

**WHAT ARE THE FACTORS
FOR HIGH/ACTIVE VS LOW/POOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION
IN KECAMATAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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KDP Outline

The Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) was developed by the Government of Indonesia in the time of Asian Economic Crisis (late 1990s) that forced millions of rural poor below of poverty line. President Suharto was overthrown, and the country, whose local capacity and local community organizing skills had been undermined by 32 years of authoritarian rule by Suharto, was now faced with a period of political transition and decentralization process. In this context, KDP has emerged as a key component of GOI's efforts to improve local governance and to launch the decentralization process. The KDP provides block grants of Rp. 350 million to 1 billion rupiah (USD 39,000-111,000) directly to kecamatan and villages for small-scale infrastructure and social economic activities.

Goals

1. alleviate poverty by raising rural income
2. strengthen local government and community institutions
3. improve good governance

Key principles

1. community participation and empowerment of poor rural communities
2. transparency
3. sustainability
4. simplicity
5. competition for funds (between villages)

KDP strategy

1. empower the poor to help themselves
2. raise their income through job creation and higher productivity
3. improve local infrastructure
4. bottom up decision-making
5. village financial management
6. technical and social facilitation and assistance drawn from Indonesian private sector and NGO's.

KDP provides funds at the kecamatan level, and villagers decide to use these funds for infrastructure, social or economic activities. These funds are available to each kecamatan each year for up to three years. The distribution of the fund within the kecamatan is through the UDKP forum (Unit Daerah Keraja Pembangunan) to the village council LKMD (Lembaga Ketahnan Masyarakat Desa). The UDKP forum consists of members appointed by the government, in addition to broadly respected persons (religious and traditional leaders, teachers, etc.) and three other representatives (one man and two women) selected from each participating gvillage. The UDKP also creates a unit called the financial management (UPK) to manage KDP funds and to oversee any large procurements.

Despite its special efforts for inclusion of all members of the community to create a true bottoms-up decision making ground, some inevitably find themselves excluded from the program, for various reasons. As part of the effort to investigate this problem, we were assigned to explore, for our first fieldwork in Subang, in West Java, the question: “Why do many women experience feelings of discomfort and unease at attending KDP meetings?” From there we have branched out our investigation, with a different focus in each region we visited thereafter, to ask the bigger question: **“What are the factors for high/active vs. low/poor women participation in KDP?”**

Executive Summary

Subang, Cirebon, and West Sumatra—each unique in its women KDP participation trend and approach—has combined to give us an overall picture of the factors that make for low/poor and high/active women participation in KDP.

Factors that make for a poor women participation are:

1. limitation caused by lifestyle and strict division of labor
2. not accustomed to attend meetings and to “discuss”
3. feelings of inferiority; lack of confidence
4. poor information

Factors that make for high/active women participation are:

1. strong sense of community
2. membership to community groups
3. supportive men
4. observation and incorporation of local culture and customs
5. ability of facilitators to communicate effectively about KDP

Recommendations to address these issues are:

1. education/training of villagers and facilitators/consultants
2. improvement of information dissemination; multiple means of communication
3. promotion of community spirit
4. women empowerment programs: formal and informal, within and outside of KDP
5. meeting structure: make meetings more approachable and effective
6. technical considerations for the villagers: pick-up service

Findings

SUBANG

Subang is a remote *kota* surrounded by mountains, approximately 100km to the west of Jakarta. Tea plantations and rice fields fill the area. The majority of its people are farmers (mostly tenant farmers). Subang does not enjoy good (ie. high and active) women participation in KDP as in other places such as Cirebon or West Sumatra, and it

struggles to increase its KDP women participation. We have observed several factors, to the extent possible within the limit of our stay, that contribute to the difficulty women face in their participation in KDP. The points are as follows:

1. *Limitation caused by lifestyle & Strict division of labor*

The lifestyle and inflexible schedule as (tenant) farmers make it extremely difficult for the villagers to attend the KDP meetings (usually 8 am to noon). Their working hours are set and not open to rearrangement—unlike in other professions—not to mention exhausting. This is especially true for these women, whose primary and foremost duty is still firmly believed to be one of mothers/wives, yet whose living conditions necessitate them to also contribute to the household income. The women are depended upon completely by the men for household chores, and the men refuse to share the burden of tasks and chores that are left unattended to when women leave the house to go to the meetings. Thus, if a woman decides to go to a meeting, she must be ready to lose a big portion of her time – which would ordinarily be used for household chores— and make up for it somehow. For her, going to the meeting means staying up later or waking up earlier the next morning or rushing during the day to get all her chores and tasks done. To this end, the strict division of labor between men and women—men in public and women in the house—has made it extremely difficult for the women to attend KDP meetings.

Moreover, the opportunity cost is even higher for the poorer members of the village, whose daily income is roughly Rp 5000 (about .60USD) and for whom what they make that day is what they eat. By going to a meeting, they are possibly risking losing their meal for the day. That is, if they do not make money that day they will not eat either that day. In addition to this financial cost, the poorer women must also deal with their other duty of taking care of the house and children.

2. *Not accustomed to attend meetings and to “discuss,” etc.*

Javenese culture has made meetings and discussions in the presence of men particularly disconcerting events for the women. The women claim to have been culturally taught to not speak up against men, rendering them passive participants at the meetings. The women must make conscious efforts to keep themselves motivated to attend these meetings by telling themselves that they need the information in order to have access to the funds.

However, several adjustments have been made to address these problems. Since KDP II (March '03), women have been more actively invited to the meetings. Prior to that, only a couple of women attended, but now, as we saw at the village meeting we visited, roughly half of the participants were female. A new rule has been made where a meeting is to be cancelled if 30% of the attendees are not women. In addition, on July 3, 2003, the village had their first KDP all-women meeting. The aim of the KDP all-women meeting is to provide a place for women which encourages them to voice their opinions.

3. ***Feelings of inferiority, lack of confidence***—some have expressed their illiteracy as a source of these feelings; poorer members feel intimidated by the richer, more educated members.

Feelings of inferiority and lack of confidence have emerged as a reason for some women to shy away from the meetings, both mixed and all-women meetings. One woman from the village of Pakuhaji repeatedly referred to herself as “Saya cuman orang kecil” (“I am just a little person”); she could not hide her amazement that KDP actually wants to include an “orang kecil” like herself into the planning and decision-making. By not going to the meetings, these villagers, convinced that they have nothing to offer, avoid possibly being embarrassed in public for their illiteracy. Their lack of confidence leads them to believe that they have little to contribute at the meetings. The poorer members especially feel intimidated by the other villagers.

Moreover, that the women need to obtain permission from their husbands in order to attend the meetings implies that the men are doing the women a “favor” by letting them go. What is interesting here is that women are bound in this framework that designates them the role of the inferior party, in need of the men’s supervision; yet, they are also the responsible party depended upon completely by men for the smooth running of the household and of any other tasks left to them by men.

4. ***Poor information flow***—many women were not informed of the meetings; they expressed their willingness to attend had they been informed.

When asked why they did not attend the village meeting (to those who were not at the meeting), some answered that they were not informed, and that they would have gone had they known. However, the poor information flow that seems to have prevented willing participants from attending the village meeting could have been merely due to the fact that the two village facilitators in Subang were hospitalized and not available to inform them. Nevertheless, that the absence of the village facilitators can make the difference between attendance and non-attendance of some villagers indicates that there is room for improvement in the information dissemination process.

CIREBON

Cirebon is the second biggest *kota* in West Java, after Bandung. The two kecamatan we visited in Cirebon, Palimanan and Beber, both had sufficient transportation system, phone lines, and were generally more exposed to urban life. Both enjoy active and spirited villager participation, according to the village facilitators there. Kecamatan Beber has only recently begun its KDP program, and kecamatan Palimanan is in its second year. It was only after KDP II, when a stronger emphasis on inviting women (such as the 30% rule which requires that 30% of the meeting attendees be female) that women participation increased in Palimanan. The village of Ciawi in kecamatan Palimanan had already experienced PMD-DKE (Empowerment of Areas to Overcome the Economic Crisis), a government poverty alleviation program that provided loans and

infrastructure. However, women and sub-village level participation were not included in the decision-making of PMD-DKE.

I like KDP approach much better, because KDP lets me know what the situation in the village is really like. I know what the money is being spent on, and they even ask me about my own needs. I don't mind losing in the voting because at least I know what the money is being used for."

Ibu Ooh, laborer in the handicraft industry, desa Sindangkasih, CIREBON

I like KDP approach much better. I feel comfortable if I have the right to choose, because it's not anyone else's decision but my own.

Ibu Kajem, snack seller, recipient of two KDP loans, desa Ciawi, CIREBON

The villagers of Ciawi demonstrated much community spirit, and the mixed village meeting in Sindangkasih gave evidence of active women participation in KDP—70% of the participants were women and the two participants who voted against the proposal of the majority were women. But what makes these villagers in Cirebon, more commercialized and less rural, more active members in KDP than their counterparts in Subang? The following are several elements we observed that allow for good community participation in KDP (and consequently better women participation):

1. Strong sense of community

We noticed a significant difference in the community spirit of the villagers of Cirebon from those of Subang. There seemed to be a stronger bond among the villagers in Cirebon— Ibu Turia, a widow who struggles to make her living selling snacks, explained, “They [the other women in the village] are like family. Knowing that I am a widow, they help me and even lend me money.” The villagers of Cirebon also showed more enthusiasm in participating in community-oriented activities. In the village of Sindangkasih, villagers willingly and freely help neighbors to build houses, provided that the materials are given to them. They described KDP meetings as “comfortable” and even “sociable.” The strong sense of community that the villagers share makes them willing to contribute and participate in activities and programs, such as KDP, that aims to promote the welfare of the community. Moreover, the friendships and bond that exist among the villagers allow the women to feel more at ease and freer to speak up in the presence of the other villagers at the meetings. Thus, the strong sense of community helps to lift, even if not completely, the fear factor of these meetings for the women (ie. having to speak up in front of unfamiliar/unfriendly faces, especially male). Ibu Misnu, a widow from Ciawi who sells snacks and whom her neighbors call “very poor,” says, “I don't feel shy going to the meetings because I know everyone there.” Ibu Ooh of Sindangkasih, an average villager who works in the handicraft industry, confidently articulated, “This is a democracy,” when explaining why she felt comfortable being one of the only two women voting against the proposal of the majority at the village meeting (though the two women lost the vote).

2. *Membership to community groups*

Membership to community groups, a religious group in this case, seems to help foster a stronger sense of community, as found in the villages of Cirebon. All the women we interviewed are members of the religious group in their respective villages. They communicated that the group has not just a religious/spiritual value but also emotional and practical value. The religious groups in these villages now does “*arisan*,” where money is collected from the members to give to one member in need (for example, Ibu Misnu of Ciawi built a bath with the money given to her through the *arisan*). These groups bring the women together, giving the women a place to discuss current issues and share their feelings. Ibu Kajem of Ciawi (widow, sells snacks, poor) explains, “We talk about everything and discuss our difficulties. We sing traditional Muslim songs, and I’ve made many friends there.” Furthermore, membership to the group has made these women accustomed to attending meetings: “The religious group has been established for ten years, and I go to the meetings three times a week,” said Ibu Kajem. The village facilitator explains, “Women here usually attend the meetings, as long as they are invited. 77 women came to the last all-women meeting. Usually more than 30% of the village meetings are women.”

In addition, the mixed religious group of Sindangkasih has given the women practice of speaking up in front of men. Two women from Sindangkasih, Ibu Ooh (a handicraft laborer) and Ibu Nanisupartini (middle school principal, religious group leader, university graduate), explain, “It is in our habit to discuss our problems, even in front of men.”

3. *Supportive men*

Women in Cirebon seem to enjoy more support from their husbands (eg. help in household chores). Ibu Suniri, a cake-seller from Ciawi who makes a modest living, said that she asks for her husband’s permission to attend the meetings “only out of politeness” and only when she may need his help repaying the loan, but not because she *needs* his permission to go. Pak Agus who owns a small foster farm also from Ciawi, who is the leader of a group for KDP funds, articulates the importance of his wife and other women to attend the meetings: “It’s important for women to know all the problems of the community. They should know the real condition of the village and what problems they face. Men and women should shoulder the responsibility of improving the community condition. I don’t mind helping out as long as it is for a good purpose and not because my wife wants to chit-chat with other women.” He went on to suggest that there be a separate all-women meeting after the mixed meeting so that the women can discuss more freely, and then bring their agenda back to the mixed meeting. Some women even prefer mixed meetings over all-women meetings: “Women can just talk and talk without reaching any conclusion, and the ideas are limited. But when men are there, there are more ideas and we actually reach conclusions,” say Ibu Ooh and Ibu Nanisupartini. Motivation and outspokenness, which business-running (made possible by their easier access to more urban areas) had taught them, characterize these women in Cirebon. It seems that these traits have contributed to earning them the respect they enjoy

from the men. The supportiveness on the part of the men has allowed for an atmosphere of openness where women feel no threat at, and sometimes even prefer, the company of men.

WEST SUMATRA

West Sumatra, home to the Minangkabau people, is one of the only places—if not the only place—in the world where the matrilineal system exists. In the Minangkabau culture, neither sex rules as a class over the other. Men may take up the role as mediators of public disputes, but they do so only with the backing of community approval and their decisions reflect community consensus. Women play a central role in the social and public life through the revered *adat* (traditionally believed) ceremonies that they organize and stage. In the home, the mother's brother/the uncle (*mamak*) is given authority and the role as a father figure, and children turn to their uncles for guidance and advice. The Minangkabau culture is one that is distinct and enduring, unflinching in the face of outside pressure.

In the regions of West Sumatra, one sees the graceful incorporation of culture/traditions into the KDP process that is perhaps the most fundamental yet trickiest process: the information dissemination and invitation (“recruitment”) of villagers to the meetings. There, in West Sumatra, the two aspects (information dissemination and invitation of villagers) are addressed and handled by the KDP staff through their understanding of the local culture and traditions:

1. Information dissemination: Who invites?

The highest title in the Minangkabau culture is reserved for the religious figure of *Bundo Kanduang* (“the mythical Queen Mother”). KDP consultants and facilitators have observed and made a point of emphasizing the importance of the role that religious leaders (informal and formal) play in the communities. The regional officials of Pesisir Selatan explains that they use a process called BKM (*Bundo Kanduang Menghimbau*) to identify in each village the *Bundo Kanduang* through whom they can communicate to the villagers about KDP. Extremely dedicated and committed, the *Bundo Kanduang* sometimes even pay, out of their own pockets, for the transportation fare to attend KDP meetings for the women who cannot afford it.

The process of identification is applied for identifying other influential leaders as well (ie. the informal leader, woman leader, religious leader, youth leader, and “intellectual” leader). First, the kecamatan facilitators are asked to examine the established social system in their kecamatan and identify these influential leaders, who are the “five pillars of *nagari* [West Sumatran village].” Then, the kecamatan facilitators ask these leaders to urge the villagers to participate in KDP—a process which, according to the regional officials, have been proven effective. As in Kecamatan Bayang, the oral invitation by influential leaders has been especially effective in recruiting women participants: 67% of KDP participants are now women, whereas before it was 43%.

2. Invitation of villagers: *How do they invite?*

As in the *adat* (traditional) way, the selected leaders invite the villagers directly and often individually. Three scenarios are possible: the leader comes one by one to the house the day of the meeting and the villagers and the leader go together to the meeting; leader informs villager (one-by-one) the day before the meeting; or the leader informs the villagers at another meeting prior to the KDP meeting.

Officials at the Secretariat for KDP in Padang described another way the *adat* still lives on: the leader (the inviter), when going from door to door, brings something to the invitee and if the invitee takes it, he/she is obliged to go to the meeting (the only alteration to this ritual is that the inviter now brings candies and cigarettes instead of *daun siri* [a type of leaf], which have been deemed inappropriate). However, though this process has been said to be effective, the officials at the Secretariat also acknowledge the problem that the more recognized villagers are more likely to be invited in this way and that the poorer, less recognized villagers sometimes are not reached.

Another way in which the *adat* has been incorporated into the KDP process to increase effectiveness is through the help of the *mamak*, the brother of the mother, who holds the most authority in the household. In Kecamatan Mapat Tunggul, for example, the facilitators placed special effort to seek the help of the *mamak* in each household. According to the FK of Mapat Tunggul, “when the *mamak* told the women to go to the meeting, they actually walked three hours just to attend the meeting.” Whether it is actually in the interest of the women to have to walk three hours to get to a meeting if they do not want to go is open to debate; yet there is no question that help from the *mamak* is a powerful one.

What else works in West Sumatra?

Other issues have also been addressed in these villages in West Sumatra. One is the timing of the KDP meetings. Ibu Susi, the village facilitator of desa Tanjung Durian (kec. Bayung, kabupaten Pesisir Selatan) explains that in her village the KDP meetings follow right after the religious meetings. Combining the two meetings (in that one is followed right after the other but not the contents of the two meetings) spares the women of the extra time and transportation fare—both of which are very precious to them—of going to both meetings separately at different times. Held in the evening, the timing also of these meetings make it easier for the women to leave their work and attend the meetings.

Facilitators have also played an important role in contributing to the relative success of KDP women participation in these villages. Special attention is paid by the facilitators to present KDP in a manner most appealing to the women in an effort to encourage women participation. Ibu Fabriani, facilitator in kecamatan Panti, is one of such facilitators. She motivates the women to attend KDP meetings by “telling them that there’s a program called KDP that allocates 10 % of the fund for women’s economy.” She explained that, “when women hear this, they usually get curious about KDP.”

Moreover, the West Sumatran culture, where neither sex rules as a class over the other and where education is highly valued, has bred eager and active participants of KDP. “It is in our tradition for women and men to argue about everything and anything,”

says Ibu Hayatunufus of the village of Tanah Keras, a middle school teacher and the *Bundo Kanduang* of her village. Ibu Pat Mawati, a 20 year old from the village of Lubuakgadan, answers, “If we [women] don’t speak up, who else will take care of our needs?” when asked about women participation in KDP in her village. The men in this culture seems to be comfortable with their outspoken female counterparts. Also from the Lubuakgadan, Pak Sarpin—a farmer in his forties who is an elementary school graduate, yet eloquent in the KDP language and principles—says, “In Minangkabau, we’ve always had gender equity, but still it’s good to have all-women meetings to discuss their own specific needs.”

Recommendations

With the three distinct regions of Subang, Cirebon, and West Sumatra in mind, whose respective villager (specifically women) participation in KDP combine to give us an overall picture of what factors make for a good and a bad villager participation, we have come up with several recommendations:

1. *Education/Training: villagers and facilitators/ consultants*

FOR VILLAGERS

Education, though it will take time, can help to change three out of the four factors involved in making KDP participation difficult for women in Subang. These are: the strict division of labor, combined with the hardships of their living conditions, that burdens the village women with double duties (one of wives/mothers and the other of contributing economically to the family); the Javanese culture that makes it distressing for women to attend meetings in the presence of men; and the “orang kecil” (“little person”) syndrome stemming from inferiority feelings of some villagers for their illiteracy that makes them shy away from public discussions.

Education in this case can take the form of personal development training (leadership training), awareness-raising training that addresses gender issues, and improved access and exposure to information and resources (using “learning groups”). Here, as Ibu Nani, leader coordinator for PeKKA argues, it is key that the approach to helping the villagers be one of “self-help.” With a “self-help approach,” what the villagers gain from the workshops and training will remain with them, even after KDP, so that progress may continue and be sustained.

Furthermore, it becomes essential that the men are involved in this process as well. The education and personal development training should raise awareness—of both men and women— of the need to be flexible in the division of labor, so that women can take a more active role in advancing the welfare of the community (for example, through programs such as KDP) without being “penalized” (ie. having to do extra work for the time lost to attending meeting). The education needs to also promote a change in the attitude of the men towards the women to regard them as “partners,” whose contribution is crucial in their fight against poverty. Education can be made more accessible by means such as the media. As Ibu Nani of PeKKA suggests, commercials—by way of public service so that the advertisement cost would be free— can be a powerful tool in raising

public awareness of gender issues and women's rights. If any real progress is to be made, there must be a mutual understanding between the sexes for cooperation and a shared determination to improve their living standards.

This process of education will no doubt require an enormous amount of money as well as human resources. Nevertheless, it is absolutely vital that each villager understands the purpose and significance of programs such as KDP and the significance and the need for their participation and contribution to these causes—to lift themselves out of the poverty cycle. The villagers need to understand that their active involvement in KDP can help it meet its goal, one part being to revitalize the local economy and ultimately better living conditions in rural villages. Working in collaboration with non-profit organizations or other government organizations may be one way to raise funds to finance the education process.

Another alternative, to address the issue of human resources, is to actively employ the media as the main “educator.” Educational VCDs can be made and distributed to the FKs in each KDP program, which can then be viewed at village-level meetings. However, as Mr. Steven Burgess of the World Bank says, the key is to “keep the entertainment value high and the obvious preaching at minimum.” He further suggests making communal the ownership of VCD/TV and generator sets and giving them to women as a coherent group (and not given to the village head); as well as dubbing programs into the local language and preparing discussion questions/ organizing discussion groups for after each viewing. If possible, the facilitator should make a time plan and make efforts to include every villager. There should be an active movement and a proposal written out to clearly and convincingly convey the need and importance of such programs (eg. distribution of educational VCDs), explaining in detail how this program will be brought about and implemented, in order for it to gain support from sponsoring organizations.

FOR FACILITATORS & CONSULTANTS

The process of education needs extend to the FKs/FDs also—especially to the female FK/FDs, who act as role models for the village women. As Susan Wong asserts in “Do Women Make Any Difference? KDP 1 Gender Data Analysis: Interim Report,” there is a need for “improved gender facilitation training for all FKs. Qualitative reports indicate that female FKs serve as useful role models for women and encourage village women to speak more freely in public”(21). She explains that “...there are consistent field reports stating that women feel more comfortable speaking freely if there is a female facilitator. They feel less inhibited and more open to discuss their problems and needs... the Program should not undervalue the importance of female role models for village women. It is meaningful and inspirational for women (and men) to see other women in front of mixed audience and lead a discussion or facilitate meetings”(15). Wong further suggests that the problem of gender imbalance amongst consultants (currently only 20% of them are women) be addressed through more pro-active women recruitment drive and affirmative action measures (18). She eloquently sums it up: “...it is important to continue to improve gender equity in the KDP consultant ranks, not only as a matter of human rights, but also as a catalyst towards improving the quality of women's participation in the field”(21).

2. Improvement of information dissemination; multiple means of communication

On a more technical note, improvement in the information dissemination can ensure that all those who *want* to participate and attend the meetings can. It will prevent cases, as we have seen in Subang, where willing women could not attend the meetings because they had not been informed. Information dissemination can be improved in various ways: more posters in all corners of the villages; creation of a network amongst the villagers to inform one another; actively using the village notice boards; radio announcements, etc.

Furthermore, oral communication about the time/place of the KDP meetings (as opposed to invitation cards that are often used) can be more systematically used to inform the villagers. For example, the village facilitator or the religious leader can use the loudspeaker of a mosque to inform the villagers on a regular basis. This is done in desa Petok of kecamatan Panti (in West Sumatra), where villager participation in KDP has been high and active. This oral communication approach can also prevent cases where villagers use not having received invitation cards as an excuse for not attending the meetings. Moreover, a more informal approach to the information dissemination such as this will reach even the poorer members of the community. Pak Endah, the village facilitator of Sindangkasih in Cirebon, shared with us a finding of his: in two similar villages A and B, invitation cards were sent to the villagers of Village A and oral communication was used for Village B. The result was that more people showed up at the Village B meeting. The villagers of Village A who had not received the invitation did not show up because they felt uninvited. This oral communication approach would be more effective in a village where the villagers share a strong sense of community and the information flow is smoother, as well as where the villagers are more actively involved in the community (ex. involved in religious groups) so that they are exposed to more opportunities of receiving information.

3. Promotion of community spirit

The aim of this promotion of community spirit is to foster a sense of loyalty to the community and a desire to help and contribute to its well-being, in this case by participating in the KDP. Organizing social gatherings and activities that bring the villagers together in an informal setting (ex. gatherings involving dancing such as dangdut, sports tournaments such as soccer and badminton, etc.) is one way for the villagers to socialize and form friendly relations with the other villagers. Religious leaders and other influential group leaders can lead the community spirit-raising process by actively calling out to the villagers on the importance of unity as one village. Ibu Nanisupartini, the religious group leader in Sindangkashi, Cirebon, has set an example for the members in her group to follow by being herself actively involved in KDP.

Furthermore, encouraging community spirit can also work to include villagers who are often marginalized, such as the widows. In the village of Pakuhaji in Subang, the widows mentioned the sense of isolation they had always experienced, as “members without a status” in the community (the widows spoke of being verbally harassed and

made fun of for a “widows’ program”). Ibu Diah, the facilitator for PeKKA (Widows and Poverty Program) in kecamatan Tanjung Siang, Subang, and also one of the most respected and well-liked group leaders in the kecamatan, described her efforts to develop an understanding toward widows as legitimate members of the community: she has dubbed PeKKA as “Program Janda” (Widow’s Program) and lets people call her “Ibu Janda” (Ms. Janda), in hopes that the frequent use of the word *janda* can familiarize the other villagers with the term and lift, even if little by little, the negative connotation it had long carried. If a sense of community can be instilled in a village such this where widows are often verbally harassed, then it is one step forward towards a community united in its efforts to lift itself out of poverty and better the living conditions of all its members.

4. Women empowerment programs: formal and informal, within and outside of KDP

In addition to the promotion of a sense of community, there should be rigorous efforts made to establish women empowerment programs—both formal and informal, within and outside KDP. PeKKA, the Widows and Poverty Program, is an example of a formal women empowerment program outside of KDP. In contrast to KDP, which focuses on community-level projects aiming to help all members of the community through infrastructure and loans for microeconomic activities, PeKKA focuses on individual-level projects specifically of widows. Unlike KDP, the women in PeKKA are eligible to receive funds for their needs even if their group has not been established for a year. The widows are also given more intense training in money-management, bookkeeping, mechanics of lending and borrowing, and time-management. In addition, whereas KDP proposals must go through a series of procedures and steps to receive the funding—which is not even guaranteed—PeKKA proposals are directly funded (though some have expressed concern for this direct funding approach, for it lacks adequate “supervision”) and are guaranteed to receive funding.

PeKka also has emotional value for the women who seek refuge in the group for emotional outlet and a sense of belongingness. Every woman interviewed for her involvement in PeKKA in Subang expressed her gratitude for her membership in it. The program has allowed them to form friendships they would or could not have formed otherwise. The bond is so strong that members borrow from private savings of their fellow members and willingly meet for more than the required once-a-month meeting. In the village of Pakuhaji, Subang, now the PL (facilitator for PeKKA) is invited to the meetings by the widows, instead of the other way around. As one widow, who is also one of the poorest members of Pakuhaji, says, she would not leave PeKKA for anything and would remain a member, if for nothing else than its emotional value. PeKKA has not only given its members practical skills but also a sense of confidence, of direction, and a feeling of self-empowerment. The women (widow) participation in KDP in Subang, though still not as good as in other places such as Cirebon, has improved since the establishment of PeKKA.

Informal women groups, within or outside of KDP, may also prove to be effective in this scheme to empower the women and thereby boost their confidence to participate in KDP. These informal women groups, facilitated by village facilitators or others capable

of taking leadership roles, should aim to foster a friendly atmosphere conducive to open discussion. This type of exposure to more and more opportunities and situations where they are encouraged to speak out freely may act as a training for them to speak up at mixed meetings and other discussion settings. Similarly, if the women can form friendships and gain a sense of confidence through membership in these groups, then attending the mixed KDP meetings would become less intimidating. It should be explicitly and repeatedly requested to, or perhaps required of, the female village facilitators to take on the roles of facilitating these informal groups.

These groups, either informal or formal, within or outside of KDP, should also make a point of including a process of education and personal development for their members. If broader conceptual changes (as described in recommendation 1 about division of labor, etc.) are harder to come by and require much time and resources, then the process of education can start in these women groups. The issue of female literacy should also be tackled in these groups, in addition to the personal development training that will teach discussion skills (“training” to speak in mixed meetings) and develop awareness of the problems they face (both as community members and as women, ie gender issues). Literacy will be crucial in allowing the women to access information and resources, as well as increasing their confidence.

However, it is just as important that these women groups not remain isolated or segregated. They must always keep in mind that these groups have been formed so that the members can ultimately integrate themselves back into the bigger community and take on roles of contributing to it.

5. Meeting structure: make meetings more approachable and effective

Several technical improvements can be made: setting, timing, formation of smaller KDP discussion groups, and presentation of information in a simpler manner understandable to all villagers. As in the mixed village meeting in Sindangkasih, Cirebon, where participation was lively and active, seating can be arranged to form a (semi-) circle where officials are not sitting directly in opposition to the villagers who are sitting in rows in a dark room, as in Sindanglaya, Subang. The speech of the officials at the Sindangkasih was kept to a minimum, as opposed to the lengthy speeches of the Sindanglaya officials in Subang.

Furthermore, the issue of timing needs to be addressed. KDP meetings in Subang meet from 8:00 am to noon. Perhaps the meeting time can be changed to another time of the day, according to the needs of the villagers. Or, perhaps KDP meetings can meet in smaller groups for a general overview and questions, *prior* to the actual village meeting. These smaller groups can meet for a shorter amount of time (each group can meet at different times, according to the needs of the villagers)—enough to give the villagers an overall idea of the would-be agenda of the bigger village meeting. This way, the villagers can come to the actual village meeting with a clearer sense of what will be discussed; questions and concerns can be raised more efficiently before the voting; and the meeting will not take up as much time as it would otherwise. Pak Sahyono—the village facilitator of Ciawi, Cirebon— explained that in his village there are smaller KDP groups (organized by profession) where their needs are discussed and then brought to attention at the bigger KDP meeting by a representative. If a member cannot attend the

bigger KDP meeting, he/she can at least receive information and make suggestions at the smaller group. The representative can then be mindful of the needs of his/her group members when he/she is at the bigger meeting.

The presentation of information needs to also be considerate towards those villagers who do not speak Bahasa Indonesia or who cannot follow the “sophisticated” language at the meeting: “I don’t understand the essence of the KDP because I cannot speak the language they use,” says Ibu Misnu, a poor widow who sells snacks in Ciawi. Ibu Enti, the village facilitator of Halimpu (village in its first year of KDP) explains her difficulty so far, “Half of the villagers cannot grasp or do not understand what exactly KDP is. The poor especially do not understand the concept of repayment.”

Lastly, as part of the effort to make the meetings more approachable and effective, a special consideration must be made for West Sumatra (special in the sense that it is a suggestion uniquely applicable to West Sumatra). In the Minangkabau culture, it is not the gender issue that is the problem but the deference that is expected of the young people towards their elders and the *adat* beliefs. Women have no trouble speaking up and asserting themselves, but rather, it is the young people who feel intimidated to speak up in the presence of the *mamak* and *Bundo Kaduang*. The kecamatan facilitator of Mapat Tunggul has suggested that there be youth-only discussion groups, much like the all-women meetings in other regions, to provide the young people with a place to voice their opinions and discuss freely their own specific needs.

6. Technical considerations for the villagers: pick-up service

As seen in West Sumatra, a big impediment for the villagers to attend the meeting is the process of actually getting to the meeting. Villagers living in remote *desa* must travel hours and hours, often by foot, on rocky roads in weathers that can be harsh. If the meeting is held in the morning, the villagers must start early in the morning, and if the meeting is held at night, they must make their way home in the dark (and husbands worry about their wives walking for so long alone at night). As suggested by one of the facilitators in Pasaman and also explained in a KDP booklet, *Meningkatkan Partipasi Aktif Perempuan*, a pick-up service can provide these women with a means of transportation. The abovementioned booklet suggests that the (rented) truck be paid for with the operational cost of the KDP funding.

Annex 1

Content of Trip

Subang (July 15-17)

Kecamatan Tanjung Siang: desa Sindanglaya and Pakuhaji

Interviews with eleven female villagers, PL (facilitator for PeKKA), National Management Consultant, and PMD (Community Development Agency); visit to second village-level KDP meeting in Sindanglaya.

Focus: “What factors are accountable for the low attendance rate of women to KDP meetings?”

Cirebon (July 24-26)

Kecamatan Palimanan: desa Ciawi

Kecamatan Beber: desa Halimpu and Sindangkasih

Interviews with fifteen villagers, three village facilitators; visit to an all-women village meeting in Halimpu; visit to a mixed village meeting in Sindangkasih.

Focus: “What factors make for good women participation in KDP?”

West Sumatra (Aug. 11-15)

Kabupaten Pesisir Selatan: kecamatan Bayang: desa Tanjung Durian, desa Tana Keras

Kabupaten Pasaman: kecamatan Panti: desa Petok, desa Sentosa Panti

Kecamatan Mapat Tunggul: desa Lubuk Gadang desa Lundar

Interviews with twelve villagers, three village facilitators; visit to Secretariat for KDP in Padang and Pesisir Selatan, PERDA (local government) in Pasaman.

Focus: “How does culture (in this case Minangkabau) affect women participation in KDP?”

Classification of Informants

Subang

- Three villagers in leadership positions (village facilitator, village-level financial management member for PeKKA, leader of KDP all-women)
- Eight villagers (one out of these eight considered “poor” by village standards)
- One PeKKA facilitator
- Two national-level consultants

* criteria for “poor” as given by villagers: house has no concrete floor; walls are not concrete (bamboo); elementary school-level education; not able to save earnings (what they make is what they eat)

Cirebon and West Sumatra: see attached list