The Long Road to Social Inclusion: Participation of Vulnerable Groups in Village Development

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Ro'fah Ro'fah[a], Astri Hanjarwati[a], and Jamil Suprihatiningrum[a, b]

[a]UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia, [b]Flinders University, Australia

ABSTRACT

The Indonesian village Law No. 6/2014 has set the tone for empowering local development, establishing village as a local democratic institution with the ability to manage its own development. It is explicitly stated in the law that one of its goals is to establish the village community as a subject instead of an object of development. Therefore, the law highly encourages civic participation. While the mechanism is in place to ensure the participation of village inhabitants, the participation of marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, and elderly remain unexplored. Using interviews with the marginalized groups in four villages in Indonesia, the aim of this paper seeks to capture the dynamic participation of this population and to examine the barriers to their participation in the development process. In this study, it was found that meaningful participation has not yet been achieved, thus, there is still a need to advocate for empowerment for this population. In addition, marginalized groups continued to experience challenges and barriers in to their participation, primarily due to the absence of a structure and mechanisms that specifically address their need. These include the absence of disability or women organizations or forums, the inaccessibility of information, and the lack of awareness of village government to include marginal groups.

Introduction

This paper discusses the barriers to participation experienced by vulnerable groups in the development process. A change in the development paradigm after the 1970s era iluustrates how development was definitely criticized as a *top-down* activity that failed to provide space for community participation, as a result, it did not attain its goals, namely achieving prosperity and eliminating poverty. In its development, social exclusion emerged as a new term describing this phenomenon. Initiated by development academics in France in the 1980s, *social exclusion* was used to build the argument that development

failures such as poverty and deprivation are multidimensional conditions that must be seen not only from the material dimension but also because of the lack of participation, autonomy, and *self-respect* (Haan, 2000).

Essentially, development is considered to be too economically oriented and ultimately leads to social exclusion, such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. The solution to this problem is socially oriented development, also known as inclusive development. The objective of this development is not only to achieve economic growth but also to ensure social inclusion of everyone having the opportunity to participate. Various writings show that social inclusion is a concept or theory that has been contested with a diversity of ideologies within it, but at least social inclusion refers to two values: participation and involvement (Gidley; Haan, 2000).

Indonesia is inseparable from the above phenomena. The development undertaken by the New Order government was considered to be too economically oriented and consequently resulted in three major damages; poverty, violence, and environmental damage (Warsilah, 2015). The reform era gradually ushered in the idea of inclusive development, which began with decentralization and democratization, which emphasized participation. Communities are positioned as government development partners. It is in this context of changing the direction of development that participation is explicitly incorporated into laws, which includes in Village Law No. 6 of 2014, which mandates that development planning must be carried out in a participatory manner and involves the entire community, including vulnerable communities, namely: minorities, women, people with disabilities and the poor.

The implementation of community participation in development through village development plan deliberation mechanism (*Musrenbangdes*) currently faces various challenges, especially for vulnerable groups. Several studies have shown that social and cultural barriers are still quite significant for vulnerable communities to participate in, mainly because culture and social structures have not changed, which continue to perpetuate dominance and inequality between elites and non-elite (Fikri et al., 2020; Hanadi et al., 2020; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Mansuri, G., & Rao, 2004; Susetiawan et al., 2018). Research on power relations and elite dominance, which contriute to social exclusion perpetuate it, dominates current academic discussions. The experiences and voices of vulnerable groups have not been adequately explored and described in research, as well as what obstacles they encoutered and how they responded to government efforts to change the development paradigm. Thus, it is imperative to examine this subjective experience in an effort to voice to those who have been *voiceless* and have experienced social exclusion.

In this study, vulnerable groups refer to various existing laws such as Law no. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, Law no. 17 of 2007 concerning the National Long-Term Development Plan for 2005 – 2025, Law no. 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services and Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs (2014); which defines vulnerable groups as groups that do not have access to resources, information and confidence. This

group is: (1) women, (2) the poor, (3) the elderly, (4) victims of natural and social disasters, and (5) people with disability (Hanadi et al., 2020) Of the five groups included in these regulations, this research focuses on two groups, namely people with disabilities and women.

In this study, Gunungkidul Regency, Special Province of Yogyakarta (DIY) and City of Kupang, Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) were chosen as loci because both areas considere lacking access to development and are geographically diffcult to reach. Additionally, these two regions represent the western and eastern parts of Indonesia, two categories that are often contested in relation to access to development outcomes, with eastern Indonesia being a relatively underdeveloped area. Hence, despite that fact that Gunungkidul was the region that, until recently, was the poorest in DIY, it shares similarities with Kupang, which is the eastern region of Indonesia, but these two regions represent the western region within the national context. Therefore, it is necessary to explore this locations so as gain a better understanding of the dynamics of participation of vulnerable groups in these two areas. This research aims to answer the questions related to experiences of the two vulnerable groups in participating in the participation mechanism built through the village development planning meeting, what their views on involvement in the development process are, and what the obstacles they identify.

Research Literature

Participation as a concept or dimension of social inclusion or inclusive development has received sufficient attention from academics. Several main themes can be traced in the literature related to this study.

Participation and Social Inclusion

In the last few decades, the terminology of social inclusion and exclusion has dominated development discourse. Inclusion was born as an answer to social exclusion, which is a criticism raised by social policy experts in France against the approach to development. Born from the world of social policy in France, inclusion is the answer to social exclusion which is considered a product of an erroneous approach to development.

Participation in development: History and criticism

Hickey & Mohan (2005) study, participation in development and governance within the context of development provides an interesting description of the journey and development of the concept of participation. According to the two authors, the discourse on participation has been going on for a very long time, even before the Second World War during the colonialization era. During that time, public participation was echoed by the colonial government with one specific goal, namely the promotion of the colonial political interests. In the years following the Second World War, the same conditions

persisted, according to two authors, both national and international make use of community participation to achieve their targets or political agendas. A broader debate about participation in development was only initiated in the 1970s, which can narrowly be characterized as a contest between two camps: liberal and radical wings. For supporters of liberal views, participation is 'merely' a tool for decentralization. However, for the initiators of alternative development, participation has a broader meaning. In this regard, participation can be understood as an effort to balance power between dominant groups in the development process by empowering marginalized groups. In this context, participation implies a paradigm shift in development, particularly a critique of the paradigm of the ethnocentric, which is characterized by top-down and centralized approaches.

Robert Chambers is another name that is quite prominent in the study of participation in development and is known as an advocate for the involvement of the poor and marginalized groups in development policies with dozens of his works (Chambers, 1987, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2008). In "*participation and poverty*" (2007), Chambers argues that the poor should be involved in the entire development process; starting from the identification and formulation of the problem to the implementation. In his various works (1983, 1997), Chambers popularized the term "*putting the last first*"; how the development process needs to provide space for participation for those who are usually in the last circle who are not touched by the development process such as the poor and marginalized groups. It was Chambers who established participation as the dominant paradigm in development.

In subsequent developments, participation in development has become more mainstream, leading to various criticisms carried by several authors, including Chamberst himself (Cornwall, 2008; Hickey & Mohan, 2005) (Mohan, 2008; S. Hickey, 2009). As (Cornwell 2011) noted, Chamberst criticized participation as tokenistic and far from the real pusrpose and meaning of *power-sharing* when compared to its participation with major donor agencies such as the World Bank. This phenomenon is emphasized by(Cleaver, 2001) who underlines that the clamor for the issue of participation in development has become orthodox, and is no longer viewed critically. More sharply, Cornwall in his various writings underlines the phenomenon of participation that is often used as an *excuse* by liberal economic strongholds such as the World Bank and aid recipient countries to reduce the government's responsibility for providing social welfare. This is of course in line with the issues and dynamics in the debate on the welfare state.

Participation Classification

Another theme that also appears in the studies mentioned above is the spectrum or level of participation, where the author tries to classify and categorize levels of participation, which according to Cornwall (2008) takes two perspectives: from participants (vulnerable groups) and users (government and donor agencies) to measure how strong or weak participation is. One of the earliest studies is Arnstein (1969) who compose what is known

as "*ladder of participation*" which divides participation levels into eight rungs on which citizen control is placed on the highest ladder while manipulation is positioned on the lowest rung. There is also (Petty, 1995) who takes the viewpoint of the user participant and offers a continuum of participation from passive to active levels. The World Bank in 1996 compiled a *participation sourcebook* which classifies local communities based on their capacity and level of participation in decision-making, which is divided into four groups, starting with *beneficiaries* (recipients only), clients (those who can request and negotiate services), investors (resource/service holders), and managers who understand how services should be delivered).

Barriers to Participation

Regarding specifically the barriers to the participation of vulnerable groups in development, existing studies (Awortwi, 2012; Chambers, 1983; Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013; Mansuri, G., & Rao, 2004; Thomas, 1992) identified several critical factors. One of them is the dominance of elite group control in the development process and community empowerment work. For Lund and Saito-Jensen, the current development structure continues to reproduce elite domination, as a result, non-elite participation, especially vulnerable groups, continues to face these structural and cultural barriers. More specifically, Mansuri and Rao identified that information, for example, was still very much dominated by elite groups which in turn made it easier for them to formulate development agendas and form patterns of participation that were profitable for themselves.

Meanwhile, Chambers and Thomas' research is more focused on the time constraints that the community has, especially in the context of rural communities. From the analysis conducted by Thomas in community empowerment programs in India, vulnerable groups such as poor plantation workers or domestic workers are often preoccupied with work and efforts to fulfill basic needs so that they have very restricted time to participate in social and development activities. This argument reinforces Chambers' findings, which show that the type of work greatly influences the participation of the poor; who spend most of their waking hours at work.

Research methods

This research is a qualitative research that applies grounded theory to capture how the dynamics and barriers to participation of vulnerable groups, especially women and people with disabilities. There were 40 informants involved in this study, consisting of 10 participants from each village that became the research location which include PSoftan and Beji villages in Gunungkidul, and Noelbaki and Matair villages in Kupang. The selection of informants was carried out randomly or purposely with the criteria of: 1) women or people with disabilities, 2) having experience participating in *Musrenbang*, and/or 3) being actively involved in village development activities.

The main data collection technique in this study was obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) which were deliberately carried out due to several considerations; the first was to reduce psychological barriers for informants in this study. In the context of rural communities, especially vulnerable communities, it is not always comfortable to meet face-to-face with a researcher you have just met. For this reason, FGDs were conducted to capture more informants in a limited time and to get the depth of information needed. In addition, according to many authors, FGD is a strategy that is considered appropriate to identify understandings, beliefs and group behavior (Ennew, J. Abebe, T. Bangyai, R. Parichart. K. Kjorholt. A. T. and Noonsup, 2009) and also to capture the social context of informants (Ritchie, J., & Lewis, 2003). The FGDs were conducted twice in each of the villages where the research was conducted, which were attended by 10 informants consisting of women and people with disabilities for a duration of two hours.

Apart from the FGDs, semi structure interview was also conducted with eight informants, namely two informants from each village who were also FGD participants. This interview was conducted to obtain more detailed information, to complement the results of the FGD data. Two people selected from each village are administrators and activists from organizations of people with disabilities or women's associations who have experience of being active participants in village development planning meetings or being heavily involved in village development activities.

Findings and Discussion

Questions in the interviews and FGDs in this study focused on how vulnerable groups, especially women and people with disabilities, participate in various stages of village development starting from planning, budgeting and evaluation. The results of this study show how the dynamics of participation include: level of participation, form of participation and also its implementation at each stage of development. The results of the study also show the barriers to participation that residents have.

Form, Level and Mechanism of Participation

Interviews, FGDs, and observations of the four villages where the research was conducted, namely Beji and Psoftan in Gunungkidul and Mata Air and Noelbaki in Kupang show that these four villages have different contexts related to village policies and programs, resources and awareness or outreach to leaders and other village apparatus to marginal groups. The context is a number of factors that influence the level of participation of marginal groups.

The two villages in Gunungkidul have the same geographical characteristics and participant backgrounds but show slightly different dynamics of citizen participation. Participation of marginalized groups in Beji takes place in the most basic areas of government, namely RT, RW and hamlets, for example, through regular monthly

meetings. The majority of Beji respondents also said that people with disabilities, the poor, and women were actively involved in organizing social life and implementing development programs in the RT/RW or hamlet areas, for example in mutual cooperation activities or activities of other hamlet residents. However, at the village level, the involvement of marginalized groups in Beji is still limited.

One reason is related to the mechanism for selecting hamlet representatives in the village *Musrenbang*. According to several Beji women cadres, the election of hamlet representatives is often conducted by appointment, thus, it is not possible to guarantee the representation of marginalized groups. Despite the fact that women's groups have been represented because they refer to the rules for implementing PNPM, however, people with disabilities and poor groups remain unrepresented. This condition is "exacerbated" by the limited village development agenda, which until now has prioritized physical development, so that village women cadres' suggestions regarding additional food for babies and toddlers, facilities and infrastructure for the development of women's organizations and salaries for village PAUD administrators have not been fulfilled by the head of the village even though the proposal is made every year.

In Plembutan the conditions are slightly different. Even though the level of participation of marginalized groups is still minimal and confined to the RT/RW and hamlet areas, the village government has actually opened up space for participation in the village quite widely. One of the indicators is the existence of thematic village *Musrenbang* which can be seen as a mechanism for involving various groups of residents with different needs. The themes or clusters held in the Psoftan Village *Musrenbang* are quite diverse, starting from physical, social, children's and women's development. Even though not all proposed programs and activities were approved or determined in the *Musrenbang* at the sub-district and district levels, at least the village government has tried to reach all residents, including marginalized groups. Interview with *stakeholder*, including the village head and village administrators: BPD, LKMD, PKK cadres and community leaders, demonstrate an understanding of village officials' involvement in all facets of society in *Musrenbang*, including marginalized groups. The mechanism for selecting representatives in the *Musrenbang* was clearly explained by the village head of PSoftan:

> "All groups in the community can be involved in the Village *Musrenbang*: community leaders, the poor, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and also village officials. *Musrenbang* is the result of discussion at the hamlet level, where representatives will be sent to the village level to discuss issues or proposals agreed upon at the hamlet level. These discussions will serve as a basis for deliberation at the village level as well. There must be proportional and representative election in order to represent the hamlet, so the decision on who and who will be elected is determined at the hamlet level. All citizens have rights, including marginalized groups according to the village law."

Turning to Kupang district, the participation of marginalized communities in the villages of Noelbaki and Mata Air, Kupang, shows a similar picture but compared to

Gunungkidul the level of participation in the two villages is more limited. This condition is not caused by the reluctance of the community to participate, but rather because the mechanisms and spaces for participation are still very limited. According to residents in the FGD, several hamlets, both in Noelbaki and Mata Air, have not had regular meetings at the RT/RW or hamlet levels, while meetings for other village programs such as the PKK and Dasawisma have not gone well either. This condition may also be motivated by the characteristics of the residents in the two villages – as in other Kupang areas – which are very plural in terms of ethnicity, religion and also regional origin. According to the results of the FGD, the Christian community came from the southern part of the NTT islands: the islands of Rote, Sabu, Sumba, Simau and the central part of the island of Timor (TTS, TTU). The Catholic community originates from the southern island of NTT, from the island of Flores to Alor and the eastern island of Timor. While the Muslim community comes from Solor (Alor islands). Later, along with the dynamics of Kupang's development and development, immigrants from Java, Madura, Bugis and other areas began to arrive. The diversity of residents is compounded by refugees from East Timor who have begun to move to Kupang, after the separation of East Timor in 2000.

As a result of the ethnic and sub-ethnic diversity in Kupang, blood and religious ties being more dominant than associations based on residential areas, so that meetings of RT/RW residents, *posyandu* and PKK only take place but do not always get a response from the community. Nevertheless, cross-regional large family (fam) meetings and all church-affiliated meetings can run well. The residents' reluctance to organize or be involved in regional meetings can be seen from Winda, a housewife in Noelbaki:

> "In my area there are no RT/RW/*Dusun* meetings yet. Indeed, in the past, the residents had wanted to hold a community gathering in the form of an *arisan* and there were several people who responded and wanted to be involved, but most of the residents did not respond to the plan."

Two other residents in Noelbaki corroborated Winda's statement, stating that residents were "ignorant" and were "more concerned about their personal interests" than groups or residents. According to Ursula, limited community meetings also held at Mata Air when there is an election for the head of the RT/RW or other important events:

There are no meetings at the village level, except when there is an election for RT/RW/*Dusun* or when there is a new socialization. There are no regular meetings held at the RT. Village level meetings were never involved. Meanwhile, there is no regular monthly meetings , or perhaps only the RT and certain people will attend.

As previously mentioned, meetings of churches or other groups affiliated with churches or religions are spaces for social interaction and citizen participation. *Persani* (Association of Christian Disabled People) is an organization of people with disabilities in Kupang that has been quite vocal in voicing their interests in various forums. Additionally, there are Women's Organizations that have been successful in organizing themselves and empowering women in Kupang. However, according to information from FGD

participants, church and family gatherings have limited agendas; the church for example only focuses its activities on religious issues.

The mechanism for selecting village *Musrenbang* in Kupang is carried out in the same way as other regions, including Gunungkidul; starting from a community meeting at the hamlet level, then representatives are elected to represent the hamlet at the village level. Due to the lack of deliberations at the *Dusun* or RT/RW levels, information regarding citizen selection and appoinment mechanisms, for example, became more dominant. The village government has not yet adopted a policy promoting the representation of the poor, women, and people with disabilities in these two villages.

If we look at these findings, the space for participation is relatively minimal for vulnerable groups. Representation in the *Musrenbang* is still based on direct appointment which does not always represent diverse groups or does not function as an effort to reach out vulnerable communities. Even if what occured in Beji and Plembutan constitutes participation, it is still considered non-participation or at minimum token participation, according to (Arnstein, 1969); or what (Petty, 1995) called *manipulative* or *passive presentation*. *Tokenism*, *manipulative* or *passive*, is essentially the same thing, namely participation without power or power to influence policy outcomes; or participation after a decision has been made (for example, a decision regarding the allocation of village funds which has actually been arranged or decided at a higher *musrenbang* level), thereby making the participation more justifiable for the *user* (village government). We can see this phenomenon more clearly in the next presentation.

Participation in the Development Process

The previous presentation is intended to provide context or general description regarding the social and cultural conditions of the research location, which are directly or indirectly related to the level of community participation and the ability to express opinions, needs or aspirations. Next, a more detailed description of how the process of participation and expression is carried out by residents at the research location in various stages or development processes will be presented.

Planning

How is the participation of marginal groups in development planning? In this study, development planning is defined quite specifically, referring to the process of capturing of capturing aspirations or proposals that become the village *Musrenbang* agenda. In accordance with the established mechanism, this aspiration screening starts with a meeting at the hamlet level, then the proposals that are agreed upon or selected by the hamlet are brought to the village *Musrenbang*. There are various dynamics exhibited by each village in this process. One village and another exhibit different aspirations and gathering practices, resulting in different levels of citizen participation. However, in

general, this study shows that citizen participation only occurs in the planning process, while in subsequent processes the level of participation is still very low.

As previously explained, all villages have different mechanisms in formulating the agenda discussed in the *Musrenbang* forum. In Beji village, for example, the development agenda for the current year has already been decided in the previous year. For the past few years, priorities have also been set, namely physical development, the implementation of which takes turns in every hamlet. According to the information obtained, it is unclear whether the decision was taken by the agreement of the residents through a meeting or by a *top-down* decision. According to information from several female cadres in the FGD, this decision had implications for not accommodating suggestions from women's groups in Beji which were considered quite significant. A participant in Beji's FGD stated in Javanese the following conditions:

> "Especially Beji who prioritized physical. So another proposal that was accepted, but then it was filtered again as it (*their proposal*) was deemed insignificant. The critical thing is for the rest of the physics, then the others. For example, PMT *(supplementary food program)* for the elderly and toddlers, followed by the development of social organizations, such as ATK to make reports. PAUD administrators almost resigned because there was no support from the village. Our participation is to be listeners. Suggestions are accommodated, but at the office later it will be filtered again which will decide yes is the village officials (BPD and village officials)."

Nevertheless, it is also pertinent to note that a separate planning team has been established in Beji, called *Community Development Planning Institute*, which has the mandate to compose a draft budget and to submit a proposal to the village *Musrenbang*. Prior to the composing of the draft, this agency participated in the hamlet *Musrenbang* meetings, at which people from all walks of life were invited to submit proposals for development planning program.

Psoftan's development planning process in is very much different from that of other villages. During the hamlet *Musrenbang*, representatives from the village also attend to record the process and elect members or representatives to the village *Musrenbang* based on the available attendance list.

What is slightly different from Beji is that Psoftan —as previously explained—has implemented thematic village *Musrenbang* so that the recruitment of representatives at the hamlet level has also been determined based on clusters, meaning that the elected representatives clearly belong to one particular cluster. Village officers who attend the hamlet *Musrenbang* are also responsible for recording the hamlet's program proposals to be accommodated and discussed in the village *Musrenbang*. Participants in the village *Musrenbang* participants will be divided according to the theme of each hamlet. According to the chairman of the BPD Plembutan, village *Musrenbang* decisions are then taken to the sub-district for selection based on the priority scale and the availebility of funds. As a result of the village and sub-district *Musrenbang* decisions being selected, the results were socialized from the village to the dukuh, that were then obligated to socialize the resutls

to the residents. BPD's chairman explained that at this stage of socialization, residents generally just accepted the results and felt involved in the preparation of development programs.

In Kupang, the mechanism for capturing aspirations in development planning is carried out in the same way, namely through the village *Musrenbang*. However, as stated earlier, the lack of meetings at the *Dusun* level has implications for the minimal participation of marginal groups in planning. From the interviews and FGDs it can be seen that efforts by the village government to involve some of the residents have been carried out, although this is specifically related to marginal groups because of encouragement from outside parties, namely non-governmental organizations. The marginal group forum in Mata Air which consists of people with disabilities, women's groups and the poor, is the result of the AFC program (*Advocacy for Change*) at the support International Handicap. Currently, these groups are the representatives of marginalized groups in the village *Musrenbang*, and in a broader context, they increase the awareness of the village government to involve marginalized groups.

In the four research locations, the majority of residents have been actively involved in the planning process and provided suggestions village *Musrenbang*. It appears that the suggestions given are directly related to the special needs of the group as can be seen from the description of the informant above. Accordingly, from the perspective of informants involved in the in the development process, the process is closely related to meeting needs; they must feel involved so their needs can be met. In general, the proposal revolves around infrastructure, such as repairing roads, schools, and places of worship. Another suggestion that usually comes up is the ease of administrative services in the *Kelurahan* such as arranging KTPs, birth certificates, and arranging poor people cards. Especially for people with disabilities, the suggestions and programs available in Gunungkidul and Kupang are physical accessibility and economic empowerment. Dessi added:

> "I always participate in *Musrenbang*, usually I receive a written invitation. I must have come because I wanted to convey some of my people's aspirations or suggestions. Among these issues is the issue of disability, specifically recognizing their existence and doing everything possible to empower them. *(Me too)* submit suggestions to village officials to care for the poor, to make Mata Air village a model village in efforts to empower people with disabilities to be followed by other villages."

However, several informants made broader suggestions that were not directly related to individual or group needs. As quoted by Desi above, village cadres also seek to encourage the develpment of village policies in various sectors, including education, economy, health, and others. Maria's narrative in Kupang:

> "Why I always convey my suggestions to the village head is because, for example, in my village there are people who give birth who only want to be at home and do not want to get health services. Due to poverty, we cannot buy baby equipment and eat everyday. That's why there is a suggestion that there should be a village regulation regarding this. Then, there are other suggestions for people who do not accept KIS cards, but if they face the *emergency*, thus, a Certificate of Disadvantage (SKTM) will

still be accepted. I also suggest that poor people get capital in the form of pigs to raise, as a result, it may help the family economy. As for health, the village government is highly suggested to provide public toilets because in my village the people still defecate in the forest, rivers, and sea. In terms of ducational facilities, ther eis only one PAUD in this hamlet. If possible, PAUD facilities should be installed. Social Assistance: RASKIN is evenly distributed because there are poorer people who need it more. As a part of village health, the village government should pay more attention to prenatal shelters and special funds for childbirth."

The opinions and suggestions given by residents for development planning and implementation as seen in the quotation above have led to the general needs as well as the specific needs of certain groups.

The Interview also shows a limited focus on the special needs of marginalized groups of women, people with disabilities or the elderly, for example: for people with disabilities, the construction of ramps is seen as a measure or indicator of meeting the special needs of people with disabilities, both by residents with disabilities themselves and other residents and village officials, while the issue of information accessibility did not arise at all in the interviews. Likewise, for women's groups, training in business skills such as *batik*, souvenirs, and crafts is a program that is usually proposed by residents. It has also been implemented in all study areas.

Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation

The limited number of residents who are directly involved in *Musrenbang* has implications for the lack of information that the majority of the community has regarding village development programs.It has implication for the low level of participation they have in various aspects of development, especially related to budgeting, as well as*monitoring* and evaluation. Although the village administrator stated that information regarding the *Musrenbang*, village budget, village activities, and other aspects could be accessed by the community. For marginalized groups who are not involved in *Musrenbang* or other village meetings, the information obtained is limited to village assistance and activities such as community service which are obtained verbally through the RT/RW or *Dukuh*. More specific information can be obtained for residents who are actively looking for it. However, village officials have not been seen making an effort to provide information widely, for example posting information on village notice boards. In the Gunungkidul area, efforts to provide village information online are still ongoing.

Dissemination of the Village Law and - in the context of Gunungkidul - the District Head's Circular as a derivative policy of the Law, has not been carried out widely outside of the *Musrenbang* forum or others. This can be seen, for example, from several informants who never felt they had received socialization. This is despite the fact that the *dukuh* and village officials said socialization had often been carried out. Key terminology or terms such as APBDes, RKBDes, and village development mechanisms contained in the Village

Law, from planning to monitoring, are not widely understood by residents. Mr. Sudarnoto, a member of BPD Plembutan said:

> "Village laws are actually difficult to socialize. Plembutan also already has derivative policies or village regulations, but socialization has not been maximized. As an example, village levies are part of efforts to collect village budgets, but they have not been socialized optimally, so residents sometimes misunderstand them, protesting *'how this can be a coincidence.*

When it comes to issuing *budgeting* or budget planning, marginal groups, for instance, lack clear information regarding the village's budget, let alone allocation detailed. Village officials in Gunungkidul, starting with the village head, BPD members stated that a special budget for marginal groups already exists. However, the percentage of the budget for each group has not been clearly separated. Transparency of development funds is one aspect that was often mentioned by informants. It means that informants with disabilities, women, and the poor in general understand that the village government actually compiles and disseminates reports on the use of development funds, even though, they themselves do not see the report directly, or are not present when the accountability report is given.

Although in the planning process as well as *budgeting*, not all marginal groups understood, were involved, or made suggestions, many informants, especially in Gunungkidul, stated that the village already had a special program for these groups, and those village officials were considered to have carried out their functions well enough. As explained above, the provision of assistance such as social funds, house renovations, and economic empowerment is a program that residents see as related to the poor. For women's groups, women's savings, and loans and business skills training are activities that are considered to represent the poor.

A slightly different presentation was found from Kupang informants. Several residents who were interviewed stated that the government had not involved marginalized groups in planning as well as *budgeting*; the consequence is that there is no specific village program aimed at this group. Emily, a representative from the women's group stated:

> "I was never involved so that aspirations and ideas for village development plans only came from those same people. In the end, many of the needs of women and the poor were not met because they were never given the opportunity to provide opportunities or input. From stories heard from representatives of the poor who participated in the *Musrenbang*, when they attended they made suggestions to the government. However, so far none of the proposals have been accepted and implemented by the village government. Complaints from women have also not been accepted and carried out by the village government because when they were present just there to meet the available quota more women's groups join NGOs to gain additional knowledge. People with disabilities have never been involved because they are considered to be a group of people who cannot afford it. Therefore, none of their representatives are included in meetings and no one listens to their complaints."

Specifically regarding budgets and accountability reports Emily critically said:

> "No (not involved and not outreached) because not many governments are open about budgets and many people don't really care about budgets so they never have the urge to ask about them. Performance reports from the village government have also never been shared with the community. Maybe it's only shared in the village office with people who are always involved."

The presence of the APEK Workshop with education *budgeting* given to marginalized groups in Mata Air and Noelbaki began to raise public awareness regarding this issue. A resident of Mata Air, for example, said that the assumption so far was that all village-owned funds came from the government, not from the community members. The training provided by the APEK Workshop opened his awareness that residents also contribute to development funds.

Emily's comments above also underscore the lack of community understanding regarding the monitoring and evaluation stages carried out by the village government. The majority said that they were aware that the government was carrying out this process. Despite this, even participants who had actively participated in the *Musrenbang* felt they had never received any information regarding monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, the impression was given that the community, the participants in this study, did not consider monitoring and evaluation a role that they could or needed to play.

Reinforcing what the author has said in other parts of this paper, the participation that took place in several locations, especially in Kupang, can still be considered *tokenistic* or passive, just an attendance quota as told by Emily. Furthermore, if we borrow Cornwall's analysis (Cornwall, 2002, 2008), which looks at participation from the point of view of the initiator (who initiated it), it can be seen that the participation that took place in these four locations was based on the invitation of the local government to try to open up space (*opening space*) for democracy. According to Cornwall, this model does not guarantee active participation. Effective participation can only be built if it is the community itself that builds or seizes the space for participation. *Musrenbang* in the village, on the other hand, is a participation space whose structure is built by the government or a higher level of government. Thus, it cannot be separated from the sub-district and district agendas and even up to the central government. So it is difficult for *Musrenbang* at the village or hamlet level not to be reproduced from the existing structure, which of course does not provide much space for vulnerable groups.

Barriers to Participation

In the previous section, it was explained about the levels of participation, mechanisms and dynamics of implementing participation at various stages of village development. Referring to the explanation above, this section specifically identifies the barriers to participation faced by the poor, women and people with disabilities.

Participation Room

As explained above, citizen participation in the development process in this study is simply seen in the involvement of marginalized groups in village meetings at various levels: starting from the RT/RW level as the closest environment to the village level. In other words, the meeting becomes a mechanism, media, or space for participation. Using these glasses, the question that needs to be addressed is how this mechanism is regulated. Concerning marginalized groups, the question that needs to be raised is how the government build mechanism to serve them across all levels of government.

As described at the beginning of this article, Beji and Softness illustrate the importance of participation mechanisms in the most basic areas of government, specifically RT and RW, as these spaces are the most accessible to all citizens without the need for representation. RT meetings, distribution of mutual cooperation groups, and even community contributions at the RT level are spaces for participation that are not distant and provide convenience for residents, including the poor. If such a space does not exist, as occured in Noelbaki and Mata Air, then citizens have very limited opportunities and rights to participate. It is imperative to note that, however, that residents attending RT or RW meetings do not necessarily ensure quality participation. For example, residents may not necessarily be able to express their proposals both for planning, implementing, and evaluating the development in the RT/RW area. However, attendance remains one of the most significant indicators.

The description of *Musrenbang* representatives in Beji which is presented elsewhere in this paper shows that this is such a *gap* between one marginal group and another. In Beji, women are sufficiently represented in village development planning meetings, but this is not the case for people with disabilities and the poor. In other words, the current representative system is deemed to be appropriate to ensure the participation of marginalized groups. More specifically, there needs to be a mechanism to ensure the representation and participation of marginalized groups in all development processes which can be carried out through explicit village government policies, in accordance with the spirit of village laws.

Aside from that, it is critical to highlight that, even if marginal groups have been represented in the *Musrenbang*, it cannot be ensured that information and decisions about development agreed upon in the village *Musrenbang* will automatically be communicated to the group members. This phenomenon was found in almost all the villages that were surveyed, resulting in a distance between the group representatives and the groups they represented. Vocal groups such as female cadres in Beji, and representatives of disability and women's groups in Kupang, admit that they are not always able to convey the information they obtain because there are no forums or socialization media, namely groups or associations of groups of the poor, people with disabilities or women in each village.

Apart from the two things above, another aspect that needs to be looked at is the mechanism and space for conveying aspirations, suggestions, or ideas for the development

process at all levels. According to this study, aspiration space is only available at the planning level, and almost none at monitoring and evaluation level. In the village *Musrenbang* process, the aspirations and suggestions of marginalized groups often stop at the hamlet level, without being accommodated at the village level, let alone the sub-district and district.

The policy is still strongtop down

One of the fundamental reasons is, once again, the *Musrenbang* agenda setting mechanism. Field data shows that the development agenda set is often *top-down*; determined by the sub-district and sometimes district governments. The most obvious example is Beji, where the development agenda has been set by the village and is focused on physical development. The women's group, however, is very persistent in conveying needs regarding group operational funds and allowances for PAUD teachers every year. As a result of *top-down* nature of the policy, marginal groups at the *Dusun* level–whose needs are often the real needs of the residents- cannot be taken into account or accommodated but only accomodated rather than realized. It should be noted that even when the village *Musrenbang* agenda presented the previous year's proposal and the document was opened at the meeting, a tendency had previously existed to close off the possibility of accomodating residents' suggestions and aspirations.

Awareness of Rights, Elitism and Majority

Participation of marginal groups cannot be developed without the understanding of citizens and development organizers regarding participation rights and the development process itself. In this study, it was demonstrated that even though women or people with disabilities attend village meetings, their presence is not always accompanied by active participation, such as giving their opinions. There are psychological barriers like apathy and not being confident in Javanese, as told by informants. Mrs. Wagini, an informant from a poor group in PSoftan village, describes this phenomenon:

> *"I have never proposed to you, ma'am* (I have never proposed), I am afraid that my proposal will not be in accordance with the wishes of the people. Actually, sometimes I have an idea that I want to convey, but I'm afraid that my presentation will not be understood by other people. At least I ask someone else to convey it, not to say it myself, to say it myself *many times less ask*."

A resident of the Noelbaki sub-district, brought up another reason for her reluctance to speak up in the *Musrenbang*, namely the lack of response given:

> "I never did because input or suggestions that were submitted to the RT/RW/*Dusun* were never answered so the community became lazy to make suggestions back to the village chief."

Naturally, this condition is understandable since the "*paternalistic*" culture is still very prevalent in the local community at the research location. Marginalized communities feel

they do not have the ability and authority to speak out and village affairs are already represented by the "elite" group. In a more detailed analysis, awareness of rights as mentioned earlier is also related to ability or *social skill*. The low opportunity to get education and social experience experienced by the majority of marginalized groups has implications for their limited ability to communicate, build networks, and organize themselves as well as the ability to manage common affairs. The lack of groups or associations for women, people with disabilities, or the people in the study locations shows this condition.

Also, citizen participation stakeholders and villafge leaders and officials are not sufficiently aware of their rights. Even though the Village Law clearly regulates the involvement of vulnerable groups, in practice most of these *stakeholders* still do not have a clear vision of how these rights should be granted.

The "majority" paradigm or in a more cultural language is "communalism" as a feature of village communities tend to marginalize the interests of marginal groups because they are considered a minority, and their specific needs must also "give in" to common interests. When the role of citizens in development is still not well understood— as explained earlier—then when specifically talking about marginalized groups, leadership awareness is still very far away. Regardless of the size of a government, it is impossible to ignore the interests and "politics" of the elite. This interest often stands in the way *political will* on the part of the government.

This phenomenon reinforces previous studies regarding the dominance of group of s*stakeholders* or elite which is discussed by (Lund & Saito-Jensen, 2013) as *capturing the player*. Several other authors assert that *capturing the player* can take the form of elite domination and control in decision-making processes (Ribot, 1993), monopolization of development resources and outcomes(Platteau & Abraham, 2002), or both (Labonté et al., 2011; Saito-Jensen et al., 2010). In this research, for example, this can be seen in the fact that there are still many specific agendas proposed by groups of women and people with disabilities in the allocation of village funds because they have to "give in" to the interests of the majority. Although these interests do not always collide, the special needs of vulnerable groups continue to be under threat of not being accommodated.

Information and Information Accessibility

The process of socialization and education also requires tools and methods. How village plans and activities are socialized to marginalized groups. It seems clear in this study that the methods and socialization are still very limited. Those who understand the information about planning, *budgeting,* evaluation, and monitoring are only residents who attend the *Musrenbang* and actively participate or are interested in getting information. Another mechanism is the tiered distribution of information from village to hamlet and then to residents. It is critical to emphasize that this method really depends on the individual (hamlet, RT/RW head) and also on the mechanism for holding community

meetings at that level. When these two things are not met, it is certain that residents will not get information.

People with disabilities still lack access to information and their needs have not addressed by the village government. The information posted in the village hall, for example, even if this is available, has been presented in variety of formats, making it difficult for those who are blind or who have mobility difficulties to access the place.

This condition requires the development of a more accessible and varied information system. Village laws provide opportunities, at least funds, for village governments to develop systems or *database* of village information. However, it should be noted that *database* that are based *online* also not completely *applicable* for marginalized groups that do not have access to the internet yet. For this reason, another mechanism needs to be built, namely the creation of marginal community forums that can be used as media for socialization and communication between the village government and residents.

Conclusion

Participation has become a *buzzword* in discussion of democracy, development, and community empowerment. Nevertheless, there are a number of different viewpoints regarding what and how participation should be carried out. Simply put, participation implies *power* and provides a space for those who participate to seize and equalize power in order to gain empowerment. Participation is a tool for achieving the goal of empowerment.

In the context of implementing the Village Law no. 14 of 2014, efforts to involve the participation of vulnerable communities in village development have begun, as happened in the four villages in this study. However, in practice, the findings of this study indicate that participation by vulnerable groups cannot be addressed that it has achieved the goal of empowerment, namely giving power and control to influence village development outcomes and policies.

One of the obstacles and also the solution is the importance of mechanisms and structures built by the village government to support and encourage participation, starting from quotas for vulnerable groups in *Musrenbang*, the formation of organizations or forums for vulnerable groups as media for advocacy and dissemination of development information, as well as understanding and awareness vulnerable group members as well as village officials. When mechanisms and structures for participation are built, the active participation of vulnerable groups can occur. Psoftan Village, which now has village government regulation No. 11 of 2017 concerning the Participation of Vulnerable Groups in Village Development, is a clear example of the above phenomenon.

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