

CSOs, Evidence and Policy Influence Seminar and Workshop

14th - 15th June 2005

Hotel Sari Pan Pacific, Jakarta, Indonesia



Overseas Development Institute
and
Yappika

Seminar and Workshop Summary

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in collaboration with Yappika (Civil Society Alliance for Democracy) held a national seminar and workshop on 'CSOs, Evidence and Policy Influence' in Jakarta, Indonesia on 14th and 15th June 2005.

Lili Hasanuddin, Executive Director of Yappika, opened the seminar by briefly introducing ODI and the purpose of the meeting. Representing ODI, Naved Chowdhury welcomed the participants and gave a short introduction of ODI, the Research and Policy Development Programme (RAPID) and the Civil Society Partnership Programme (CSPP). In his address, Naved emphasised the importance of research and the use of research results in advocacy processes, and also presented lessons learnt from the consultation held in Africa earlier in the year.

Following ODI's welcome address, Ahmad Wahid – a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives active in drafting of legislation – spoke briefly and provided an insight into how legislation is formulated in Indonesia following the recent reforms and how CSOs are actively participating in the process. He expressed a strong belief in the need for people's participation in policymaking. Stating that he found input from CSOs to have an important role in policymaking, he also voiced encouragement for initiatives that support participation of CSOs in policymaking through research and advocacy.

Representatives from various government departments, NGOs, research organisations and universities from Jakarta, Bogor, Semarang (Central Java), Surabaya (East Java), and Lampung (South Sumatra) attended the half-day seminar. After the welcoming remarks, two presentations were made. The first was from ODI, presented by Naved Chowdhury and Cokro Leksmono, followed by a presentation of a case study from the Coalition Participatory Policy of Indonesia.

Cokro Leksmono began the ODI presentation by introducing ODI and the RAPID programme, then Naved Chowdhury continued by introducing CSPP and its purpose. It was stated that the programme intends to form partnerships with CSOs in developing countries so that they can learn from each other and develop ways of working together. In addition, CSPP aims to assist CSOs so that they can better engage with government in policymaking using information gathered through research. The presentation also included information on principles which will guide and ensure that the partnerships the programme intends to form in the years ahead will be equitable and participative.

In sharing the Indonesian experience, a joint presentation was made by two members of the Coalition of Participatory Policy (Koalisi Kebijakan Partisipatif (KKP)): Rival G. Ahmad (PSHK) and Sugiarto A. Santoso (Yappika). The case study explained the experience of KKP in advocating for public participation in policymaking; specifically, efforts by the KKP to influence the Draft Legislation on Procedures for Law Formulation.

Established out of the shared awareness for the need to ensure that policymaking procedures provide a space for meaningful public participation and support to marginalized groups, the KKP used innovative research methods to prove that: (i) people are capable and have the potential to be engaged in policy formulating processes; (ii) representative bodies and existing procedures in Indonesia are inadequate in ensuring that people's voice is heard during policy formulation; and (iii) financial limitation is not an obstacle to participation.

The methods used by KKP to collect and present the evidence included: monitoring of on-going policy formulation processes at both the regional and national levels; conducting workshops in several regions to consult the people: inviting members of parliament as

resource persons in the workshops; desk based research; compilation of success stories of participatory policy formulation processes in other countries, etc. The strengthening and widening of networks, combined with contributions from KKP members proved to be very effective in using these methods.

As a result of their efforts, KKP has succeeded in obtaining increased public support (increased membership and involvement in particular events) and also support from members of the Indonesian parliament. One of the major highlights of their work has been the adoption of KKP's recommendation into the Law on Procedures for Formulation of Law and Legislation called 'people's right to participate in policy formulation processes'.

In terms of key lessons, KKP found that: (i) the benefits of evidence in influencing policy are self evident; (ii) innovative methods and techniques bring results; however, (iii) the impact of evidence largely depends on its strength in relation to existing discourse, the nature and intention of political parties, and the openness of legislation procedures. Recent success of other CSOs were also explained during the discussion.

The workshop component of the consultation began in the afternoon following the seminar and was attended by approximately 20 participants from various Indonesian CSOs.

The workshop started with a more comprehensive explanation of the RAPID Context, Evidence and Links (CEL) Framework and several examples from other countries regarding evidence based policymaking.

An open discussion followed the presentation, with some participants sharing their own experiences in advocacy and research. Several key points from the discussion were:

- In the Indonesian context, one of the challenges faced by CSOs in policy advocacy efforts is the complexity of the process itself.
- It is possible that the issue is not necessarily research per se, but rather the political processes that involve many stakeholders and much interest, including external pressure.
- Undertaking impartial research and advocacy is important. When building links with the government, one needs to be aware of the compromises to be made.

The second day of the workshop started with a review of the first day by the facilitator, Lili Hasanuddin. This was followed by a presentation by ODI showing how the CEL framework was used to analyse the political context, evidence and links that contributed to the evolution of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Approach during the late 1990s. Participants were then asked to select a number of case studies from the Indonesian context, and use the framework to analyse them.

Three case studies were chosen: (1) Forestry Participatory Poverty Assessment in Bantaeng and Bulukumba, South Sulawesi; (2) Mechanism for Public Service Complaints in Semarang, East Java; and (3) Poverty Alleviation in Lampung, South Sumatera. The assignment for each group was to: (i) analyse the case study using the CEL framework; (ii) identify key factors that enabled the CSO to influence policy; and (iii) feedback and input into the CEL framework.

From the group discussions, the main points were:

- Political will of the parties is essential to involve different viewpoints in policymaking;
- Government departments also need capacity building support to enable the bureaucrats to understand the benefits of evidence based policymaking;
- There needs to be a shared perception within government on the necessity of CSOs as partners in development;

- Advocacy will succeed if evidence is obtained in collaboration with and sometimes in agreement with policymakers and bureaucrats;
- Strong links between stakeholders are important;
- Appropriate strategies are needed when influencing policymakers and these may include informal and personal connections between CSOs and policymakers;
- It is important to support representatives who are trusted by the people in gathering evidence;
- Both horizontal (within the district) and vertical (with government at the provincial level) links between key players is crucial to facilitate efforts to influence policy;
- Research needs to be packaged in a way which is user friendly and easily understood by the policymakers. The product has to be given to the right person at the right time in the right way;
- Research, both qualitative and quantitative, is sometimes insufficient to convince policymakers. Therefore efforts to bring in policymakers at the beginning of research are necessary so that they are aware of and in agreement with the methodology. This will help to mitigate the question of legitimacy of CSOs often raised by the government officials.

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to provide recommendations as to how ODI can support CSOs in influencing policy. Suggestions from the participants included:

- Funding for research and advocacy activities as well as for field testing of policy tools;
- Provide strategic and financial support to establish an institution which can promote shared learning from various issues in policy advocacy in Indonesia;
- Collaboration with Indonesian CSOs for further study of methodology for successful policy advocacy;
- Capacity building of various stakeholders through training on policy formulation (government, CSOs, community, policymakers);
- Training and internships in Jakarta or to ODI for selected CSO staff;
- Workshops for CSOs in other Indonesian cities;
- Organise a similar workshop for government staff;
- Involve academia in Indonesia in sharing research results;
- Undertake pilot projects in Indonesia which will analyse ways to bridge research and policy.

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