetings also addressed the relocation of teachers, and citizen journalists kept on reporting about the status of primary education and the efforts of the district addressing it, which was widely picked up by mainstream media.

This broad media coverage and constant public discussion meant that the Deputy District Head could overcome implementation challenges. She dealt with resistance from teachers with a person-to-person approach, even when faced with threats by a senior government official who was not willing to accept the transfer of his wife (a schoolteacher) to a different location. With the support of the public behind her, she was successfully able to handle such threats and oversee successful implementation.

After months of public discussions, 128 teachers were reassigned to 76 primary schools. The Luwu Utara administration allocated funds in the district budget to help offset teachers’ relocation costs. Incentives to teachers, including housing and an additional monthly stipend, were also provided to ensure a smooth re-distribution process.

The administration has asked CSOs and MSFs to monitor the program’s implementation in the field. These community members are to ensure that transferred teachers accept the changes and are actually teaching at their new schools. To fill up this responsibility, MSF members first had to be trained and their capacity to monitor established. Now any issues they encounter are passed on to the District Education Office for follow-up, while citizen journalists continue to discuss education quality in newspapers and on the radio.

Overall, the teacher re-distribution program not only succeeded in transferring teachers to underserved schools but also building stronger, more accountable and more transparent relationships between the community and the government. Demonstrating that reform leadership may pay off politically, the process also smoothed the ground for the Deputy District Head, who was elected as new District Head in 2015 with great citizen support.

For more information, visit www.usaid.gov/indonesia or contact Ketty Kadarwati at kkadarwati@usaid.gov.

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