

Managing Women's Village Activists Participation in Village Development Planning

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Abstract: *Decentralization of Indonesian villages provides opportunities for grassroots-level groups to participate in village development. This study explores the participation of women affiliated with women's groups in the participatory processes of village development planning in the villages of Central Java. Using a mixed-methods strategy, this study found that many members of women's groups known as women's village activists have been involved in participatory planning processes, and used the processes to demand programs that improve women and family well-being. Besides, their priority for village development seems to differ from that of the current trend, which heavily focuses on village-scale infrastructure development. On average, this group of women have relatively good levels of education and have been active in community activities. The findings of this study reinforce the argument that women village activists who are quite active in community and grassroots activities are potential representatives in determining the priority of village development.*

Keywords: *managing women participation, women's village activist, development planning*

Introduction

In 2014, the Indonesian government enacted Law No. 6/2014 concerning decentralization of villages (*desa*). It is the lowest tier of Indonesian governmental administration. The law grants more than 75,000 villages the authority to manage village-scale development and mandates the government to substantially increase the villages' budget. The law also

institutionalizes participatory spaces to facilitate villagers' involvement in determining development priorities. Article 79 of the Law does state that development priorities should be contained in the village mid-term development planning document (RPJMDes). This document is effective for six years and elucidated annually in the form of village annual work plan (RKPDDes)

In comparison to the current village governance, the old governance in the New Order era, under the Suharto presidency, had significant differences. As Antlov (2003) and Sutiyo and Maharjan (2017) argued, village development programs earlier were dictated and devised by the central government. Since 1999, a major turn with the decentralization of villages has been marked with the stipulation of Law 22/1999, concerning regional governments. Nevertheless, even against such a framework, villagers did not have the opportunity to be directly involved in determining the priority of village development, especially in the early 21st century. Besides the progress of decentralization, community initiative development has been considered by the government and, as mentioned above, the law introduced in 2014 included this aspect.

Antlov, Wetterberg, and Dharmawan (2016) assert that the presence of empowered village citizens is one of the crucial factors to make village development priorities responsive to villagers' problems. They define empowered village citizens as those villagers who have capacity to demand development priorities that are responsive to village communities' needs (Antlov, Wetterberg, and Dharmawan, 2016: 181).

Previous studies by SMERU (2017; 2019), World Bank (2018), and Sambodho (2019) suggest that in the nascent stage of the implementation of the Village Law participatory processes of development priorities held by villages were not inclusive. According to the implementing regulation (Ministry of

Home Affair (MOHA) Regulation 114/2014) participatory processes of village development planning consist of hamlet or group meeting (*musdus* and *musyawarah khusus kelompok masyarakat*) and village meeting. SMERU (2017; 2019), World Bank (2018) found that in some villages, villages meetings are mostly attended by men and village elites, such as government leaders and community figures. Moreover, these studies also revealed that these participants were more engaged during this meeting. Therefore, they are more likely influential in the results of such meetings or decision-making processes. Quite contrary to the village meeting, SMERU (2017; 2019) and World Bank (2018) converge that hamlet meetings were more inclusive in terms of participants, socio-economic backgrounds, and sexes.

World Bank (2018) explains that the restricted participation of village meetings is attributed to the fact that this meeting is normally controlled by the village head, who in turn, selectively invited meeting attendees. In this regard, villagers who are more likely to be invited are those who have concerns about village affairs and are active in village or community activities and representatives from community groups that share positive opinions of the village government. Furthermore, Sambodho (2019) indicated that the marginalized groups, including poor families, were circumscribed to participate, in part due to their lack of capacity to engage in civic activity and their lack of resources to participate.

However, amid these circumstances World Bank (2018) also

indicates the presence of empowered village citizens among village activists. Initially the term 'village activists' was introduced by Akatiga (2010) in analyzing villagers participation in participatory processes of the National Program of Community Empowerment (PNPM). Akatiga (2010:19) portrays village activists as villagers who "possess knowledge of government projects, have a relatively close relationship with village government generated from their activities in their organization's activities."

This includes prominent members or leaders of women's organizations or groups that exist in the village, such as Women's Family Welfare Organization (PKK) Community-Based Integrated Health Post (Posyandu), and several religious-based women's groups. According to Blackburn (2004) they are the backbone of women's movements that have a shared interest in improving women's living conditions across Indonesia. Siahaan (2003) and Blackburn (2004) suggest that local autonomy in Indonesia which facilitates citizens to be closer to decision-making is a litmus test for such groups to expand their agenda. Therefore, the present study also expands the discussion on women's organizations engagement in improving Indonesian women's condition in the context of decentralization into villages.

Previous empirical studies (SMERU, 2017 & 2019; World Bank 2018; Syukri, 2019) have shown that women's village activists in most cases were invited and involved in village meetings in the drafting of village development priority.

However, there is a conflicting claim about their engagement in village meetings. SMERU (2017) and Syukri (2019) agreed that such participants tend to be passive and silent. On the other hand, World Bank (2018: 29) claimed that women's activist organizations "were less reluctant to talk in public forums and were thus better able to help air the voices of their fellow female villagers." Besides, compared to men's activists in villages, the same study argues that women's activists' capacity to engage in village meetings is relatively comparable with their male counterparts as vocal and active participants in meetings.

Beard and Cartmill (2007) underscored the importance of individual characteristics that are influential in shaping women's participation and engagement in participatory community development. These characteristics include education, employment, and economic status of woman. Unfortunately, World Bank (2018) did not elaborate on these women's activist organization's characteristics concerning their participation in village development planning processes. Further, the World Bank (2018) did not specifically unfold women village activists' demands concerning village development priority.

However, studies by Blackburn (2004) and Beard and Cartmill (2007) shed some light on the importance of New Order's legacies to understand women's participation in community development in Indonesia. During this era, women's organizations were highly co-opted by the state. As a result their movement was limited to programs or causes which tend to support New Order's development policies and legitimacy (Blackburn, 2004).

Moreover, Blackburn (2004) and Beard and Cartmill (2007) also asserted that New Order was relatively successful in influencing and shaping Indonesian women's citizenship through its gender ideology that defines how men and women should contribute to national development. The New Order saw women as a significant structural group in society which needed to be brought into line with its search for harmony and development. Women should play their part in ensuring social stability, implementing development plans and reducing the birth-rate.

Equally important is a study by Syukri (2019), which implies that under the current participatory village governance policies under the Village Law, women's village activists' inclination to demand development is more likely restricted to secure programs that are responsive to women's practical needs.

Thus, the present study intends to fill this gap by revisiting women's village activists' potential in their participation in village development planning based on their affiliations, dissecting their socio-economic characteristics, and analyzing their demands concerning village development programs.

The present paper is divided into five sections. The first section provides the background and significance of this study. The second section discusses the methodology and the data used in this study, as well as briefly touches upon the research site. The third section talks about the current social and economic situation and the presence of women's groups as well as their main activities in the villages under study. The fourth section explores members of women's

groups involvement in the participatory process of village development planning and their ideas of the priorities for the same. Finally, the paper concludes with policy implications and suggestions based on the findings.

Methods

Time and consolidates these data to get comprehensive and robust findings to study questions. Mixed-methods, as stated by (Creswell, 2014), enables a researcher to address limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative data was sourced from a questionnaire survey answered by 80 respondents from 16 villages in the Ampelagding sub-district. A purposive random sampling procedure was used to select respondents wherein 5 people were chosen from each village. All the respondents were women village activists who belonged to women's organizations at grassroots level and had been active in community activities. Most of them had experience working with the village government.

This survey consisted of one field survey and an online survey with the same respondents to ensure consistency in their answers concerning their attendance and engagement in village meetings to deliberate about development planning. The second survey also served to obtain additional information, which could have been left out in the first survey. Second, we also interviewed key respondents to understand the state of women's organizations under the study after the surveys were completed.

Additionally, qualitative data was obtained through an interview with key

respondents and secondary data that consisted of village mid-term development plans, regulations concerning the village budget and governmental documents, as well as various relevant articles.

This study was carried out in the sub-district of Ampelgading (kecamatan), consisting of 16 villages, which is topographically a lowland area around the north coast of Java, with a population of around 76,000 (Statistics Indonesia of Pemalang Regency, 2018). Administratively, this district is part of the local government of Pemalang Regency (Kabupaten) with 14 districts, Central Java Province.

Villages in this sub-district are relatively varied in terms of their development status, as implied by the 2019 village development index (VDI) by the Ministry of Village, Backward Region, and Transmigration (MoV, 2019) which will be explained in the next section. At the same time, based on our preliminary field study, the branches of Indonesian women's organizations under this study were found to exist in the sub-district villages. After all, the selection of villages in Ampelgading sub-district is mainly driven by the author's consideration of data accessibility.

The survey shows that almost all respondents are married or had been married with the ages are ranged between 24 and 62. Most respondents stated that they do not have toddler which allows them to contribute time to their organizations and community activities. Around 62% of the respondents are senior high school graduates, followed by nearly 30% higher education graduates. This indicates that most

women's activists had sufficient literacy, which is required to manage organizations and actively engage in the development of the village. Most women's activists are also employed, which means that they have a relative independency in comparison to their husbands. Further, the welfare condition of a higher portion of activists might be living below the poverty line, according to the standard of Indonesian statistics poverty line, 2019, (Rp. 425,770/person per month).

Result and Discussion

Villages Status and Women's Organizations

This section provides a background of the activists participation in village development planning. The first sub-section discusses the development status of villages in Ampelgading, based on the village development status by the MoV. It also briefly explicates trends of village fund (*dana desa*) expenditure in the first three years of the implementation of the Village Law within the district. Further, the second sub-section explains the organizations to which the activists are affiliated.

A. Status of 16 Villages

The village development status represents the availability and accessibility of primary public facilities, economic activity, and output in a given village and also its resilience in case of natural disasters. It serves as a guide for villages in devising a development plan, sourced from substantially increased fiscal transfer into villages. An Indonesian village's development status can be categorized into one of five groups, ranging from the most backward to the

most independent, based on a village composite index (VDI) that consists of social, economic, and environmental indices (See Table 1). The social index comprises of availability and proximity to public facilities (such as primary education, health, and waste processing units). The economic index captures data on the economic activities of a village and its proximity to the service sectors

(financial and logistics). Also, the environmental index indicates the village's resilience towards natural disasters and environmental quality. This categorization of villages, including the corresponding indices, was developed by the MoV to measure a village's developmental progress since the implementation of the Village Law in 2015.

Table 1. Village Development Status and Index Score

Status	Index Score
Independent	> 0.815
Developed	> 0.707 ≤ 0.815
Developing	> 0.599 ≤ 0.707
Backward	> 0.491 ≤ 0.599
The Most Backward	< 0.491

Source: MoV (2015: 5).

Table 2 shows the development statuses of the villages in Ampelgading. It can be seen that only one village has gained the status of an independent village, six villages have been categorized as developed villages, while the rest are developing villages. These variations indicate how each village is different in terms of its availability and proximity to primary public services and economic activity (see Appendix 2). A village that is considered independent and developed is more likely to have access to primary public facilities, especially health and education. On the other hand, villages that are lower on the economic index seem to have a lower productivity output, measured through the presence of small-scale enterprises, village-scale trade

centers, and the distance to service institutions such as logistics and finance.

While social and economic resilience indices are varied, almost all villages are similar on the environmental front. Based on field observation, villages in this sub-district showed similar environmental problems, especially concerning solid waste processing and water contamination from household liquid waste. Unfortunately, these problems have not yet gained immediate attention from governments. Besides, it was found that there is only one relatively small domestic solid waste facility in the sub-district, located in Ujunggede. Burning solid waste is thus a common practice to process domestic waste.

Table 2. Village Development Status in Ampelgading Sub-district

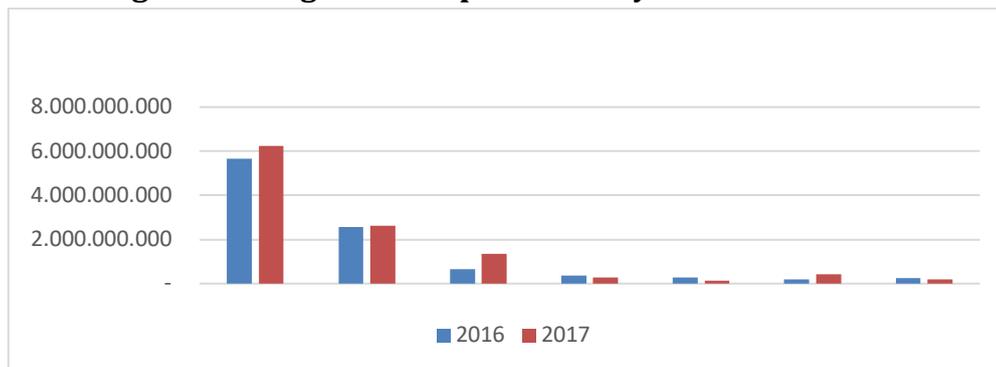
Villages	Index				Status
	Social	Economics	Environment	Aggregate	
Ujunggede	0.9429	0.9333	0.6667	0.8476	Independent
Blimbing	0.8286	0.6833	0.8000	0.7706	developed
Ampelgading	0.7943	0.8000	0.6667	0.7537	developed
Karantelok	0.8229	0.7000	0.6667	0.7299	developed
Losari	0.8286	0.6667	0.6667	0.7207	developed
Banglarangan	0.8229	0.6500	0.6667	0.7132	developed
Karantengah	0.7429	0.7167	0.6667	0.7088	developed
Kebagusan	0.8686	0.5833	0.6667	0.7062	developing
Jatirejo	0.7943	0.6333	0.6667	0.6981	developing
Tegalsari Barat	0.7657	0.6167	0.6667	0.6830	developing
Sidokare	0.7600	0.6167	0.6667	0.6811	developing
Sokawati	0.7714	0.5833	0.6667	0.6738	developing
Cibiyuk	0.7829	0.5333	0.6667	0.6610	developing
Kemuning	0.7429	0.5667	0.6667	0.6588	developing
Wonogiri	0.7943	0.4833	0.6667	0.6481	developing
Tegalsari Timur	0.7600	0.5000	0.6667	0.6422	developing

Source: MoV (2019).

Since 2015, like any other village in Indonesia, each village in Ampelgading also received village funds as mandated by the Village Law. Figure 1 shows that between 2016–2019, village funds received for this sub-district was increased substantially from around Rp.

661,155,563 to Rp.1,218,368,875. At the same time, almost the whole fund was to be invested in village-scale infrastructure development with road and drainage system construction as the top two projects in terms of the expenditure.

Figure 1 Village Fund Expenditure by Items 2016–2017



Source: Village Fund Expenditure Report, Ampelgading 2016-2017.

Notably, the Village Law does state that the village budget allocation should be based on the village mid-term development plan (RPJMDes). During 2015–2019, almost all villages in Ampelgading were still using RPJMDes – which was drafted before the Village Law was enacted – since RPJMDes was effective for six years. This means that during this period, most villages in Ampelgading, except for Ujunggede and Jatirejo, did not involve villagers in the participatory process of determining village development priorities. Most villages began to exercise the participatory process in 2019, with the drafting of RPJMDes as the newly elected village heads, who then began to lead their villagers.

B. Women's Organizations in the Sub-district

Based on field observation and the survey, six women's organizations branches were found in Ampelading: 1) Women's Family Welfare Organization (PKK); 2) Community-based Health Post (Posyandu); 3) Muslimat; 4) Fatayat; 5) Aisyiyah, and 6) Naswiatul Aisyiyah (Nasiyah). These are the local branches of nation-wide organizations, and the first four are present in all the villages and have a semi-autonomous organizational structure at the village level. They also have a significant number of members. The remaining two organizations Aisyiyah and Nasiyah, however, are limited only to certain villages (see Tabl3).

Table 3 Number of Women's Organizations Members in each Village of Amopelgading Sub-district

Village	PKK	Posyandu	Muslimat	Fatayat	Aisyiyah	Nasyiah
Sidokare	105	20	180	179	10	-
Kebagusan	195	20	190	250	320	120
Jatirejo	95	20	125	100	20	-
Ujunggede	145	30	100	71	20	-
Losari	125	25	150	50	70	60
Banglarangan	105	15	95	100	-	-
Cibiyuk	95	15	-	50	-	-
Karangtengah	95	20	125	70	32	30
Ampelgading	105	20	150	40	-	-
Blimbing	105	15	110	60	-	-
Karangtalok	127	20	170	180	-	-
Kemuning	75	10	75	78	-	-
Wonogiri	125	15	125	70	-	-
Tegalsari Timur	135	25	125	40	-	-
Tegalsari Barat	125	20	125	45	-	-
Sokawati	65	15	80	60	-	-

Source: Interview conducted by authors with officials of each women's organization in Ampelgading (2019).

C. PKK and Posyandu

PKK and Posyandu were formed by the Indonesian government during President Soeharto’s administration (New Order), which lasted 32 years (1966–1998). Given this history, they are known as government-sponsored organizations and are still maintained by the current government. Saito (2006) reported that PKK was established in 1967 as the national women’s organization, with the main responsibility to include and mobilize women into national development. During the New Order, national development programs related to issues on women, such as family planning and maternal and child health, were channeled through PKK (Wieringa, 1993). In 1984, the Soeharto administration also officially introduced Posyandu, a community-based activity that provided basic health services, especially for children, mothers, and the elderly. This initiative was intended to strengthen national health development, especially to reduce the maternal and child mortality rate (MoH, 2011; Saito, 2006).

Marcoes (2002) and Herawati (2016) noted that, after the end of

Soeharto’s regime, even though PKK was not strongly supported during the New Order and its members were in decline, its role at the grassroots level remained stable. Its members still play a significant role in providing primary health services for mothers and children through Posyandu (Marcoes, 2002; MoH, 2011; Herawati, 2016). The MoH (2011) reported that in 2009, there were around 266,827 Posyandu members (Health Post center) throughout Indonesia and roughly three to four Posyandu units in each village.

D. Religious-based Women Groups

There are some similarities like other organizations, which as per Blackburn (2004) were religious-based women’s organizations (see Table 4). Muslimat, Fatayat, Aisyiyah, and Nasyiah were women’s organization wings of two of Indonesia’s largest Islamic mass organizations. While Muslimat and Fatayat are closely affiliated with Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Aisyiyah and Nasyiah are branch association of Muhammadiyah.

Table 4. Women’s Organizations Activities and Year of Establishment

Organization	Year of Establishment	Development-Related Activities
Aisyiyah	1917	Its activities range from education and health services to productive activities and charity. It owns more than four thousand kindergarten facilities, hospitals, and orphanages.
Nasyiatul Aisyiyah	1932	Women’s capacity development, including media literacy, parenting skill, organizational management, leadership, and entrepreneurial training.
Muslimat	1946	Highly involved in promoting the national program of family planning during the New

		Order, in particular within "traditional" Islamic families.
Fatayat	1950	At the national level, Rinaldo (2008) and Arnez (2010) consider Fatayat a progressive women's organization that is often involved in gender issue debates and issues concerning women leadership, domestic violence, polygamy, and quota for women in the legislative body.

Sources: Syamsiyatun (2007); Rinaldo (2008); Arnez (2010); (Qodariyah, 2016: 1).

Moreover, these organizations' members have mainly come from families that follow religious teachings and practices of the parent organizations. For example, members of Muslimat and Fatayat mostly belong to NU families. Further, membership to these organizations is based on age, to a huge extent. In this regard, Muslimat and Aisyiyah members are women aged above 40 and from NU and Muhammadiyah families. On the other hand, members of Fatayat and Nasiyah are younger. Although these are considered religious-based women's organizations, their activities are not confined to religious activities such as recitation gatherings. Historically, they have also shown involvement in improving Indonesian women's overall conditions (Blackburn, 2004; Syamsiyatun, 2008; Rinaldo, 2008; Arnez, 2010).

E. Women's Groups Activities

At the grassroots level, this study found that the relation between government-sponsored and religious-based organizations is fluid, especially in terms of their membership. Around 84% of the respondents were affiliated with more than one such organization. In this regard, nearly half of the activists of PKK or Posyandu are also affiliated with religious-based organizations, such as Fatayat or Muslimat, or vice versa. Members of Muslimat and Fatayat also have joint memberships to other such organizations. However, this is not the

case with religious-based women's organizations with different parent organizations, such as between Muslimat and Aisyiyah. Nevertheless, there is no sign of conflict or competition among such organizations so far.

Notably, there are some differences between the organizations' main activity and in leadership between government-sponsored organizations versus religious-based ones. The activities of PKK and Posyandu are mostly concerned with local development, targeting women villagers as their main beneficiaries. In this regard, PKK has a wider scope of activities relating to local development programs. Many members of PKK also serve as Posyandu activists, organizing health service activities for mothers and infants once a month. Furthermore, some chapters of PKK in Ampelgading also assist village governments in delivering programs such as loan-saving and nutritional food assistance programs for toddlers and the elderly. On the other hand, routine activities of religious-based organizations in Ampelgading, to a great extent, is limited to recitation meetings and informal religious teachings.

In terms of leadership, generally, the government-sponsored organizations, especially PKK, is chaired by the village head's wife. Conversely, the chairwoman of religious-based organizations is elected democratically. Furthermore, there are also special requirements that must be met to be elected as the chairwoman of

such organizations at the grassroots level. On the other hand, a significant number of women's organization's members in the villages under this study also served as members of village formal institutions such as village council (BPD), Village Community Empowerment Cadres (KPMMD), and village-owned enterprise (Bumdes). This in turn would make them be more frequently in contact with the village government, providing a greater chance to access information concerning village governmental activities.

Our findings in this section suggest four important points to understand women's village activists' participation in the planning of development. First, it was found that the village development status in Ampelgading varied relatively between independent and developing villages. This might help shape different aspirations concerning village development priorities, especially among women's activists in each village. Second, there were common trends in the fund expenditure among villages of Ampelgading. Almost all villages put a heavy emphasis on village-scale basic infrastructures such as roads, walls, and drainage. Third, almost all women's organizations in Ampelgading share joint memberships, particularly among government-led and religious-based organizations. Another finding is that a significant number of women activists also hold positions in formal village organizations such as BPD and served as members of KPMMD. This is of significance as it could help them to have a better chance to engage in village developmental activities. Fourth, in terms of organizational activities, there seems a gap between the activities of religious-based organizations at the national level and their chapters at the grassroots level such as in Ampelgading. The most common activity of religious-based women's organizations in this district was

found to be religious teachings and practices.

Participation in Village Planning

This section discusses women activists' participation in the current village development planning in Ampelgading villages. It focuses on who participates in what activities and how they engage in the participatory developmental processes. Further, this section explores the correlation between socio-economics characteristics of the participants and their engagement, analyzing their village development priorities.

A. Mechanism of Village Development Planning

Soon after village heads are officially on their tenure, they should begin drafting RPJMDes, which contains six years' village development priorities, serving as a legal basis for allocating the village budget (APBDes). Law 6/2014 on villages emphasizes that the village government should involve villagers in the drafting of RPJMDes. It asserts that village communities should be included in shaping the priorities. Therefore, the village government is required to facilitate consultative meetings to allow villagers to voice out their demands from developmental programs. Since a village consists of sub-village units (hamlets and neighborhoods) and even groups or associations, implementing the MOHA Regulation 114/2014, sub-village meetings and group meetings must be held to channel villagers' demands and needs. Moreover, it must convene deliberative meetings (village meeting) that functioned as participatory decision-making forums.

As discussed in Section 4, almost all villages' budget during the first three years (2015–2017) was spent to build basic infrastructures such as roads, bridges, and other public facilities. And as

mentioned in the third section, in 2018, 14 villages in this district had newly elected heads who required to draft RPJMDes in a participatory manner. In this context, villagers could have an opportunity to demand for development as per the communities' problems. A new trend to seek a new path of village development towards community initiatives might have started here.

B. Participation in Hamlet Meetings

Consultative meetings in villages within the Ampelgading district mostly took place at the hamlet level. Thus, in practice, consultative meetings are popularly known as hamlet meetings. On the other hand, some villages had mixed consultative meetings at the hamlet and neighborhood levels. This meeting was mostly attended by invitees who

represented each household within the hamlet or neighborhood unit. Normally, hamlet meetings are chaired by hamlet or neighborhood heads and facilitated by members of the RPJMDes-drafting team, which is formed by the newly elected village head consisting of 7 to 11 members from several village organizations. They are responsible for formulating the RPJMDes.

Notably, SMERU (2017) and World Bank (2018) reported that, in the villages under study, hamlet meetings were more inclusive than village meetings, particularly in terms of participants' socio-economic status and gender. Unfortunately, there were no villages that had group meetings for designated groups such as women, farmers, or disadvantaged people.

Table 5 Women's Organizations Activists Participation in Hamlet Meeting

	PKK	Posyandu	Formal Village Organizations	Religious-based Organizations	Others	Total
Participation in sub-village meetings						
Yes	37	6	6	6	1	56
No	11	6	2	3	2	24
Reason for non-participation						
No Invitation	5	5	2	3	1	16
Nursing Child	2	0	0	0	0	2
Family Concerns	4	0	0	0	0	4
Working	0	1	0	0	1	2
Active Participants	27	4	5	5	1	42

Source: Survey conducted by authors (2019).

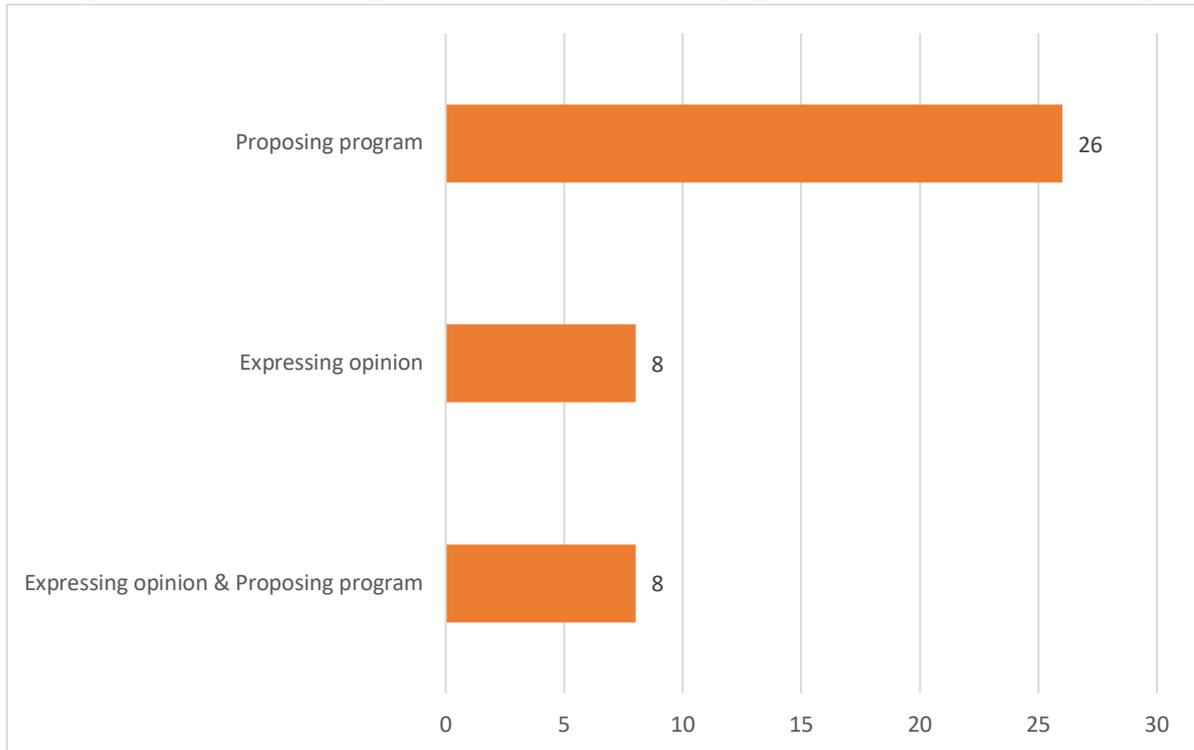
56 respondents out of the 80 surveyed participated in the hamlet meetings. Most of them (16 respondents) who did not attend this meeting stated non-invitation by consultative meeting committees as the reason. Higher majority of women participants in this

meeting asserted that their presence was to represent PKK. The rest represented Posyandu, formal village organizations such as BPD, KPMD, and religious-based women's organizations in a few given villages. Interestingly, 42 women who did attend hamlet meetings were considered

active participants, meaning that not only attended the meeting but also engaged in it by voicing their ideas concerning village development (see Figure 2). Accordingly, around 80% of respondents were satisfied with the hamlet meeting process

and results. However, more than 80% of respondents perceived the meetings as being dominated by community figures and government officials who had greater say.

Figure 2. Women’s Organizations Activists Engagements in Hamlet Meeting



Source: Survey conducted by authors (2019).

C. Participation in Village Meeting

Unlike the hamlet meeting that is held at the sub-village level, village meetings are normally attended by representatives from communities or groups of neighborhood units as well as hamlets that are present in a village. This meeting is supposedly organized by village council. However, in Ampelgading villages, almost all village meetings for determining development priorities were convened by the village government. Village meetings in this sub-district were held in the evening at the villages’ meeting halls. Ideally, village meetings are to be facilitated by trained facilitator to

make the discussion more effective and balanced regarding the power among participants. In Ampelgading, this meeting was normally facilitated by the village secretary and, in rare circumstances, by the district facilitator or local government officials assigned by the district head (*Camat*).

Table 6 shows that in general, more women’s activists had attended this meeting than hamlet meetings. Like in consultative meeting, 42 out of 67 respondents who attended this meeting referred to themselves as representatives of PKK.

Table 6. Women's Organizations Activists Participation in Village Meetings

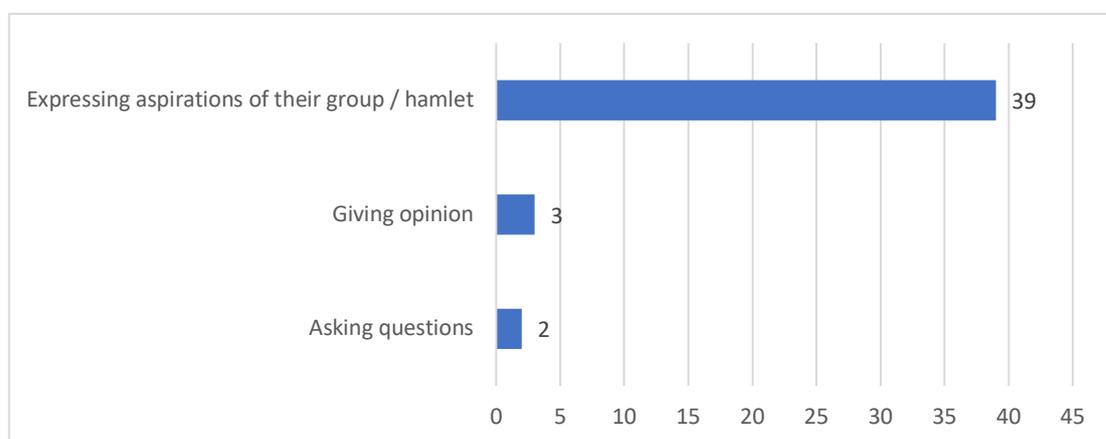
	PKK	Posyandu	Formal Village Organization	Religion-based Organization	Others	Total
Participation in village meeting						
Yes	42	8	8	7	2	67
No	6	4	0	2	1	13
Reason for non-participation						
No Invitation	4	3	0	2	1	10
Nursing Child	1	0	0	0	0	1
Family Concerns	1	1	0	0	0	2
Active Participants	27	5	6	5	0	44

Source: Survey conducted by authors (2019).

Only eight respondents represented Posyandu, formal village organizations (BPD, KPMD), and religious-based organizations such as Fatayat and Aisyiyah. Like in sub-village meetings, those who did not attend were mostly those who had not been invited by the committees. In addition, nursing children and women's responsibility of dealing with family matters were among the reasons that prevented female activists from attending the meeting. In

this meeting, around 65% of the 67 respondents who attended had engaged (see Figure 3). The proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the meeting process and results was also higher, compared to their opinion towards sub-village meetings. Nevertheless, only 20% of respondents who attended had the view that there were no dominant participants controlling village meetings.

Figure 3. Women's Organizations Activists Engagements in Village Meeting



Source: Survey conducted by authors (2019).

D. Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Participants

About half of the women's activists who participated in the participatory developmental planning processes fall in the age group of 37–49, with 50% who attended the sub-village meetings and 53% attended village meetings. Respondents within these age groups are normally married or had been married. Besides, they are more likely to occupy senior positions in their organizations which gave them a greater chance to represent their organization in civic activities. In terms of educational attainment, around 60% of respondents who attended participatory village development planning activities are senior high school graduates.

Interestingly, a majority of the respondents in the age group 37–49 are also senior-high-school graduates, with 57% in sub-village meetings and 59% in village meetings. Concerning employment, around half the respondents who attended sub-village meetings and village meetings work in the public sector, 28% are housewives, and 22% work in the private sector. Housewives and those who work in the public sector might have high flexibility in participation in community activities as compared to those who work in private sectors. All the women's village activists who were involved in the participatory development planning process in Ampelgading had previously attended village meetings and supported the village governments' activities. However, less than 10% of the respondents who attended the village meeting are spouses of village government officials.

Women who are public employees are more likely to become active participants in village development planning (see Appendix 4). In this regard, 64% of hamlet meeting participants and 56% of village meeting participants who have a say or are engaged in the meetings

are employed in the public sector. Respondents working in the public sector are mostly street-level bureaucrats, such as teachers and midwives, who frequently engage with members of the general public daily. In this case, their professional responsibility might give them the confidence to speak in community activities. On the other hand, a similar pattern was found in terms of engagement between respondents who are senior high-school and higher education graduates. The ratio of respondents considered active in village meetings in the two education-based groups were found to be similar.

E. Women's Village Development Demands

Table 7 shows women's organizations' activists demands concerning village development, indicating three interesting points. First, a significant number of women participants from almost all villages in Ampelgading demanded women empowerment and child and maternal health programs, deeming these of high priority. In this study, women empowerment programs resembled activities intended to improve women's capacity, such as training or capacity building for women, which also can be found in SMERU (2019b: 28). Meanwhile, child and maternal health activities are considered to be popular in villages that traditionally have Posyandu members. Second, women's village activists of developed villages had concerns about providing primary health services for the elderly and domestic waste management as there is only one designated domestic waste disposal located in Ujunggede village. Third, villages under "developing" status prioritized for the village budget to be invested in income-generating activities. This proposed program has direct relevance to the aim of Indonesia's village decentralization, i.e., to reduce poverty.

Looking at the MOHA Regulation 114/2014, the proposed programs by women activists are eligible to be funded with the village budget. Moreover, the inclusion of these development priorities

by women's activists in village development planning might slightly balance the trend of demanding basic infrastructure development, dominating the village fund expenditure allocation.

Table 7. Women's Village Development Demands

Villages	Women empower ment	Child and maternal health	Health service for elderly	Early childhood education	Income generating activities	Waste managemen t	total number by village	Average of Demand number
Self-reliance village (1 Village)								
Ujunggede	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	
	1(50%)	1(50%)					2(100%)	2,0
Developed Village (6 villages)								
Losari	1	2	1	1	-	-	5	
Banglarangan	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	
Karagtengah	4	2	2	3	2	2	15	
Ampelgading	2	3	3	1	-	3	12	
Blimbing	7	1	1	-	1	1	11	
Karantelok	2	3	3	2	1	2	13	
	16(29%)	11(20%)	10(18%)	7(13%)	4(7%)	8(14%)	56(100%)	9,3
Delveloping Village (9 villages)								
Sidokare	2	3	3	1	1	1	11	
Kebagusan	3	1	1	-	1	-	6	
Jatirejo	3	1	1	2	1	-	8	
Cibiyuk	2	1	-	2	1	-	6	
Kemuning	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Wonogiri	-	1	-	-	1	-	2	
Tegalsari Timur	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Tegalsari Barat	4	2	2	2	2	2	14	
Sokawati	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	
	16(31%)	11(21%)	7(13%)	8(15%)	7(13%)	3(6%)	52(100%)	5,8
	33(31%)	23(21%)	17(16%)	15(14%)	11(10%)	11(10%)	108(100%)	6,8

Source: Survey conducted by authors (2019).

To sum up, the three important findings of this section are as follows. First, the participatory processes of village development planning were mostly attended by women's organizations activists. Almost all

activists involved were married, with a majority (above 60%) of them representing PKK and nearly 60% being senior high school graduates. Around 30% had a higher education degree. Second, a significant number of

respondents were considered active participants in village development planning. Data on the characteristics of active participants demonstrates that most of them work as street-level bureaucrats. Moreover, they had experience in attending previous village meetings, discussing village affairs strategically. Third, concerning the second finding, those who had been engaged in participatory processes of village development planning used this forum to voice out their demands concerning village development. Regardless of the village development status, women's organizations activists in almost all villages had demanded primary health care for women and children and to facilitate women empowerment-related programs. Also, these activists' demands were more likely connected with their village's status, as the demands of those from developing villages will differ from those living in developed villages.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore the participation of women's village activists in village development planning. Based on field observations, it was discovered that the village understudy in the Ampelgading district has six types of nation-wide women's organizations, including two government-led women's organizations, PKK and Posyandu, and four religious-based women's organizations, Muslimat, Fatayat, Aisyiyah, and Nasiyah. A relatively significant number of these organizations' activists had been involved in participatory processes of village development planning. However, the

findings suggest that some of the women's organizations, especially the government-sponsored and religious-women organizations, have joint memberships at the grassroots level. Thus, it was difficult to make a distinct categorization of their affiliation to particular women's organizations.

A significant number of women's organizations activists also held positions in formal village organizations. Nevertheless, around half of the activists who had been participated in hamlet meetings and villages meetings confirmed that their involvement was on behalf of PKK. The findings also demonstrate that a substantial number of respondents utilized participatory development planning to demand programs intended to improve women and family well-being and programs related to their villages' development status. In this regard, their version of village development priority differed from the current trend of village development that heavily focused on village-scale infrastructure.

The findings corroborate with those of the World Bank (2018), wherein women's organization activists were found to have the potential to represent women villagers' aspirations in the participatory processes of village development planning. On average, this group of women belonging to the grassroots level has relatively good levels of education, with the majority being senior-high-school graduates and a growing number holding higher education degrees. In this regard, Beard and Cartmill (2007) argued that women's education is important to improve their participation in local planning processes. Moreover, they were found to be

accustomed to civic and community activities, making them more assured in expressing their opinions in a public forum.

Unfortunately, this study could not ensure the effectiveness of participation in village development planning and to what extent the participatory process of village development in Ampelgading villages is inclusive, especially of women. Besides, since the sample of this study was limited and covered only villages within one district, it is important to note that characteristics of women's organizations' activists, their involvement in village development, and their development priorities might differ significantly.

Through the institutionalization of participatory space, decentralization of Indonesian villages provides an opportunity for women's organizations at the grassroots level to participate in determining development priorities. Although there were several women's organizations that exist at grassroots level, PKK and its members seems still dominant in representing women's voice. This in part is due to membership fluidity among women's organizations at grassroot level, in which PKK activists might also be affiliated with other organizations, such as Fatayat, Aisyiyah, and so forth, including village government organizations. This fact might complicate studies that seek to capture as well as to elaborate on role and involvement of women's organizations outside PKK about the current village decentralization framework. At the same time, this finding also raises questions about interventions by government and elite activists from women's organizations at the national

level in supporting and strengthening grassroots women's organizations involvement in village decentralization.

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