

Strengthening Village Information System to Reach Good Governance in Rural Areas through Participatory Rural Appraisal

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Abstract. In the national development context, the role of a village cannot be left remain. Especially, recently with the increasingly blurred boundaries between villages and cities both in physical infrastructure and social demography. Furthermore, villages need to have competency in which appropriate with the national development context for maximizing the potencies that the villages had, using the renewal of Village Information System (Sistem Informasi Desa - SID). The development of a top-down model slowly has changed with a bottom-up perspective for sustainable development. This is happening because sustainable development leads to community's participation rather than the elite's stakeholders in the village. Through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method, the village government of Pandanarum, Blitar Regency, tries to improve and update their profile through SID to reach good governance in village government. The village government of Pandanarum cooperates with Sociology Department, Universitas Negeri Malang tries to maximizing their profile for analyzing the condition of their society by using social mapping. Finally, this empowerment, which using the PRA model, hopefully, could reproduce the valid and the newest data for improving the potencies that owned by Pandanarum Village. As a result, there was connectivity and good cooperation between the local government, the researcher, and also the people of Pandanarum to complete their profile for better development.

Keywords: Village Information System; Good Governance; Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

1. Introduction

Currently, the village is in a period of transitional power due to changes that occur at the level above the village[1]. The assumption is that during the New Order the village government was in a co-opted position by the state and not autonomous. In recent system changes, village governments are given a larger space through overhauling structures where controls are in the hands of the community [2] The change in the system is trying to create a transparent and accountable village administration[3].

A transparent and accountable government is part of the vision of the ideal Indonesian government to realize good governance[3]. Good governance is a situation where there is a

change of role within society as well as capacity changes to carry out collective interests under strong internal and external constraints. Both focus more on the following: (1) the importance of network usage in public policy; (2) change of government role from control to influence through continuous bargaining process and persuasion; (3) public and private partnerships in providing resources; and (4) the use of multi-stakeholders instruments in developing and operating public policies[4]. One of the efforts to realize good governance in rural areas is through the active participation of all elements of rural society[3].

This article describes the effort to realize good governance in Pandanarum village area through strengthening Village Information System. Strengthening the SID process conducted participatively by community and all stakeholders. In addition, efforts to strengthen SID conducted by Pandanarum village in cooperation with the Department of the Sociology State University of Malang. In general, the methods undertaken by some stakeholders in strengthening SID are through PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal).

Chambers defines PRA as a set of approaches and methods that encourage rural communities to participate in improving and analyzing their knowledge of their own lives and conditions so they can make plans and actions[5]. PRA as an antithesis to a top-down development scheme either by the government or donor agencies[6].

2. Method

In this modern era, village governance is required to be adaptive to the advancement of information and communication technology. Village management is expected to no longer be run in a conventional manner that proves less effective and efficient. In some cases, the use of information and communications technology can improve the village's capabilities and potential and lead to bureaucratic reforms [3], [7], [8]. It is also to support the implementation of good governance that prioritizes transparency and accountability. In this case, the Village Information System (SID) is part of ICT functionalization that plays an important role in village development and development as regulated in Law No. 5 of 2014 on villages.

One element of fundamental and vital SID is the availability of village data profiles. The village profile process itself is expected to be an initiative and involves the participation of villagers as a form of democratization at the local level to achieve good governance[9]. According to Dahls[9], effective participation can be realized if citizens have a decent and equal opportunity to express preferences, be active in the formulation of the agenda and express opinions. This matter is regulated in Act number 6 year 2014 about Village and Permendagri number 12 year 2007 about Guidance of Preparation and Utilization of Village Profile Data and Village.

But the problem is the competence, capability and the number of Human Resources in Blitar Pandanarum Village is still limited. Blitar regency administratively has 22 subdistricts which are subdivided into 220 villages and 28 urban villages. The relatively large number of areas should be supported by the availability of primary data and information about villages, so village profile information becomes very important for stakeholders focusing on the preparation of a medium-term village development direction.

Therefore, to optimize the process of filling and provision of village profile data needs to be done simultaneous community empowerment with the model of accompaniment of the implementation of village profile preparation. The village profile was composed by members of several village institutions facilitated by the university through a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approach. In this case, the University plays a role as a facilitator that encourages the awareness and responsiveness of villagers to fill their profile independently.

The implementation of mentoring is based on two PRA principles [5]. First, facilitate the village community in investigation, analysis, presentation, and learning. Second, build critical awareness and responsiveness through evaluation and sharing of information. The aim is to maximize the skills, knowledge, and analysis of villagers through data collection, discussion and solution search and joint agenda planning [10].

In practice, PRA is run on three main foundations, namely methods, behavior, and sharing or discussion [5]. One of them is through participatory mapping and modeling where people make a comprehensive and complete demographic map of social, natural, soil and health [5]. In this case, some members of village institutions (such as KarangTaruna and Posyandu) conducted village mapping through the distribution of questionnaires from villages and facilitated by several lecturers and students. As a local institution, KarangTaruna and Posyandu have some significant roles in developing the village that cannot be conducted by formed government institutions. Both of this local institution is formed by local values, knowledge, and wisdom that institutionalized strongly in the village community[11].

The initial stage of mapping is more emphasized social mapping due to limited time and energy, through the data collection of the quality of life of 1300 families in several RukunWarga (RW). This amount is determined based on the proportional sampling of the total population. Social mapping includes several elements; (1) development of a comprehensive understanding of the physical and social aspects of life in the village (2) gathering information and demographic data and other conditions related to households (3) holding discussions in the forums to describe various aspects of social life (4) monitoring and evaluation to the results and the process of collecting and processing data with the community and stakeholders of village government.

The results of the questionnaires were used for Pandanarum village profiling on the village website. Village mapping and profiling are conducted through several methods — first, socialization of policy and practice of compiling and utilizing village profile. Second, Training of trainer (ToT) for village technical team (40 people) accompanied by a research assistant. Third, the method of technical guidance in filling the questionnaire. Fourth, the evaluation of the results of the questionnaire. People involved in PRA SID are not only trained researchers related to technical data collection. However, it is preferred to mining their responsiveness to village conditions and governance [10]. Because basically according to involvement in PRA is not merely data collection based on their experiences and conditions, but the achievement of a common agenda towards a better condition[10].

Involving villagers in filling SID does need a long process and not easy. However, from the process can foster awareness and responsiveness of the community to the condition and potential of the village. Critical awareness process is done through dialogue and sharing of data collecting result with facilitator and village holder stakeholder. The community becomes active and critical in addressing the condition of the limitations and potential of the village. Likewise with the stakeholders can increase cooperation with the community in transparent village governance and accountability.

Community participation can provide a different perspective for stakeholders related to village information that can influence policy making. Also, there is a sense of confidence from the community always to be actively involved in the decision-making process and increase the degree of trust in the village administration. Decisions determined by the outcome of the consensus have stronger legitimacy and are widely accepted than unilaterally decided by the village administration. In other words, community participation in the SID process can strengthen social capital among citizens and stakeholders in the implementation of village governance [9]. In local government, governance requires intensive interaction and problem

solving with community groups to get the desired results together. Therefore, in local governance must have public service management and representation of citizens[12].

3. Result and discussion

It is a well-known fact that the improvement of technology, it can make our work more effective, ease, and faster. However, there were some obstacles which occurred due to the process which impedes the continuity of the program. Firstly, there was only one person inside the local government of Pandanarum who knew about SID and can operate the system. The others cannot operate the system because of the lacked human resources. When the beginning of the process of SID, the village government of Pandanarum only has few staff because there was yet open recruitment for the village's apparatus.

Consequently, the process of SID only helped by one staff from the village. Although the other apparatus would like to learn, the condition and capacity of them were not capable to learn SID from the beginning. Those make not all of the staff could use the system efficiently[13]. However, we can use the youth in Pandanarum village as a programmer of SID. As long as we know that the youth is complicated to get a job in their transition life due to the risks that they should face in the modern era[14].

Another problem was limited to data from the local government about the society of Pandanarum. That was like another institution which has no new update about demography condition. The same thing was happening in Pandanarum, so it needs to do a survey for adjusting the demography data of Pandanarum village. Obviously, it took so much time because the data must be completed. With the help from the student from UM and women who joined in PKK (PembinaanKesejahteraanKeluarga/the organization that helps to improve the prosperity of the family), the process of collecting data took about a month. Of course, not all of the individual data can be collected 100 %. There were some families that did not want to answer or did not know about their own data. However, the data was collected about 80% of the Pandanarum dwellers.

From these obstacles, we could see that there needs some capability improvement and also capacity building for the people in Pandanarum village, especially in technology basis. The cooperation and trust that occurred between the local government, the people of Pandanarum and the researcher, while the research was conducting should be held to optimize the completion of SID system and good empowerment[15]. The challenges are started from the beginning of SID in Pandanarum as we know that there will be any possibility and dynamic process. The main challenge is how to stabilize and optimize the SID system in the future. It will need many supports from the local government and the people of Pandanarum with coordination with the researcher to optimize the SID system to become better and beneficial for the interests of all circles.

4. Conclusion

At the beginning of the digital era, each country was trying the new concept of digitalization system for bureaucracy effectiveness and ease. Indonesia, as one of the developing country, is trying to use its online system to accommodate the people's need for the public administration for the ease of society. Not only in big cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, et cetera, but that also happens in the villages, especially in Java. The momentum of administration system renewal to become online has become one of priority for the local

governments to support the data and also policy. That is also what makes the local government of Pandanarum village try to conduct a research team to explore their potentials.

The main function of the SID system is to make the data collection and identification of the people in Pandanarum village to become easier. That was also a good chance for the local government to improve their system to serve the people and make good governance for the people of Pandanarum. Using the PRA model of empowerment, hopefully, it can help the local government to stabilize and serve the local people conscious about the important of bureaucracy is helping the people of Pandanarum about the administrative problems around them. With the PRA model which is using the bottom-up model, hopefully, it can help the local government to know more about their people more in-depth. Of course with using this model, it also draws closer between the local government and the people of Pandanarum. The obstacles that occur at the beginning of this research, hopefully, can be a motivation for the local government to improve its bureaucracy system.

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