

Revisiting the State's Targeting Design and Distribution of Social Protection Programs

Tinjauan Ulang Rancangan Penargetan Negara dan Distribusi Program Perlindungan Sosial

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Abstract

Several countries in the Global South have implemented social assistance programs to reduce the impact of the economic crisis and continued to implement the program in the recent pandemic situation. Indonesia is no exception. To increase the effectiveness of the program implementation, the state involves local governments and communities both in the targeting process and program delivery. The central government involves a village meeting called *musyawarah desa (musdes)* to update beneficiary' data of social assistance programs and Basis Data Terpadu (BDT-Unified Database). However, issues of mistargeting in the form of inclusion and exclusion error persist. Using the deliberative democracy framework and ethnographic case study approach, this chapter seeks to understand why mistargeting continues to occur by assessing the process of the *musdes*. This study found the problems of a centralized design of targeting and concludes that there is a need to give more authority and responsibility to local government and villages in the targeting process to increase the quality of targeting and delivery of the social protection programs (SPPs).

Keywords

social assistance; village deliberation; centralised targeting; mistargeting

Abstrak

Beberapa negara di belahan bumi bagian selatan telah mengimplementasikan program-program perlindungan sosial untuk mengurangi dampak krisis ekonomi dan terus melanjutkan program-program tersebut di masa pandemi seperti saat ini. Indonesia tak terkecuali. Untuk meningkatkan efektivitas pelaksanaan program, pemerintah pusat telah melibatkan pemerintah daerah dan masyarakat luas baik dalam proses penentuan target penerima manfaat maupun dalam pelaksanaan program. Dalam konteks tersebut Pemerintah Pusat menggunakan *musyawarah desa (musdes)* untuk memutakhirkan data penerima program perlindungan sosial dan Basis Data Terpadu yang saat ini dikenal dengan Data Terpadu Kesejahteraan Sosial (DTKS). Meskipun berbagai upaya di atas telah dilakukan, isu kesalahan penargetan baik *inclusion error* dan *exclusion error* terus mengemuka. Dengan menggunakan kerangka konsep *deliberative democracy* dan pendekatan studi kasus, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami lebih jauh mengapa ketidaktepatan sasaran (*mistargeting*) terus terjadi dengan melakukan observasi terhadap proses *musyawarah desa*. Penelitian ini menemukan masalah-masalah yang kerap muncul dalam desain penentuan sasaran yang bersifat terpusat (*centralized*) dan menyimpulkan perlunya memberikan kewenangan dan tanggung jawab yang lebih luas kepada pemerintah daerah dan desa untuk meningkatkan kualitas penargetan dan pelaksanaan program-program perlindungan sosial.

Kata Kunci

perlindungan sosial; *musyawarah desa*; penargetan terpusat; kesalahan penargetan

1. Introduction

Several countries in the Global South have implemented social assistance programs to reduce the negative impacts of economic crisis. The countries have continued to implement the social protection programs in the pandemic situation caused by the wild spread of Covid-19 virus. Indonesia is no exception. The government of Indonesia has allocated a significant amount of funding to finance social protection programs (SPPs). In 2020 the central government has allocated around 204 trillion rupiahs from the total budget of 695.3 trillion through the *Pemulihan Ekonomi Nasional* (PEN – National Economic Recovery) program.

One of the critical challenges for social assistance programs is uneven coverage (Leisering, 2018). Exclusion can occur because people fall outside the group that program designers have categorized as ‘deserving’ of assistance. However, others who fall within the target categories can be overlooked due to ‘exclusion errors’ (a situation in which communities, households or individuals receive SPP assistance despite not being eligible) while persons outside the target category may also receive benefits (‘inclusion errors’). For instance, Indonesia’s conditional cash transfer program (Program Keluarga Harapan/PKH) targets very poor families, identified by the econometric targeting method as being in the bottom 10% and meeting five criteria as stated in the program guidance, while Indonesia’s non-cash food assistance (Rastra/BPNT) targets families identified in the bottom 25%. These means-tested programs have struggled to overcome the problem of uneven targeting. Moreover, Sumadi (2021) reported that the accuracy of targeting of the SPPs is between fifty and seventy percent. It means that the inaccuracy of targeting, and delivery of social assistance remain significant. Exclusion presents a major challenge both because mistargeting leads to the program failing to address financial distress and because it generates social problems, tensions, jealousy between households (TNP2K, 2017) and even social conflict (Sumarto, 2021).

To address this problem policy makers have supported involving communities in the delivery of social assistance (Yamauchi, 2010). Assuming that communities have more accurate information regarding who is eligible for assistance, researchers have argued for decentralizing selection of beneficiaries to communities (Alderman, 2002; Faguet, 2004; Yamauchi, 2010). These propositions have been supported by findings from field surveys conducted for the World Bank in a range of countries, which demonstrated that involving communities and local actors, including local groups and NGOs, in decisions regarding delivery of SPPs resulted in better targeting of these programs (Subbarao et al., 1997).

However, even though involving community in targeting process is somewhat resulting in higher satisfaction (Alatas et al., 2012), the Indonesian experience of attempting to involve local communities in the process of SPPs targeting through use of *musdes* has revealed that this is not always effective. For

example, despite the government’s efforts to engage communities in updating the data used in SPPs, this task has proved challenging, and mistargeting problems persist. Consequently, Indonesia’s SPPs are still not reaching many of their intended beneficiaries and are also often assisting those who do not need the support (McCarthy, 2020).

This article discusses how villages conduct *musdes* to help the state to achieve better targeting of SPPs. In particular, it considers the extent of power relations between tier of government as well as social relations of village government and communities impact on the targeting of SPPs along with the deliberative process of *musdes* in updating the data on recipients of the *musdes Rastra* the pre-list of poor households in the *musdes* BDT. Three questions will be answered: How do *musdes* and deliberation processes occur during the data updating process? Are any patterns evident in *musdes* and deliberation processes? And how and why do *musdes* and deliberation work in particular contexts?

2. Methods

This study was undertaken in three villages in Bumi district, Central Java Province. The author uses pseudonyms for the district and three villages: Tambak, Tudung and Tani villages to preserve the confidentiality of informants. The research seeks to understand the underlying patterns of village decision-making by exploring the organization of deliberation (i.e., participation selection and meeting design), the process of deliberation (i.e., reason-giving), representations in the deliberation process (actors and issues/discourse) and deliberation outcomes (procedural, processual and actual), as well as the embeddedness of the process in social and power relations. Accordingly, this research uses a case study method to assess and analyze ‘instances of class events’ (George and Bennett (2005) in Levy, 2008, p. 2), conduct an intensive study of cases ‘to shed light on a larger class of cases’ (Gerring, 2006) and investigate the cases by putting particular emphasis on ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Yin, 2018). The thesis also employs a case study method because it focuses on a particular situation (particularistic); aims to provide a rich description of phenomena (descriptive); and illuminates the reader’s understanding of the phenomena (Merriam, 1998, p. 27).

Given the qualitative nature of the research questions and the focus of the thesis, the research employed an ethnographic approach to collect data and information about everyday decision-making processes in the village. An ethnographic approach enabled the exploration of the embeddedness of village decision-making in social, power and accountability relations. The author conducted direct and participant observations, in-depth interviews (both formal and informal) and gathered data from a wide variety of actors, arenas and sources (cross-scale level). To link the findings to specific theories, including theories on the role of micro deliberation and its uptake in macro deliberation, and theoretical constructs (Schwandt, 2015; Yin, 2018), this study employed analytic generalization to make generalizations from the case

studies to shed empirical light on the practices of public involvement in decision-making processes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Musdes* and Deliberation in the Data Updating Process

The *musdes* Rastra and BDT are embedded in the centralized design of SPPs targeting they are part of both the centralized processes and the centralized organizational structure of the targeting. The *musdes* are part of the centralized processes in that they are used by village governments as forums to update the recipient data for the Rastra program and the data on poor households in the BDT. The embedding of the *musdes* in the centralized organizational structure has been facilitated by the establishment of coordinating teams for the Rastra program at the central, provincial, district and village levels. The lower-level coordinating teams (provincial, district and village government levels) are coordinated by and accountable to the national coordinating team. Within this structure, the village-level coordinating team is responsible for distributing social assistance and conducting a *musdes* to update recipient data for the Rastra program.

In practice, the centralized design of SPPs targeting circumscribes the role of *musdes* Rastra in four ways. First, the centralized process leads to the *musdes* being a relatively 'exclusive' process. Specifically, actors from higher level government play more prominent roles in the process of updating the data than do actors from within village governments. The central government controls the data updating process by issuing official guidelines for the implementation program (i.e., *Pedoman Umum*), and establishing an implementing team to execute and facilitate the updating process.

The exclusivity of the *musdes* Rastra process was apparent in all three villages. The village governments invited only selected community representatives (mostly village leaders) and actors from outside the village, such as TKSK and officials from the sub-district and agencies of the district governments. This exclusivity circumscribed the opportunity for ordinary villagers to participate in the *musdes* process. Consequently, the representativeness of the *musdes* forum is problematic: the forum usually does not provide opportunities for ordinary villagers to participate in the process or to have power during deliberations. In this context, authentic deliberation cannot occur.

However, the level of exclusivity of the *musdes* Rastra is partly under the control of the village head. For instance, while the governments of Tambak Village and Tani Village invited only a few village representatives and community leaders to the *musdes*, the headman of Tudung Village advocated for increased inclusivity, and invited representatives from the recipients of Rastra and other marginal groups. Through these invitations, the headman of Tudung Village wanted to show his community and other parties that under his



Figure 1. Broken door of the Tudung headman's house following damage caused by a stone

administration, the village government was focused on being transparent and participatory in decision-making. The headman wanted to distinguish his administration from that of the previous headman, who was highly authoritarian and excluded villagers from the village decision-making process.

The Tudung headman's other reported reason for wanting to be transparent in the *musdes* Rastra was related to a negative experience following previous decision-making regarding poverty support funds. During the implementation of the *Bantuan Langsung Masyarakat* (BLSM—Unconditional cash transfer) program, when the headman was assigned as an enumerator to collect data for the program's targeting, someone threw a stone at his house and broke the glass door (Figure 1). He was concerned that the culprit was someone who did not receive *bantuan* (assistance) from the BLSM. That event led the headman being very cautious when dealing with poverty data. During his administration, he has focused on transparency as a means of avoiding tension among villagers and maintaining harmony in the village.

Given the domination of village officials and community leaders in the *musdes*, interestingly, it is the village headman who accommodates the wishes of villagers concerning

mistargeting problems, particularly in distributing assistance from the Rastra program. For instance, Tambak Village and Tudung Village tried to reduce social tensions by conducting their own survey and initiating village SPPs funded by the village budget. In increasing the validity and reliability of poverty data, Tambak Village conducted a survey and census of all villagers who were listed in the BDT by developing a questionnaire from the BPS and modifying it to fit the villagers' condition.

Second, the centralized design also tends to lead to unequal power relations between actors and the tendency of villages to be upwardly accountable. The unequal power relations can lead village governments to defer upward to higher level governments and make decisions that focus on the perceived needs of the higher-level government, rather than the needs of the village communities. In conducting *musdes*, the governments of the three villages tended to focus on fulfilling the administrative requirements of the meetings, as requested by the central government, at the cost of paying attention to and spending time on the communities' concerns. Here, the higher-level government becomes the more powerful actor, using accountability mechanisms to influence the actions of the less powerful actor (the village government, i.e. a means of legitimating a list) (Jacobs & Wilford, 2010). Village governments can act as 'agents' that are accountable to 'principals' (in this case, the *camat* [heads of sub-district] and the *bupati* [head of district]).

In *musdes* to update the BDT, in Bumi district not all villages conducted *musdes* BDT because of budget limitations. The *bupati* instructed village governments to use the villages' budgets to conduct *musdes* BDT. Later, this arrangement could not work as expected because only a small percentage of villages conducted the *musdes* BDT. The secretary of Tudung Village explained that the budget to hold the *musdes* was limited because village governments had allocated their budget to finance village programs that were stipulated in the RPJMDes and RKPDes. Moreover, at the time of the author's fieldwork, Tani Village had not yet held the *musdes* BDT because the village government had not allocated a particular amount of the budget to conduct the *musdes* BDT. Because of the small percentage of villages that conducted *musdes* BDT, the *bupati* issued another instruction through a *surat edaran* (circulation letter) to remind villages to hold the *musdes* BDT immediately.

As a consequence of budget limitations, the three villages were not highly motivated to conduct the *musdes* BDT. The headman of Tambak Village explained that his village government was hesitant to hold the *musdes* BDT, both because of the data not changing for several years and because of the need to use part of the village budget to conduct the *musdes*. Despite the hesitation, Tambak Village held the *musdes* BDT in February 2019, after numerous reminders from sub-district officials.

Third, the centralized design of the SPPs targeting also creates a lengthy accountability process, particularly with

respect to grievance procedures and reporting mechanisms. This is exemplified in the lengthy and complicated procedures that are required to report any changes to the data of the SPPs beneficiaries. In Bumi District, the long and complicated reporting process is also vulnerable to human error, which leads to protracted and costly policy coordination. This happened at the provincial level when reporting the results of *musdes* Rastra. When the head of the social agency at the provincial level contacted official in the MoSA, he discovered that the official at the Pusdatin (Data Center) never received data from the Central Java Province. As a result, the national team at the MoSA assumed that there was no change in the pre-list of recipients in the Central Java Province. After conducting an investigation, the head of the social agency found that the data operator had forgotten to send the recapitulated data from the *musdes* to the MoSA. Consequently, he had to go to Jakarta to check that the official at the MoSA had received the data from the Central Java Province. This example of human error demonstrates that the long and complicated reporting process can also lead to costly error coordination.

As a consequence of the vulnerability of the complicated reporting process to human error, and the associated costly coordination, the data from the village and district level can be incomplete, and the national team therefore often has difficulties processing the data. The official at the MoSA admitted that because not all local governments send their Rastra program data changes to the MoSA, where new information is not available, the MoSA uses the existing (previous year's) data in their program planning. To compound the risk of error, the officials responsible for the implementation of Rastra also often do not send the updated Rastra data to the official responsible for updating the BDT, as they are meant to do. Consequently, the data regarding the recipients of Rastra from villages and the BDT often do not match.

This managerial problem regarding data management at the national level leads to dissatisfaction at the local level. In the three study villages, the headmen and village officials in this research kept the pre-list unchanged because they noted that despite their efforts to conduct *musdes* to develop updated lists of Rastra recipients, for each village the final Rastra recipients list that they received from higher government remained unchanged. This has occurred for three consecutive years. The village officials have complained to officials of *dinas sosial* at the district level but have not received clear explanations for why the Rastra data have not been updated during this time. This led to disappointment of villages. One of officials in Tambak village said:

"I am disappointed with the way the higher-level governments manage the poverty data. We held the musdes Rastra every year as required by the district government. However, they never used the result. The central government never acknowledged our proposal to replace several well-off villagers in the existing list. If they

don't have any willingness to change the list of recipients, they should not require us to organise the musdes." (Interview in August 2018)

3.2. Patterns in Musdes and Deliberation Processes

From the information presented above we can identify three key factors that influence how villages make decisions to update the Rastra's recipients and BDT: power relationships between the village and higher-level governments; social relations between the village government and communities, including mechanisms for accountability and inclusion; and the process of deliberation in the *musdes* Rastra and BDT.

The tendency of the village headmen in the three villages to focus on being accountable upward to the higher-level government, rather than focusing on the needs of their villagers, served the interests of the headmen and village governments in several ways. First, the headmen were motivated to maintain good relations with sub-district and district officials. 'Good relations' here refers to mutual networking between the village head and the officials of the sub-district and district governments. The headmen perceive that if officials at the district level know them and think well of them, there may be a higher likelihood that they will receive information, offers and support from the district officials regarding additional programs, particularly infrastructure projects that are too expensive for the village government to afford alone.

Good relations with officials in higher level governments can also strengthen a headman's political networks and support, from both the village and actors outside the village (i.e., political support from the heads of sub-district and district agencies). When a headman has good relations and networks with officials in sub-district and district governments, the headman can obtain political support in the form of endorsements and promotion of village programs, support with administrative matters regarding program implementation, and allocation of funds for programs. Support from higher level government also enhances the reputation of a headman because communities consider that the district government's support in the form of additional programs is a key performance indicator for the headmen. This is important for a headman's political career.

Village headmen may also be tempted to shift blame, deflecting criticism from themselves and the village-level government to higher levels of government. For example, when discussing the pre-list of Rastra beneficiaries in the *musdes* Rastra, village governments may be motivated to use the pre-list from the central government, rather than listening to the suggestions from the community. By doing this, the village government can more easily shift any blame onto the higher-level government, if a community voices concern about mistargeting of funds. Village governments are also aware that if they remove names from the pre-list and the overall total number of households on the revised list is lower than before, the overall Rastra budget for their village will decrease.

Although a lower Rastra budget indicates that more villagers have been raised out of poverty—a highly positive event—the general perception among headmen is that receiving a lower Rastra budget would damage their reputation and reduce the community's degree of trust in the village government, which would not be conducive to the political capital of the headman if he wants to run for another term. Headmen are therefore often reluctant to make any changes to pre-lists. A similar case reported in previous study conducted by [Alatas et al. \(2012\)](#) that mistargeting issues created social conflict in villages such as the rejection of headman to support the implementation of social assistance program. Even in the pandemic situation due to Covid-19 virus, as reported by [Sumarto and Ferdiansyah \(2021\)](#) there is a case that village headman opposed the implementation of social assistance program as the program created social tension.

However, retaining an unchanged list of recipients for the Rastra program also creates problems, particularly among villagers who expected to be added to the list to obtain assistance because they had fallen into poverty. For instance, village secretary of Tudung Village and head of Tani Village, admitted that the village government often received complaints from villagers who deem themselves eligible to obtain Rastra assistance but have not been included on the final list. In Tani Village, concerns about mistargeting were not helped by the fact that the village headman's parents were included in the list of Rastra program recipients. These mistargeting issues often lead to jealousy and associated conflicts among villagers. In Tudung Village, for example, jealousy associated with perceived mistargeting had a negative impact on the tradition of gotong-royong, in that households who deemed themselves to be eligible for assistance but were left off the list had less motivation to join social activities (i.e., *krigan* or *kerja bakti*). Similar mistargeting issues have been reported during the process of the unconditional cash transfer distribution ([Sumarto, 2021](#)).

A similar case occurred in Tambak village. The government of Tambak Village, also received many complaints about mistargeting during the implementation of SPPs, including the Rastra program, by excluded villagers. However, village officials claimed that they could not do anything to resolve this issue, other than attempt to calm down the villagers. A village official in Tambak Village even used religious values and beliefs against the villagers who protested to him that they did not receive the assistance they were eligible for. A village official said:

"When there was a complaint about mistargeting, I said to the villagers that those who received assistance, although they were ineligible, were those who were willing to donate (bersedekab) to others. According to Islamic thought, if you give more, you will get more. Thus, those who received the bantuan (assistance) must be those who share more with other villagers." (Interview 18 February 2018).

This study identified two main approaches used by village headmen and village officials to deal with tensions in the village regarding mistargeting of SPPs funding and to maintain harmony. First, as exemplified in Tambak Village, village officials could choose to ignore mistargeting issues and associated complaints from excluded villagers, which they justified by stating that paying attention to complaints could increase social tensions and disputes among villagers. Here, village officials considered it was easiest to ‘turn a blind eye’ to mistargeting issues, so long as there was no overt tension in the village. As explained by one of Tambak Village officials, proposing revisions to the list of recipients would mean that several households would be removed from the list, and this would create social tensions because no households currently on the list would want to surrender their entitlement. One of village official in Tambak village explained:

“We [village government] are aware that some beneficiaries of the Rastra or PKH have experienced improved economic status and should be no longer eligible for social assistance. Some villagers have protested to the village government about this. However, we decided that we could not do anything to respond to the protest. As long as there were no significant social tensions in the village because of the mistargeting issue, we would not do anything further to revise the list.” (Interview in July 2018).

Secondly, the village governments avoid social tension because they are not able to respond to the protest from the excluded group regarding the mistargeting issues. In this case, the village government faces difficulties in replacing recipients that are ‘no longer’ considered eligible to receive assistance because they have improved their economic condition. In Tambak Village, the rejection from the ‘no longer’ considered eligible recipients created a dilemma for the village government as to when the village officials forced them to resign, because they presented a negative image of the village government that affected the reputation of the headman. One of village officials in Tambak village reported:

“In my experience working as head of welfare, whatever the program, it is not easy to replace recipients who have been receiving assistance for many years. They appear to have become dependent on the support and do not want to lose it, even though their economic conditions have improved. When we tried to replace the no longer eligible recipients, they protested and created inconvenient situations in the village. Therefore, the headman asked me not to remove these villagers’ names from the existing pre-list for the Rastra program.” (Interview in December 2017)

When considering the failings of higher-level government that contribute to the SPP recipient lists not being revised, a main failing is evident. The central government employed the PMT as the primary method in the targeting system that reflected the weakness of the far-reaching grievance handling system in the program. Scholars, [Bain et al. \(2005\)](#), revealed the

weakness of the PMT based on their evaluation of the implementation of transfer programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. They argued that the secret formula in PMT is not easy to understand. Hence, it limits stakeholders’ rights to appeal and created tensions in communities.

3.3. How and Why Do *Musdes* and Deliberation Work in Particular Contexts?

As was discussed earlier, the promised benefits of involving communities in decisions regarding the delivery of social programs have not always emerged in the Indonesian case. While the use of *musdes* to resolve SPPs mistargeting problems by involving a wider range of local actors and communities in updating the data regarding recipients of Rastra and BDT has presented a compelling policy narrative at the state level, in practice, we have observed that the *musdes* have often not achieved better targeting. In addition, the *musdes* forum has often not provided a friendly and equitable space for actual deliberation where communities can deliberate freely and equally.

We have also seen that both *musdes* Rastra and BDT become exclusive arenas of decision-making. Here, ordinary villagers still do not have free and equal access to participate, and experience both structural and social barriers. The design of the *musdes* creates structural barriers to participation by ordinary villagers by proposing that only village elites, village leaders and village representatives need be invited. The social barriers relate to the established social hierarchy and class system within the villages; village governments tend to extend *musdes* invitations only to villagers who possess economic capital (in the forms of economic assets), social capital (in the forms of networks and social relationships) (see, i.e., [Fox in McCarthy et al., 2014](#)) and political capital (understood as the resource used by an actor to influence policy formation processes) ([Birner & Wittmer, 2003, p. 298](#)).

The institutional design of the process to update the data regarding the Rastra recipients and BDT shapes how the *musdes* and deliberation process occur. The centralized design of the updating of the recipients of the Rastra program included a stated requirement to hold a *musdes* Rastra, but in the three villages in this study, the meetings were held as a formality, merely to meet their obligations. In the process of *musdes*, participants tend to rely on the pre-list prepared by the central government; this research found that despite the *musdes* including an exchange of arguments regarding changes to the pre-list, the meeting’s participants tended to agree easily to retaining the pre-list. In such situations, the deliberation process cannot overcome the real causes and consequences of mistargeting issues.

Aside from the formal process of *musdes* to update the BDT, the headman plays a dominant role in dealing with mistargeting problems at the village level, particularly to ‘force’ the ‘no longer considered eligible’ recipients to give up their entitlement. For example, the headman of Tudung Village summoned villagers who refused to surrender their

entitlement to have face-to-face discussions with him. The headman argued that such an approach is more 'convenient' than in the *musdes* forum, in the sense that by using the face-to-face discussion, they can express their concerns more freely than in deliberation in *musdes*. These observations demonstrate the highly influential role of elites in achieving developmental outcomes in villages.

We have also seen that there is a dimension of the state's 'power over' that manifests in the process of *musdes* Rastra, because villages hold the *musdes* to avoid administrative sanctions from the higher-level governments. The villages in this study initially distrusted the higher-level governments' capabilities because of unchanged recipient data regarding the Rastra program (despite changes being proposed by the villages), leading to village pessimism that conducting *musdes* would solve the mistargeting issues. Rather than authentic deliberation (Tanasoca & Sass, 2019), *musdes* Rastra then became simply ritual deliberation, in which the villages used the deliberation process to legitimize predetermined decisions.

However, this research found that several steps in the *musdes* BDT involved a relatively high degree of deliberation, particularly the *musyawarah* at the neighborhood level. This higher degree of deliberation was observed in both Tambak and Tudung Villages, and even, to a lesser degree, in Tudung Village. The *ketua RTs* were the closest village officials to whom villagers could voice their complaints regarding the SPP implementation. In this case, elite control does not necessarily result in adverse outcomes, as was also found in research by Dasgupta & Beard (2007) on elite control and elite capture in the implementation of community empowerment projects in Indonesia. In fact, the role of the *ketua RTs* in conveying the mistargeting issues in the *musdes* Rastra and BDT is important in elevating the issue to a village government concern.

This study found that officials from central government have recognized the challenges of incorporating the result of the village-level *musdes* at the central level. An official from the TNP2K admitted that there are problems with integrating and updating data using the results of the *musdes*, including problems with the completeness of data and concerns about consistency and reliability of the data, given that village governments may conduct the *musdes* in various ways. These concerns were presented by officials as a key reason why the central government has tended not to use the results of the *musdes*, leading to the experiences reported at the village level, that despite their early legitimate efforts to revise the lists, these revisions were not accepted at the higher level. Therefore, despite the BDT offering the potential for more effective targeting than the previous approach of targeting to reduce leakage (Bah et al., 2018), inefficiencies related to data coordination and data processing at higher level government levels have not been addressed, and therefore, the final list of beneficiaries remains problematic at the village level.

This study noted that the persistence of the mistargeting issues regarding the recipients of the SPPs, for both the Rastra program and BDT, has led to tensions among the actors

involved in the data coordination. An official at *dinas sosial* (social agency) in Bumi District explained that tensions arose between the *bupati* (head of district) and the *kepala dinas sosial* (head of the social agency), because the head of the social agency instructed that an additional quota of assistance of the Rastra program and PKH be proposed to the MoSA for Bumi District. The *bupati* considered that this instruction from the *kepala dinas* went against the promise that was made by the *bupati* to reduce the number of poor people in Bumi District. The *bupati* assumed that by proposing the quota of the recipients of the Rastra program and PKH to the MoSA, the central government would note that the number of poor people in Bumi District would increase, which eventually means that the *bupati* fails to fulfil his promise. The *bupati* assumed that if the poverty numbers remained high, then regardless of any other achievements by his administration, he would be considered a 'failure'.

The poverty issues in Bumi District are politically sensitive, and this affects policy coordination among district agencies and between the district government and provincial and central governments. The head of the Bappermas expressed doubts about the way that the BPS obtained and processed the district's poverty data. He also recommended that the district conduct its own local surveys to obtain accurate data, rather than relying on the BPS data. To this end, the Bappeda requested that each village conduct a village-level survey and census of poor households that had been listed in the BDT, so that these could be compared with the BPS data, and if necessary, used to counter them.

The Bumi District government's frustrations at what they perceived to be inaccurate official figures regarding high poverty rates in their district also led to the initiative of the *petugas lapangan* (field officer) to give a signboard to each of the households that received assistance from the Raskin/Rastra program, including a statement that the household vowed that it was indeed a poor household, which each household was obliged to display publicly (see Figure 2). This initiative was an effort to 'publicly shame' current recipients who were sufficiently well off to be ineligible for the funds, and to thereby encourage these recipients to return their entitlement willingly. This initiative created controversy and harmful impacts in several villages. Specifically, several households across a number of villages returned their right to assistance because they felt embarrassed—even though they were eligible to receive assistance.

In an attempt to resolve the mistargeting issues in both SPPs—in particular, the issue of the central government sending data back to villages that were unchanged from previous years—the local- and village-level governments employed an informal accountability mechanism. For example, Tambak and Tudung allocated a portion of the village budget to financing local SPPs that were similar to those implemented by the higher-level governments. The effort aimed to fill the gap in SPPs recipients between the national and village programs as a consequence of the differences in



Figure 2. Sign for the recipients of Rastra in one of villages in Bumi District

[Translation]

Targeted household of Raskin/Rastra Program

WE ARE TRULY A POOR FAMILY THAT DESERVES TO RECEIVE RICE FOR THE POOR/RICE FOR PROSPERITY

Ya Allah, make this poor household prosperous but if they are just pretending to be poor, indeed may your punishment greatly hurt

Name of recipient :
Amount of assistance : 15kg/KPM
Price : Rp1600/kg

Executing Team of the Raskin Targeting,

poverty data. Both Tambak and Tudung village governments initiated a ‘housing for the poor program’ and a *bantuan ternak* (cattle assistance program), with the same mechanisms of program delivery as those initiated by the central government.

In summary, we can see that the process of *musdes* Rastra and BDT appear to follow the formal procedures and processes as stated in the guidance. Yet, in reality, the *musdes* forum discussed only the pre-list issued by the central government without considering new households who might be eligible for receiving benefits. There are key reasons for this. First, the village governments included in this study aim to meet the administrative requirements set by higher levels of the state who wish to maintain the existing allocation of funding for social assistance. Here, village governments are held accountable upwards. Second, village governments face difficulties when they try to add new recipients. The guidance advises that, when they propose new recipients for eligibility, village governments can consider only households that have already been listed in the BDT. This means that to obtain the assistance, poor households should already be included in the BDT. These complex procedures created inflexibility in the targeting system and undermines its capacity to apprehend village poverty dynamics.

4. Conclusion

The Indonesian government adopted policies requiring community involvement in poverty targeting to improve the delivery of social assistance programs (Conning & Kevane, 2002; La Ferrara, 2002; Narayan & Pritchett, 1997; Subbarao et al., 1997). State efforts to use the two *musdes* as forums reflect the ideal of ‘empowered participatory governance’ (Fung & Wright, 2003), whereby ordinary villagers are included in decision-making through reasoned deliberation. However, as this study concludes, deliberation processes have not matched these aspirations.

First, deliberative processes tend to be controlled by village government and village elites. The central government guidelines require the village government only to invite community representatives and village leaders, and not

‘ordinary’ villagers. This requirement consolidates the structural barriers that limit the participation of ordinary villagers in deliberation. As other research has found, only local village leaders and other authorities tend to attend the *musdes* to finalize the list of Raskin/Rastra recipients (Alatas et al., 2019).

Yet, elite control is not the same as elite capture; although the elite dominates the *musdes*, for the most part, we do not see elite capture of social assistance. This study found that village headmen, officials and leaders avoided influencing the targeting process, seeking to ensure that they and their families became program beneficiaries. Instead, they used elite control to maintain social cohesion and village harmony, thereby protecting their reputation as leaders. This corroborates prior research, which observes that control by local elites does not necessarily translate into elite capture (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007). Undeniably, in the three study villages, the headmen’s interests and pressures from communities shaped the leaders’ actions.

Second, the research finds that the predominant form of deliberation is ritualistic. The primary reason for this derives from the highly convoluted and centralized social welfare system, which is complex and prone to error. Despite villages repeatedly proposing changes to the list of beneficiaries, largely because of problems in the data management system, village administrators see the same unchanged list of recipients returning. Subsequently, unfair beneficiary selection and mistargeted distribution corrodes community trust of village government. Some villages blame the headman and village officials. Others allege that the headman and officials encourage and even pressure them to surrender their benefit because of personal animosities, rather than objective consideration of their economic circumstances. In the face of such contentious issues, village leaders seek to avoid social tensions and maintain their reputation.

Third, decision-making processes and pressures from community hold village leaders downwardly accountable to some extent, leading them to find workarounds, support more authentic forms of deliberation to redress unfair beneficiary selection. Local and village governments’ anxiety with respect

to the central government and fear of village discord compel local leaders to respond. The district agencies observed in this study carried out their own surveys to produce more valid and reliable poverty data for local planning. District governments also initiated local social assistance programs, funded by local budgets. Similarly, the three village governments in this study funded surveys and allocated funds for social assistance from village budgets. Even at the village level, the headman and officials used personal, cultural and religious approaches to reduce tensions related to mistargeting in their communities.

Interestingly, despite elite control and domination, this study found that more authentic deliberation could still occur during the *musdes*, especially during the *musdes* BDT at the neighborhood level. Here, ordinary villagers had equal opportunity to participate in the forum. In this sense, the requirements for ideal deliberation, such as free and equal access and opportunities (Bohman, 1998), were fulfilled. However, this outcome was only observed in Tudung village, and not in Tambak or Tani villages. Nonetheless, given that village data were not included in the BDT, these more authentic forms of deliberation did not necessarily overcome the targeting problem. Thus, the decision regarding who was eligible ultimately lay in the hands of the central government.

Finally, this study concludes that involving communities in distributing social protection programs has not achieved more inclusive state welfare programs. The complex centralized design of the system circumscribes the role of *musdes*, and strong upward forms of accountability structure the process. This leads village governments to conduct *musdes* and *musyawarab* as a ritual process. However, responding to informal forms of accountability, village governments attempt to resolve the problems of unfair and exclusionary welfare distribution at local level. The villages react by going through the motions of *musdes* merely to meet administrative requirements, to build good relations with higher level governments and to maintain village harmony. Consequently, if the problems of unfair beneficiary selection and mistargeted distribution are to be addressed, new social welfare designs will need to be developed that are built on more sophisticated understandings of local realities. Accordingly, giving more authority and responsibility to local government to synchronize and update data of social assistances program in the targeting system is worth to be considered. Otherwise, the central government efforts to increase the effectiveness of the SPPs delivery would be less workable at the local and village level.

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