

Empowering or Overpowering? Engaging Community for Sustainable Coastal Development in Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract

After more than 30 years of a centralistic, top-down and technocratic approach to development in Indonesia, the new government introduced policies in 1999 favouring participatory approaches and community empowerment, and giving local government more authority to engage the poor in coastal area development programs. The Community Empowerment Bureau was established and many empowerment projects initiated. However, in practice community engagement remains limited, and the implementation of the new approach has created a culture of dependence in both bureaucrats and community. This paper examines why this has happened, and how the Indonesian government could engage communities more effectively in development programs.

A two-phase study of recent participatory development projects was conducted in coastal Lombok in 2002 and 2003, focussing on the empowerment process and the degrees of empowerment achieved. After an island-wide overview, three coastal villages were studied in detail to observe the dynamics of community engagement in development projects. The findings indicate that government policy initiatives have brought some change in institutions, organisations and projects but not in bureaucratic work culture. No training and capacity building in empowerment philosophy and engagement methodologies has been offered for staff to implement the new policies, and former 'top-down' and 'targets' approaches are still practised. The government tried to establish development groups, but the empowered, pre-existing community groups were ignored resulting in exclusion rather than inclusion, and overpowering rather than empowering the communities. This led to deterioration of traditional social capital.

The participants in the study feel that better community engagement can be achieved by capacity building for both government staff and community members, and enabling development to include the traditional groups. This would achieve greater empowerment, inclusiveness and build social capital for sustainable development.

Keywords

Empowerment, empowering, Lombok, overpowering, sustainable

Introduction

Until a reformist government took office in 1997, most of the coastal development programs in Indonesia used a conventional development approach in which the mode of delivery was top-down, centralistic and technocratic. This development approach is often called the 'medical model', and it encourages a passive role for the community with the ultimate decision-making by the professional developer or government (Reed et al. 1995). These professionals tend to dictate to the community rather than engaging them to become empowered, so that coastal communities are able to develop own solutions to overcome their problems. Consequently, these communities become dependent and powerless.

There is a long history to Indonesian development programs. The government has involved various government and non-government development agencies in trying to engage coastal communities in development programs. Different forms of development programs were supposed to increase incomes and to improve the education, health and welfare of the people. Meanwhile the poor remain poor, and have become powerless and dependent.

From 1997, the democratic government attempted to engage communities in development throughout the country. Bottom-up and participatory approaches were promoted and the word 'empowerment' was introduced. However, at the implementation level the old development approach remained. The usage of word 'empowerment' was limited to rhetoric.

Two years later, in 1999, the government implemented Act no. 22/1999 regarding decentralisation. With this new legislation, the new government introduced policies favoring participatory approaches and community empowerment, and giving local government more authority to engage the poor in coastal area development programs.

Engagement of all coastal users and stakeholders is paramount to effective program implementation. Attempts should be made to engage and educate the local community about the development projects being proposed and implemented. Simply imparting information and enhancing the experience of coastal users can at best only be partially effective in achieving development objectives. Therefore, from 1999 the government put real effort into empowering and engaging communities in development, by establishing community empowerment bureaus and introducing new legislation favouring autonomy and empowerment at local and national levels.

Under these measures, the central government gave autonomy to the local governments to manage their regions. Community empowerment bureaus were established and many

projects labelled 'empowerment programs' were launched to empower the community. Local government tried to engage the communities, but community engagement remains limited. Many projects have failed to empower the communities and those in coastal areas in particular are still poor, dependent and powerless.

This study asks why this happened — to what extent have individuals or groups at the village level been empowered through the current development programs; how were the empowerment programs carried out in coastal development; and what future models of community engagement can be developed for the coastal areas in Lombok, Indonesia. We review literature, describe our study method then present results from a two-phase study in coastal Lombok.

Approaches to development and mode of engagement: The view from the literature

Approaches to development and modes of engagement in development have undergone considerable change since the 1940s. In the period of the 1940s and 1950s, with the emergence of many 'new nations' and the colonies become independent (Worsley 1984), the emphasis was on rapid economic growth with industrialisation, urbanisation and westernisation becoming seen as critical for development (Kitching 1982; Malkote 1991). The focus of engagement was those who were progressive and innovative. Malkote referred to this approach as the dominant paradigm of development. The assumption was that there would be a 'trickle-down' effect and wellbeing would follow automatically from economic growth (Young 1993). The poor would gain benefits when the economic growth of the country was high.

The 1960s development approach was at the macro level, with emphasis on diffusion of technology in a modernisation process and assumption of a 'trickle-down' economic effect on communities. Problems were identified, and solutions offered at high levels of government. Participatory and autonomous development were seen as slow and inefficient (Rogers 1976). Most of the community members were only informed about the development around them, not consulted. Development initiative and action was taken by government and those who were progressive and innovative. Engagement of all stakeholders in development was not yet seen as important. In this period, the belief was that with technology and capital people would be able to solve the problems (Worsley 1984); social change was not considered important.

In the 1970s the approach shifted to the micro level as countries recognised failure to achieve development objectives. The approach to development became more people-centred. Social change was given attention, with a new focus on poverty and equity. In this period emphasis on participation of people at the grassroots level began, with the encouragement of self-determination and self-reliance of local communities (Chambers 1983; Lele 1979). Boesen (1977 cited in Lowdermilk and Laitos 1981) claimed that participation in a mutual learning

experience where all actors and resources including local people and external agencies were involved would empower people. He believed that people develop themselves through participation in decisions and cooperative activities which affect their wellbeing.

Although the concept and need for participation was recognised and understood in 1970s, implementation really started in the 1980s (Stuadt 1991). For instance, in 1983 the World Bank published *Learning by doing: World Bank Lending for Urban development*, which emphasised directing investments towards the urban poor, with the use of low-cost technologies paid for and maintained by local communities (World Bank 1988). With this concept, World Bank intervened in many developing countries to implement World Bank development projects.

The concept 'bottom-up approach' put people at the centre of development. The main implication of this approach was the need for participatory decision-making in the planning and implementation of projects. Self-help and empowerment become objectives of development programs in many countries.

Empowerment and engagement

In simple definitional terms, the verb to *empower* means to *enable*, to *allow*, or to *permit* and can be conceived as either self-initiated or initiated by others. Empowering is the act of building, developing and increasing power through cooperation, sharing and working together. It is an interactive process based on a synergistic assumption of power; that is, the process of empowerment changes the power in the situation rather than merely redistributing it (Vogt and Murrell 1990).

Itzaky and York (2000) note that empowerment has been recognised as a concept in a number of ways for many years. Some authors have seen empowerment as a process (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995; Titi and Singh 1995); another defines it as a product or outcomes (Friedmann 1992), while others perceive it as an approach to social work practice and an aim of social work research (Hess 1984; Rapp et al. 1993; Hegar and Hunzeker 1988).

Brown (2002), based on her research into nursing, developed a theory of the process of creating power in relationships. Her model consists of two mirror images of dialectical processes: empowering and overpowering. Each side of the mirror consists of four steps: communicating, relating, fitting and being. The inner cycle of this process is the intra-personal process composed of three steps: imaging, defining and allowing. The empowering and overpowering processes that affect the internal perception are shown in Figure 1.

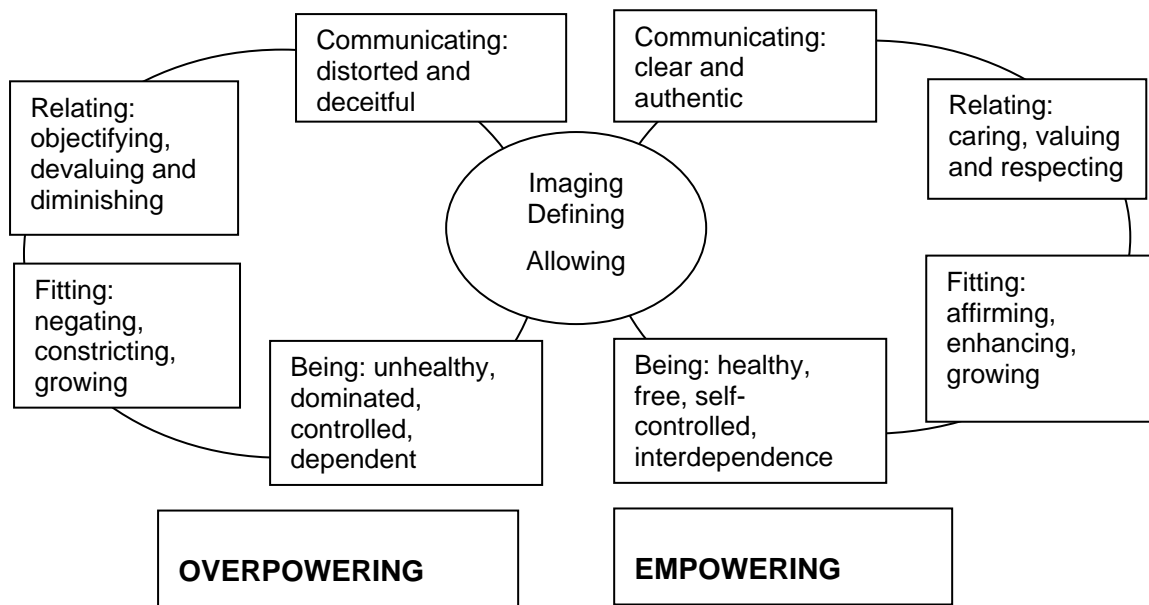


Figure 1. Empowering and overpowering processes that affect the internal perception (adapted from Brown 2002)

This model starts with participants' reflections about the relationships between people in an organisation. From this, people form an image of what happens in the relationship, define the situation and make a judgment about what they will allow to happen in future interactions. According to Brown (2002), this stage is set for either empowering or overpowering. The process will then go through the four steps mentioned previously. For example, in Lombok's coastal community development programs, particularly in subsidised government credit or revolving fund programs, the conditions put forth by the government and credit agencies and NGOs (even though unfair) are accepted by the fisheries program participants even though they know very well that the scheme is overpowering and they feel powerless. They will still try to meet the conditions to obtain the money. This is an exchange process between the power holders and powerless clients. People accept the situation or 'play the game' to obtain personal benefits, knowing the situation is unhealthy, dominated and controlled. Moreover, in the cultural context of patron–client relationships, the client feels that being in and conforming to a relationship with the people who have power is safe and beneficial.

Indonesian experiences in development and engagement in the agricultural sector

In the past, the government of Indonesia put most emphasis on the development of inland agriculture. The agricultural sector, especially food crops, was developed intensively from 1964. A sequence of government programs followed different approaches.

There were four major government initiatives in food crop (paddy) intensification. This started with a mass demonstration (*Demas, Demonstrasi Massa*) in 1964 (Palmer 1977). Subsequently, the 'mass guidance' approach (*Bimas, Bimbingan Massa*) was introduced in late 1965 (Adjid 1981). This government effort failed to achieve its objectives (Hansen 1978). In the late 1960s, the government then introduced the new *Bimas* called 'Bimas Gotong royong'. In this program the government forced farmers to apply fixed input supplies and plant a new rice variety. The farmers were also obligated to become members of rural cooperatives, which supplied the farm inputs. Many farmers were reluctant to adopt these technologies and the program failed (Hansen 1978). In 1979, *Bimas* was replaced with a new intensification approach called special intensification (*Insus, Intensifikasi Khusus*) (Adjid, 1981). In this program, farmer groups were introduced and used as a medium for delivering services. This intensification program resulted in Indonesia achieving self-sufficiency in rice in 1984 (National Secretariat of Bimas Supervisory Board Jakarta 1988). However, after that rice production seemed to be levelling off (Sawit and Marwan 1991). To overcome this problem, the government finally introduced a further level of intensification called '*Supra Insus*'. The most important improvement in this form of intensification was cooperation among farmers in groups, and cooperation among farmer groups within each agricultural Field Extension Agent Area (FEAWA) (an area of 600 to 1000 hectares). There was collaboration among contact farmers within each FEAWA (forming one cooperative), and collaboration across the FEAWA within one Rural Extension Center Working Area (RECWA). At a higher level still, there was coordination among RECWA contact farmers within a *Supra Insus Unit* (SIU), an area of about 25,000 hectares. This hierarchy of relationships improved links between farmer groups, rural cooperatives and agribusiness.

This development sequence was carried out intensively in inland agricultural sectors but not in marine and coastal development, although these came under the jurisdiction of the agriculture department at that time. Coastal area development was carried out by sporadically by various government agencies, with considerable duplication program failure.

Study method

A two-phase study of recent participatory development projects was conducted in coastal Lombok in 2002 and 2003. The first phase was a survey using individual interviews, designed to gain an overview of development activity and statistical information on participants' experiences. Seven coastal villages were selected for study, distributed around the entire coast of Lombok. All groups within those villages, whether created under development assistance programs or pre-existing village-initiated groups, were identified in discussion with village leaders and local officials. A sample of 109 of these groups, 40 created under empowerment policies (referred to hereafter as 'empowerment groups'), 36 created under development programs which did not emphasise empowerment ('non-empowerment groups') and 33 community-initiated groups from those villages was selected using random sampling.

A total of 690 individual respondents were selected from these groups for interview in the first phase of the study, again using simple random sampling.

Among other questions about the background and operations of each group, the respondents were asked about the extent of their feelings of being empowered, using a five-point rating scale. Five aspects of feeling empowered were assessed:

- Control — the degree to which people have a power to influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth 1989). In other words empowerment is perceived control over decisions that influence their lives.
- Competence/self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs about his or her capabilities to perform activities skilfully (Thomas and Velthouse 1990)
- Choice/self-determination is an individual's feeling of having a choice to initiate, select and regulate actions (Deci et al. 1989)
- Meaningfulness is the value of the tasks, goals or purposes judged according to an individual's own ideals or standards (Thomas and Velthouse 1990)
- Access to information, support and resources.

The responses to these five aspects were averaged to create an index of empowerment. Scores of 1 to 2.33 were classified as not (feeling) empowered; 2.34 to 3.67 as moderately empowered and 3.68 to 5 as empowered.

In the second phase, three coastal villages were studied in detail using participant observation to observe the dynamics of community engagement in development projects. Data collected in this phase of study was analysed qualitatively.

Results and discussion

Group approaches to engage community members in development

The first-phase findings indicate that group approaches are still used widely to engage community members in development programs. At least nine types of groups were established by a variety of government agencies in the villages of coastal Lombok, falling into two categories. The groups formed for the implementation of Economic Empowerment for coastal Community (PEMP) program carried out by the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs, (called 'empowerment groups' here) consist of Fishery Groups, Fish Farming Groups, Fish Processing Groups, Community Groups/Pokmas and Local Government Empowerment to Combat the Impact of Economic Crisis (PDMDKE) Groups. Such community groups are also required to implement the community empowerment program of the West Nusa Tenggara Empowerment Bureau and PDMDKE under a regional empowerment program designed by West Nusa Tenggara Planning Bureau to combat the impact of the economic crisis in 1998–99.

The second type of group is those formed under programs that do not use any empowerment approach (called 'non-empowerment group' here). This type includes small Farmers/Fishermen's Income Generating Groups (P4K), Farmer Groups, *Takesra* (saving and credit) Groups and Cattle Fattening Groups. Farmer groups are formed to provide subsidised credit to the farmer under a Department of Agriculture program. *Takesra* groups manage a revolving fund provided by the Family Planning Bureau to increase the welfare of poor families. The details of these groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Government-formed groups in Lombok villages

No.	Type of group	Agencies	Activities	Roles
1	Fishery	Coastal and Marine Affairs	Micro finance and revolving fund	To develop a group plan To coordinate members in obtaining and repaying funds Improve knowledge and skills of the members To develop a network with LEPM3 and business enterprises To improve members' welfare by providing a revolving fund and capital development
2	Fish Processing	Coastal and Marine Affairs	Micro finance and revolving fund	As above
3	Fish Farming	Coastal and Marine Affairs	Micro finance and revolving fund	As above
4	Small Farmers/Fishermen's Income Generating Group (P4K)	Agriculture Department	Microfinance saving and credit	To facilitate members to learn and improve technical as well as financial management skills to run their economic activities To obtain project credit from the bank, increase income and improve welfare of the members Information sharing Networking with other groups. At a certain stage of development the groups can merge and form a microfinance institution.
5	Farmer Group	Agriculture Department	Farming credit	Developing seasonal plan (RDK ¹ and RDKK ²) for the

¹ Groups plan for a given period of time, which usually includes details of group consensus on the area to be cultivated, cropping pattern, activities and schedule, task description and allocation.

² Group make consensus-based plans towards their needs for inputs such as fertiliser, pesticides, seeds, etc.

				whole area within the group boundary Establishing inter-group agreements promoting capital development Developing relationships with the rural cooperative unit Utilising information, adoption of new technology for productivity improvement.
6	Community Group (<i>Pokmas</i>)	West Nusa Tenggara Empowerment Bureau	Revolving fund	A medium for the people to learn and share information A medium to work together in an agreed economic activities A medium to deliver a revolving fund A medium to develop capital through saving activities.
7	Saving and Credit for Family Welfare (<i>Takesra/Kukesra</i>)	Family Planning Bureau	Saving and credit	Encourage participation in the family planning program Encourage saving for capital development Developing relationships with the rural cooperative unit Obtaining credit from the bank Increase group members' income and welfare Encourage community involvement in family planning program Information sharing Health Services
8	Cattle Fattening Group	Agriculture Department	Revolving fund	To facilitate learning among the members, working together in raising cattle Adoption of innovations Manage the loans and increase farmers' incomes.
9	Regional Empowerment in Combating the Impact Of Economic crisis (PDM-DKE)	National Planning Bureau	Revolving fund	To facilitate members to learn, create jobs, increase capital, productivity and income Mobilising the economic potential of the village.

The extent of use of groups in development programs is evident from this list. A consequence of has been the formation of too many groups in coastal villages. This has influenced the social structure of the villages as well as social capital. Pre-existing community-initiated groups are often replaced or split into several functional groups by government agencies to meet project requirements, as in the case of *subak* (traditional irrigation group in Lombok and Bali) and fishery groups. In so doing, the government regroups community members and creates new leaders, affecting the existing social structure.

Moreover, social capital such as *gotong royong* — the voluntary participatory action that exists in the community has been degraded as government agents provide cash incentives for all activities carried out during a project's lifetime. This situation was worsened by competition among the government agencies to engage community members in their projects by providing competitive incentives and 'nonsense promises'. The government attempt to engage community members in development programs by regrouping and restructuring community members into new groups ignored the many community-initiated groups that existed and were performing well.

In the first phase of the study it was found that in daily life, people of Lombok have a tradition of working in groups to overcome problems that they could not cope with if they worked alone. In the agricultural sector for example water is a scarce resource in the island. In the past this often created conflict among farmers. As the fights over water to irrigate farms often caused death, the farmers formed traditional groups called *subak* to manage scarce water resources and to stop fighting among the farmers.

Moreover, people usually form different types of group to cope with different problems in social life. Some groups were formed to carry out a specific task, while some others were formed to perform many roles. Table 2 offers some examples of groups and their roles found in coastal areas of Lombok.

Table 2. Community-initiated groups and their roles in coastal Lombok

No	Type of groups	Sector of activities	Roles
1	<i>subak</i> *	Agriculture	Maintain irrigation channels, manage irrigation water and conflict resolution
2	<i>banjar</i>	Social and economic	Improve solidarity among members, help members in conducting social and religious activities, accumulate funds to help members who need urgent financial support through lending and donations, to build horizontal and vertical networks, increase communication among members and a sense of family.
3	<i>kelompok kelem</i>	Social	Improve solidarity among members, help members in conducting social and religious activities, accumulate funds to help members who need urgent financial support, increase communication among members and a sense of family
4	<i>kelompok selakaran</i>	Religion and social	To improve the ability to sing the Alqur'an, to improve knowledge of Alqur'an, develop a sense of brotherhood, sing Alqur'an in

			members' houses to obtain blessing for the householders' welfare, health and safety as well as a long life
5	<i>kelompok pengajian</i>	Religion and social	To improve moral and spiritual life of the members, to improve knowledge of Alqur'an and other Islamic books, share information among members; improve the sense of brotherhood and to provide support to the members if needed. Incidentally, collecting money to help others
6	<i>kelompok wirid</i>	Religion and social	To improve the ability to sing the Alqur'an, to improve knowledge of Alqur'an, develop a sense of brotherhood, sing Alqur'an in members' houses to obtain blessing for the householders' welfare, health and safety as well as long life of the members and community at large
7	<i>kelompok arisan</i> *	Social and economic (Saving and credit)	Improve sense of brotherhood, help members with financial support, improve solidarity and share information
8	<i>sapaah</i>	Social/death	Death related activities such as providing material and financial support for the family members when someone dies. To attend the funeral, attend the night prayers for the death and supporting the traditional death ceremonies.
9	<i>'kelompok kandang kumpul'</i> *	Security	Protect cattle from thieves
10	<i>pam swakarsa</i> *	Security	Protect members from thieves and other criminals

Note: * These groups exist in coastal Lombok but do not exist in the villages sampled.

These groups can be classified into two major categories: those that carry out social and religious activities, and those that conduct some economic activities. The first category includes *subak*, *kelem*, *pengajian*, *wirid*, *selakaran*, *sapaah*, *kandang kumpul* and *pam swakarsa*. The second category involves *banjar* and *arisan* groups. In this study only the *banjar* group, *pengajian* group, *kelem* group, *wirid* group, *sapaah* group and *selakaran* group were found in the villages sampled during the first phase of the study.

The communities form these traditional groups without any intervention from outsiders such as government agencies and non-government organisations. The idea of group formation is usually triggered by grass roots awareness of a problem and the need to overcome it. This natural process of group formation could be one of the reasons why these groups exist continuously and perform well in the community.

Despite their existence and performance, these community-initiated groups were ignored and excluded by government agencies in development programs. Data about these types of group

cannot be found in any government agencies' records such as the statistical bureau, or even in the village government offices. Instead government formed new groups in coastal communities to engage the community and deliver their development programs.

Empowerment as a national policy

The post-1997 government based on the People's Consultative Assembly Decision No. 4/1999 is ordered to implement the Broad National Guidelines (GBHN), which contain the mission and vision of the country as well as the policy guidelines to achieve the country's goals. In these policy guidelines the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) clearly indicates 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 *adat* (customary) institutions within the Republik of Indonesia".

Driven by the GBHN, the National Five-Year development plan (propenas) 2000–04 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.

It is clearly stated in the propenas that community empowerment can be achieved by facilitating the communities to have access to information and development resources which in turn will enable them to mobilise their potential to participate, control and gain benefits from the whole development process. The empowerment strategies developed include women's empowerment, family empowerment and strengthening institutions.

Based on this policy each government agency under the sector ministries at national level develops its own strategic planning. The strategic plans developed put emphasis on the use of empowerment in the process of the government program implementation. As each central government program will be carried out in different provinces and districts in Indonesia, the concept of empowerment embedded in the program has become a national policy that should be implemented throughout Indonesia.

In addition, some national government departments have established their own empowerment bureaus to implement their programs. For instance, the Agriculture Department of Indonesia has established a Centre for Community Food Security Empowerment. The Trade and Cooperatives Department established a Small and Medium Enterprise Empowerment Bureau and the Department of Internal Affairs established community empowerment bureau at provincial and district levels.

The economic empowerment program for coastal communities

The Economic Empowerment Program for Coastal Communities is one of the programs run by the Indonesian Government through the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs to eradicate poverty among the people of coastal areas. Since 2001, the Government of West Nusa Tenggara (the set of islands to which Lombok belongs) through the Department of Coastal and Marine Affairs has launched its Coastal Community Economic Empowerment program. The activities carried out in this program are identification of problems and local potential, data analysis, program development, program implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Under this program, specially formed community groups in coastal areas have freedom to plan economic activities in a democratic way. Thus each community is intended to develop a sense of belonging and responsibility for the development of their activities, including planning and implementation. The objective of the Empowerment Program is to improve the welfare of the coastal communities through improvement of their economic activities, the quality of human resources, and strengthening socio-economic institutions by optimal and sustainable usage of coastal and marine resources. The approaches used to achieve this objective are participation, self-reliance and partnership. The principles applied to manage and develop this program are acceptability, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, quick disbursement, democracy, competitiveness, sustainability and equality.

The Coastal Community Economic Empowerment Program should be supported by locally based economic activities. The development of businesses relying on coastal and marine resources needs comprehensive and detailed planning. For this purpose each project must start with identification of problems, the state of coastal and marine resources, community needs assessment, community knowledge and ability, local government policy and infrastructure.

Supporting institutions such as management consultants, village partners, micro finance institutions and community groups were formed to support the implementation of the program. The program is funded by the Indonesian Department of Finance. The funds are allocated annually and delivered as a revolving fund (involving loans and repayments) through the Department of Marine and Coastal Affairs. The micro finance institution called Coastal Economic Development Institution — Micro Mitra Mina — manages the revolving fund.

During the implementation of the program various activities such as selection of targets, group formation, training and education, distribution of funds and economic activities are carried out with guidance and advice. Through this process, the government expects that the communities will become empowered.

However, our research shows that at the implementation level some distortion has occurred. In order to implement the PEMP, community groups of up to ten persons each must be formed. The groups were not formed according to recognised principles for group formation and project guidelines. By and large, they were formed to fulfil the targets and timeframes of the projects. The field workers form the groups as required without considering the existence and locations of current groups or the aspirations of the people. Their target was the number of groups formed and the amount of revolving funds distributed, not how each group should be formed and maintained to be sustainable and have empowered members. In the first year of the project (2001), for instance, 255 groups were formed in six districts. In the second year (2002) a further 159 groups were formed and in the last year studied (2003) another 211 groups were also formed. Thus within three years, 665 groups were formed. With this achievement and the amount of funds distributed by the project leader, this project was considered successful in achieving its objective. However, as it will be described in detail in the next section, most of the members of these groups feel less empowered than members of traditional groups.

The effects of this community engagement approach: Empowering or overpowering?

The statistical analysis on group members' feelings of being empowered shows that the level of empowerment of all groups that participated in the study falls into the 'moderately empowered' category (ratings of 2.34 to 3.67 on our index of empowerment).

For example, the empowerment groups (consisting of fishery groups, fish farming groups, fish processing groups, community groups and PDMDKE groups) have mean scores ranging from 2.68 to 2.79 (see Table 3). The non-empowerment groups (including P4K groups, farmer groups, *takesra* groups and cattle fattening groups) have mean scores 2.69 to 2.81, a similar range to that of the empowered group (Table 3).

Although all of these groups are classified according to their means as moderately empowered, almost half of the individual group members gave low scores (1 and 2) in expressing their feelings of empowerment (see Table 4). The high composite mean score that makes these groups fall into the moderately empowered category was contributed by high scores expressed by some group members who were mostly in group management, and the village elite who become contact people and gatekeepers for the government agencies. These people usually have access to information and get the most benefit from the programs.

This suggests that only certain people, usually the village elite, enjoy the benefit of the program and the poor are left behind. This could create jealousy and social friction among the villagers, leading to apathy which may contribute to program failure and disempowered rather than empowered participants.

Table 3. The mean score and standard deviation of Empowerment, Non-empowerment and Community-initiated group members on the empowerment index

Type of group	Mean	Standard deviation
Empowerment groups (EG)		
Fishery Groups (EG1)	2.79	0.58
Fish Farming Groups (EG2)	2.68	0.49
Fish Processing Groups (EG3)	2.65	0.58
Community Groups/ <i>pokmas</i> (EG4)	2.71	0.58
PDMDKE Groups (EG5)	2.78	0.65
Non-empowerment groups (NEG)		
P4K Groups (NEG1)	2.73	0.62
Farmer Groups (NEG2)	2.73	0.64
Takesra Groups (NEG3)	2.69	0.64
Cattle Fattening Groups (NEG4)	2.81	0.63
Community-initiated groups (CIG)		
Banjar Groups (CIG1)	3.33	0.55
Pengajian Groups (CIG2)	3.50	0.54
Kelem Groups (CIG3)	3.51	0.47
Wirid Groups (CIG4)	3.51	0.57
Sapaah Groups (CIG5)	3.55	0.52
Selakaran Groups (CIG6)	3.49	0.54

Note:

Not empowered : 1.0 to 2.33

Moderate empowered : 2.34 to 3.67

Empowered : 3.68 to 5.0

The data also shows that the community-initiated groups (including *banjar*, *pengajian*, *kelem*, *wirid*, *sapaah* and *selakaran* groups fall within the range of 'moderately empowered' with mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 3.55 (see Table 3). High empowerment scores were contributed by more than 90 percent of group members scoring 3, 4 and 5. Only about seven percent of the community initiated group members feel less empowered (Table 4). These people are mostly the elderly who are still eligible to be group members, and want to, but physically they are very weak and less able to participate effectively.

Comparison across these three different types of group indicates that empowerment group and non-empowerment group members are similar with respect to feelings of being

empowered. However, both of these groups give ratings much lower than those of community-initiated group members (see Table 3 and distribution in Table 4). This finding indicates that community initiated group members feel more empowered than members of empowerment and non-empowerment groups initiated by government agencies.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of empowerment, non-empowerment and community-initiated group members' ratings of feeling empowered

Score	Empowerment group	Non-empowerment group	Community-initiated group
1	2.83	5.64	0.56
2	45.76*	40.52*	6.69
3	29.84	30.64	41.06
4	19.52	21.13	46.55*
5	2.05	1.97	5.09
Total (%)	100	100	100

* Modal score

This data shows that government attempts to engage and empower community members through group approaches have failed to achieve their goals. Despite a large amount of funding, almost 50 per cent of the community members involved in government programs still feel powerless, compared with seven per cent of those in community-initiated groups. Only 20 per cent of people in the first two groups feel empowered, with scores of 4 and 5, compared with over 50 per cent in community-initiated groups.

The data gathered in the second phase of the study using participant observation clearly indicated that community participation in government development program was a 'false' participation where they participated for the sake of money and other support provided by the government. When there is no money and support provided, they will not participate in such programs. This was proven by the fact that when the projects finished people's participation also finished and the groups ceased to exist.

Although the recent approach to engage communities in development using empowerment and participatory approach is endorsed nationally in each government program, the implementation of the programs at grassroots level still uses the old method. Some causes for this were identified. At the policy level, the development policy was dictated by the fund providers (donors). The development program, however, put emphasis more on the tangible and quantitative achievements. The focus of evaluation was therefore on quantity not quality, the results rather than process.

Moreover, the policy makers — usually the bosses in government offices — used project achievements to evaluate the performance of the government staff and field agencies. This situation then resulted in staff and agencies ‘playing a game’ to fit the work situation, including corruption and data manipulation. Subsequently, at the implementation level there is some distortion of the ‘ideal’ project guidelines as they work to fulfil project targets and serve the boss rather than the community.

Although the government policy has changed to focus on empowerment, empowerment institutions have been established and there are projects labelled ‘empowerment’, the work culture is still using old paradigm ‘top-down and target approach’. This could be because training about empowerment and participation in the agencies as well as at community level was limited. Consequently, officers’ and participants’ understanding of empowerment and participation was also limited. Moreover, program evaluation still emphasises on quantitative rather than qualitative outcomes, the end product rather than the process.

In these circumstances, the field agents feel better working with the village elite who know well and understand that a project is beneficial for them and use their power and legitimation to justify project implementation. They barely work with the poor as it takes time to make them aware of the benefits of the project and even to meet them. Here, manipulation and corruption often occur. This then leads to overpowering, rather than empowering, as is indicated by the level of feelings of being empowered on the part of both empowerment and non-empowerment group members.

At the community level, we found that this attempt to engage community members in development has brought a negative perception to development programs. Community members perceived the government programs as distribution of aids such as money, other materials and facilities, not as a program to enable and empower them to be self-reliant.

In the community-initiated groups, the community members genuinely participate in community development through their group participation. They participate in a group as they are aware that they should do so to solve their problems. Unlike the government-initiated groups, membership of this group is open to everybody interested and group size is unlimited. This resulted in group that function continuously, and group members feel empowered.

Conclusion

Various community engagement approaches have been tried by the government of Indonesia to engage communities in development programs. Government policy initiatives have brought some change in institutions, organisations and projects, but not in bureaucratic work culture. No training and capacity building on empowerment philosophy and engagement methodologies has been offered for staff to implement the new policies, and former ‘top-down’

and 'targets' approaches are still practised. The government tried to establish development groups, but the empowered, pre-existing community groups were ignored resulting in exclusion rather than inclusion, and overpowering rather than empowering the communities. This led to deterioration of traditional social capital.

Better community engagement can be achieved through inclusion of community-initiated groups, capacity building for both government staff and community members. This would achieve greater empowerment, inclusiveness and build social capital for sustainable development.

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