

## **Authority of Assignment from District Government to Village Governments: A Case Study of Three Villages in *Insana Sub-District, Timor Tengah Utara District, Indonesia***

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore authority of assignment that can be delegated by a district government to village governments. Three villages in *Insana* sub-district, *Timor Tengah Utara* (TTU) district, Indonesia were chosen as the examples. In-depth interview method was employed to collect data from the study participants who were recruited using purposive sampling technique. The collected data were analysed thematically guided by a qualitative data analysis framework. Results indicated that the management of primary education, the construction and maintenance of irrigation, the identification of non-habitable houses of rural communities and the development of habitable houses for villagers, the prevention and control of livestock diseases and the distribution of livestock for villagers in needs, and the protection of women and children from violence, were the authorities that can be delegated to village governments. The main reasons were that such authorities were ineffectively and inefficiently implemented by the TTU district government due to the lack of financial and human resources. The study findings indicate the needs for regulation at district level that assigns such authorities to village governments and regulates budget allocation to support the implementation of the authorities at village level.

**Key words:** Authority of assignment, village government, TTU district government, Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Decentralization or regional autonomy is a concept that has been applied in Indonesia. Article 18, Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution shows that the Republic of Indonesia is divided into provinces, and provincial areas are divided into regencies and municipalities, and each province, regency and municipality has local government which is regulated by Law and in paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, stipulating that the provincial, regency, and municipality governments regulate and manage their own governmental affairs according to the principle of autonomy and duty of assistance (1, 2).

Local governments, as the implementation of the concept of regional autonomy, are given the authority to carry out their government affairs as stated in Article 5, paragraph (4) of Law No. 23/2014 on Local Government that the implementation of government affairs at regional level is based on the principle of decentralization, de-concentration and co-administration (3, 4). The consequence of this concept is not only the decentralization of authority to the autonomous regions but also the recognition and protection of the existence of village autonomy as the original autonomy of this nation prior to the arrival of Dutch colonial (5, 6).

Law No. 6/2014 on Village has authorized village governments to manage their territories autonomously (7). Villages that used to wait for instructions to implement top-level government policies are now given creative space to carry out developments in their regions. Therefore, the central, provincial and district governments should pay great attention to village governments because basically they are the foundations of the country (5, 8). In addition, in the context of regional development, village governments are the spearhead of regional governments in regard to community empowerment. One of the

authorities of village governments as stipulated in Article 19, Law No. 6/2014 is the authority assigned by the central government, provincial government, or regency / municipality government and other authorities assigned by the central government, provincial government, or regency / municipality government in accordance with the provisions of legislation (7). Law No. 6/2014 represents that the exercise of authority assigned by the regency / municipality government is administered by village governments and accompanied by a fee (7). In addition, Article 20, Paragraph (3) of Law No. 23/2014 also stipulates that the affairs of the concurrent government which become the authority of a regency / municipality shall be held by the regency / municipality or may be assigned part of the implementation to the village governments (3).

The assignments of a district government to village governments are based on several considerations, among others: (1) the district government has limited resources to carry out the development tasks that could reach out to all in all corners of society; (2) the village governments know the conditions of rural communities and are able to deliver the services to the communities; (3) the implementation of the tasks in the rural communities will be more efficient (low cost) and effective (right on target) if carried out by the village governments. This is in line with the goals of decentralization which are to reduce the burden of government at the top level, and to achieve the efficiency and effectiveness of services to communities, the effectiveness of resource use, the stabilization of development planning, the increase of companionship and national unity and political legitimacy of the government by providing opportunities for the public to recognize the problems faced and submit them to government agencies (8, 9).

In addition, the assignments of a district government to village governments can increase the independence of the village governments, position village communities as the subject of development and provide an active role for village governments in improving public services. Therefore, the success of local governments is reflected in how far the needs of communities are met, community empowerment, and community satisfaction of the services received (5, 8, 9). This study, therefore, aimed at exploring the authorities of assignment that can be assigned by the *Timor Tengah Utara* (TTU) district government to village governments in the district.

## METHODS

### *Study Setting*

TTU district covers a total area of 2,669.70 km<sup>2</sup> (10). The district is located at the mainland of the Timor island with positions of 9 ° 02 '48 "and 9 ° 37' 36" South Latitude, and between 124 ° 04 '02 "and 124 ° 46' 00" East Longitude, and shares the border with *Timor Tengah Selatan* (TTS) district in the south, *Ambenu* district (East Timor) and *Sawu* Sea in the North, *Kupang* district and TTS district in the west, *Belu* district and *Malaka* district in the East (10). Administratively, the district is divided into 24 sub-districts, 183 villages and 11 urban villages. The total population of the district in 2016 was 250,664 inhabitants. The population density in the same year was 94 people / km<sup>2</sup> with the female population more than the male population (10).

*Insana* sub-district where the current study was conducted was recognized as *Insana Swapraja*. After the independence of Indonesia the name of *Insana Swapraja* was changed and then divided into five sub-districts, namely *Insana*, North *Insana*, West *Insana*, Central

*Insana* and *Fafinesu Insana* (11). The sub-district of *Insana* covers 17 villages including *Oinbit*, *Nunmafo*, *Fatoin*, *Manunain A*, *Tapenpah*, *Bitauuni*, *Ainiut*, *Botof*, *Keun*, *Manunain B*, *Fatuana*, *Sekon*, *Nansean*, *East Nansean*, *Susulaku*, *Susulaku B* and *Loeram*. Administratively, the *Insana* sub-district shares the border with West *Insana* and *Malaka* district in the South; *Biboki* sub-district and *Biboki Tanpah* sub-district in the North; West *Insana* sub-district in the West; and *Malaka* district in the East. Geographically, the area of *Insana* sub-district cover the area of 333.08 km<sup>2</sup> (12.47% of TTU District) with varying topography, hilly, flatland and valley (11).

### *Study Design, Recruitment and Data Collection*

A qualitative study was conducted in *Insana* sub-district, TTU district, East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. This qualitative design was employed because it allowed the research to observe the situations and settings of the participants and to have direct interaction with them (12-14). The study participants (n=17) were recruited using purposive sampling technique. In-depth interview method was used to collect data from the participants. Interviews focused on exploring authority of assignment that can be delegated by TTU district government to village governments. Each interview took place at time and places recommended by each participant and lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Participants were advised about the voluntary nature of their participation before each interview. Prior to commencing the interviews, each participant signed and returned a written consent form at the interview day. Each participant was informed that ethical approval for this study was obtained from Nusa Cendana University, Kupang, Indonesia.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis in this research was conducted using Miles and Huberman approach. Miles and Huberman (15) argue that the activity of qualitative data analysis is performed interactively and continuously to reach data saturation. Data analysis activities are data reduction, data display and data conclusion drawing / verification, which are described as follows. The first step was data reduction. Data reduction was carried out by summarizing, selecting the key points, focusing on the essentials, and searching for the theme and pattern. Thus the reduced data give a clearer picture and make it easier for the researcher to collect the next data and look for it if necessary; the second step was data presentation. The presentation of data was done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, and flowcharts. Miles and Huberman stated that "the most frequent form of data display for qualitative research data in the past has been narrative text"; the last step was data conclusion and verification.

## RESULTS

This study pointed out several district government authorities that can be assigned to village governments due to the limited financial and human resources of district government, and on the basis of efficiency and effectiveness considerations. The authorities were in regard to the management of primary education, health, irrigation, the identification of non-habitable houses and the development habitable houses for villagers, the prevention and control of livestock diseases and the distribution of livestock to rural communities in needs, and the protection of women and children from violence.

## Education

### *Incentives for Primary Education Teachers*

Primary education including early childhood education, elementary school, and junior high school was reported to be under the control of district government. District government has the authority to manage programs and activities supportive of the implementation of teaching learning process at primary education level. The interviews with several participants indicated that the authority to manage primary education could be assigned to village governments as some of them had been involved in handling issues related to primary education in their villages.

"Management of education is handled by three elements namely the government through education department, private sector and community. TTU district handles 297 elementary schools, 20 formal kindergartens, and approximately 300 early childhood education institutions. .... So, there are some authorities that can be delegated to the village governments. In regard to the management of Early Childhood Education, we have a commitment to issuing a Decree of the district Chief to assign the authority to the village governments. In regard to Elementary School and Junior High School, we have built networks and talked to non-civil servant teachers. I am also grateful that some village governments had allocated some funds to finance the teachers" (Participant 1).

"In the 2017 fiscal year we have allocated funds for the incentives of three non-civil servant teachers at *Bokis* Primary School and four other teachers at Early Childhood Education. Each of them gets IDR. 450,000 per month and the budget is taken from the village funds" (Participant 2).

"We have seen that the scope of the district government is too broad, so we cannot expect much from the district government .... Thus the sub-district governments hope that the authority to manage primary education can be assigned to village governments as there may be some aspects that can be supported with the village funds "(Participant 3).

The fact that the district government had not yet issued regulations which authorized village governments to be actively involved in supporting primary education at village level seemed

to be a major obstacle for village governments to taking real steps in assisting the education sector. Some participants revealed that the district government had not yet assigned such authority which could enable them to fully support primary education in their villages. This seemed to hamper them from allocating funds to help the education sector as it could be considered as a fraud.

"If the district government gives us a chance or permits us to build classrooms for students, then the village government can do it because the *Ekafalo* State Elementary School here does not have sufficient rooms. The village government has seen this shortage but cannot do anything because the allocation of funds is set in the regulations, we cannot do something outside the existing regulations because it violates the rules. Therefore, the local government should think of delegating the authority to village governments so that they have legal basis to take action" (Participant 4).

## Health

### *Hiring Health Personnel*

The provision of health professionals to deliver health services for communities especially in rural areas seemed to be another area where the authority to manage could be assigned or delegated to the village governments. Several participants interviewed indicated that some village governments had taken part in this field and hired health professionals to help their communities.

"In *Sekon* village, we have been employing one midwife who is originally from the village and not a civil servant. We provide her with incentives of IDR 1 million per month. Source of the fund is the village funds. .... We consulted the head of the community health centre to ask for a midwife and she was assigned to our village because she is knowledgeable, experienced and has a diploma certificate" (Participant 5).

"The village government submitted a proposal to the Health Department, asking for a health professional to be assigned in the village. The health professional assigned to work in the village is from the village "(Participant 7).



"In *Oinbit* village, we are planning to employ four health professionals who are not civil servants and we will provide them with incentives of IDR 400,000 per month which will be taken from the village funds. This decision has been made and agreed upon in the meeting with Village Deliberation Agency" (Participant 6).

It appeared from the interviews that even though the village governments had been involved in managing health services in their villages but they did not have the legal authority yet since the district government had not yet assigned them to do so. The study participants expressed that the authority of assignment by the district government would be very much helpful as it could be used as the basis to decide the number of health professionals they could hire and the incentives they should provide for each health professional.

"In regard to the health sector, there are some village governments that have funded health workers (Midwives) who are not civil servants with very small amount of incentives. If there is an official authority of assignment from the district government to the village governments then the village governments can provide them with standardised incentives" (Participant 8).

## Public Works and Spatial Planning

### *Enhancement, Rehabilitation and Maintenance of Secondary Irrigation Networks*

Irrigation development seemed to be another area that could be assigned to village governments. Law No. 23/2014 indicates that primary and secondary irrigations are under the authority of the district government. Furthermore, the Village Minister's Regulation, No. 1/2015 stipulates that the authority of village governments is limited to the construction and maintenance of tertiary irrigation. The interviews showed that village governments and village communities were willing to take part in irrigation development if they had the authority to do so.

"We have proposed to the district government because the irrigation of primary and secondary channels is not the authority of village governments. District government has already handled severe rehabilitations. The communities in my village have proposed to handle irrigation problems, but I told them that village governments could only handle the tertiary channels. If the village governments have the authority then we can also improve and maintain the irrigation channels" (Participant 8).

"Communities in our village are ready to help if needed for the development of irrigation and if we are given the authority then we are ready to build or repair the irrigations because the development is from the people, by the people and for the people" (Participant 9) .

## Housing and Settlement Area

### *Facilitating the Implementation of Habitable Housing Development Program*

The implementation of habitable housing development program was identified as a field that could be facilitated by village governments. Limited district government personnel to identify non-habitable houses in rural communities and to plan the construction of habitable houses at village level seemed to be the main reason supportive of the authority of assignment to village governments.

"Technical guidance in the Regulation of the Minister of Public Work indicates that there are technical personnel who assist communities to determine whether or not the houses belonging to the communities are habitable or in serious or minor damage. The technical personnel and community members do the calculations related to the materials to be used and budget plans. During the construction of habitable houses, technical personnel will assist communities and be assisted by village officials. This aims to facilitate development. Staff or human resources at our department / Public Work Department are very limited. We only have 11 staff, while the area to cover is very wide. I think it is much more effective and efficient if the village governments facilitate and control the housing development process" (Participant 10).

### *Organizing the Development of Habitable Housing at Village Level*

The development of habitable housing for villagers seemed to be another aspect that could also be assigned to village governments. A few study participants commented that the development of habitable housing for villagers was not their authority and they expected the district government to delegate the authority to village governments so that they could organize the development of habitable housing for rural communities using village funds.

"If we are given the authority, then I have a plan to build habitable housing using village funds. I will look for engineers to design the model of the house and calculate the required budget. The houses to be built have the same model and size and the local people are the one who will work on the constructions (Participant 11).

### **Women Empowerment and Child Protection**

#### *Organizing the Socialization and Campaign on Women and Child Protection*

Socialization and campaign to protect women and child from violence were another area that could also be implemented by village governments. These have been seen as preventive efforts that need to be done by the village governments to prevent violence against women and children. The study participants indicated the existence of the program for women and child protection. However, the limited availability of funds to support the program had led to the lack of program implementation and inability to assign the program to village governments.

"One of the strategic issues in the Department of Women Empowerment is the violence against women and children. For the time being we can only coordinate with the village governments but have not been able to delegate duties to the village governments because the funds available are very limited. If we delegate the duty and authority to the village governments

without facilitating them with funding then surely the task and authority cannot be executed" (Participant 12).

## Agriculture

### *Facilitating the Prevention and Control of Livestock Diseases*

Development in the livestock sector or increasing livestock production and productivity is one of the areas in which the village governments could take an active role. One of the activities undertaken to support the increase of livestock productivity was the prevention and control of livestock diseases. The district government could delegate the authority to the village governments so that the village governments could act as the implementers of the program and provide vaccination to the livestock of the villagers.

"I see that the participation of villagers in livestock disease prevention activities through vaccination activities is still lacking. Many village community members did not prepare their animals and most of the animals were not vaccinated. This is because people consider vaccination activities as a livestock department service program, whereas vaccination is very beneficial" (Participant 13).

### *Facilitating the Distribution of Livestock*

The livestock department seemed to have constraints in distributing livestock to villagers. These constraints were primarily related to the identification of community groups that met the criteria for obtaining livestock, and monitoring them. Therefore, delegation of such authority to village governments and the implementation of such activities by the village governments would be much more effective and efficient because the village governments would more easily identify the villagers in need and supervise them.

"The distribution of livestock and the implementation of other activities such as vaccines, drug delivery, equipment procurement for artificial insemination and

livestock collection can be done more effectively and efficiently by the village governments. The livestock department just needs to provide technical personnel and guidelines of the medicines and equipment for artificial insemination" (Participant 15).

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the authorities of district government that can be assigned to village governments in TTU district, East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. Authority of assignment assigned to village governments is primarily based on the efficiency and effectiveness considerations, and due to the limited financial and human resources of district government to implement such authorities. The results of the current study suggest that TTU district government was in process of assigning or delegating the authority to manage primary education to village governments. This study reports that the provision of incentives for non-civil servant teachers at the early childhood education, elementary school and junior high school teachers, were the aspects where village governments in TTU district had been involved in. However, it also indicates that the village governments in the district were not fully involved in handling problems related to primary education in their villages because the district government had not legally assigned the authority to village governments. As the consequence, they were not in position to financially support primary education activities. This is in line with the results of previous studies by Djaha (16), Murdiantari (17), Silahudin (18) and Kessa (19), reporting that lack of regulation stipulated by head of district or governor preclude full involvement of village governments in the implementation of programs or activities at village level.

Similarly, supporting the previous findings (20, 21), the results of the present study point out the authority to provide non-civil servant health professionals to deliver health services

for rural communities as an authority that can be assigned to and implemented by village governments. This study portrays that several village governments had taken initiatives in supporting the availability of health professionals including nurses and midwives in their villages and providing incentives for them. However, formal authority of assignment by the district government to village governments is required as it is seen as the basis for them to take decision and formulate health related programs (22). Construction and maintenance of irrigation in rural communities which are under the authority of district government can also be assigned to be managed by village governments. The current findings report that the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary irrigations were under the authority of district government, and the construction and maintenance of tertiary irrigation were under the responsibility of village governments. Supporting previous findings reported elsewhere (23-27), the study also reports the lack of maintenance of primary and secondary irrigations by TTU district government due to limited human resources, and indicates the need to assign the implementation of the program to village governments as it could be much more effective and efficient.

Consistent with the previous findings (18, 22, 28), this study confirms limited district government personnel as a supporting factor for ineffectiveness in identifying non-habitable houses of rural communities and in planning the constructions of habitable houses for villagers. This study suggests that such authority would be much more effective and efficient if it is assigned to and implemented by village governments since they are well informed about the housing conditions of the villagers. Likewise, insufficient human and financial resources of district government were reported to have led to ineffectiveness of the prevention and control of livestock diseases and the distribution of livestock to rural

communities in need. Some of the reasons indicated were that the villagers deemed the programs as the activities of livestock department and were not fully aware of the benefits of the programs. In line with previous studies (29, 30), findings of the current study inform that the authority to carry out such programs and activities would be much more effective if it is assigned to and implemented by village governments who are parts of rural communities and well informed about livestock in their villages. Another aspect that could also be assigned to be implemented by village governments is the authority to carry out socialisation and campaign for women and children protection. The study confirms the existence of the programs to empower women and protect women and children from violence, and recognises the significant roles of village governments in socialisation and campaign in this matter. However, the authority of assignment to village government has not been delegated because the district government or the department of women empowerment lacked budget and could not financially support village governments to facilitate program implementation. These findings support the results of previous studies (22, 30), indicating limited availability of financial resources as a major obstacle to program implementation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study reports several authorities that can be assigned or delegated to village governments. They include the authority to manage primary education, provide health professionals for rural communities, construct and maintain irrigation, identify non-habitable houses of rural communities and plan the development of habitable houses, facilitate the prevention and control of livestock disease, and distribute livestock for villagers in needs, and to protect women and children from violence. The findings indicate

ineffective and inefficient implementation of such authorities by TTU district government due to the lack of financial and human resources. The findings also indicate the needs for regulation at district level that assigns such authorities to village governments and as the legal basis for them to carry out related programs and activities.

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