

Roles of *Tonarigumi* to Promote Participatory Development in Indonesia: Case of Three Villages in Purbalingga District, Central Java Province

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Presented in Tokyo International Conference on Social Science (TICSS)
held in Tokyo, 17-19 December 2014



1. Introduction

- ❖ After the collapse of Suharto regime, in 2001, the government of Indonesia launched decentralization.
- ❖ This moment make a fundamental shift in rural development policy, from top-down to bottom up approach.
- ❖ The success of decentralization and participatory development requires an enabling rural institutional environment.
- ❖ This study aims to analyze implementation of decentralization at the lowest level of administration, namely *Tonarigumi (Rukun Tetangga/RT)*. Whether this institutions can promote participatory rural development is the central question in this study.
- ❖ Analyzing roles of an institution in participatory development requires attention to specific processes, which include: The ways in which community is involved in rural development; The leadership capacity of institution heads in executing their tasks; and the impact of those processes on community empowerment.

2. Literature Reviews

- ❖ *Tonarigumi (Rukun Tetangga/RT)* is a neighborhood group comprising about fifty households living in the same area. The head is elected by community.
- ❖ It was originally established by Japanese army during World War II to control people, foster self-help and mobilize logistic for war ([Kobayashi, 2007](#)).
- ❖ Although the war was ended in 1945, *tonarigumi* structure continued to exist. The government made it a mandatory organization throughout Indonesia.
- ❖ In fact, *tonarigumi* plays dual roles, either as a community organization or as a pseudo governmental institution.
- ❖ As community organization, it's tasks include collecting garbage, conducting night patrol, holding funerals and maintaining infrastructure ([Dwianto,2003](#); [Grootaert,1999](#)).
- ❖ As a pseudo administrative institution, its tasks include collecting property taxes, reporting demographic data and connecting the communication between community and village head ([Antlöv, 2000](#)).
- ❖ With regard to participatory development, it has tasks to conduct villagers meeting, to formulate bottom up proposals, to mobilize cash and labour in infrastructure development and to socialize government programs.

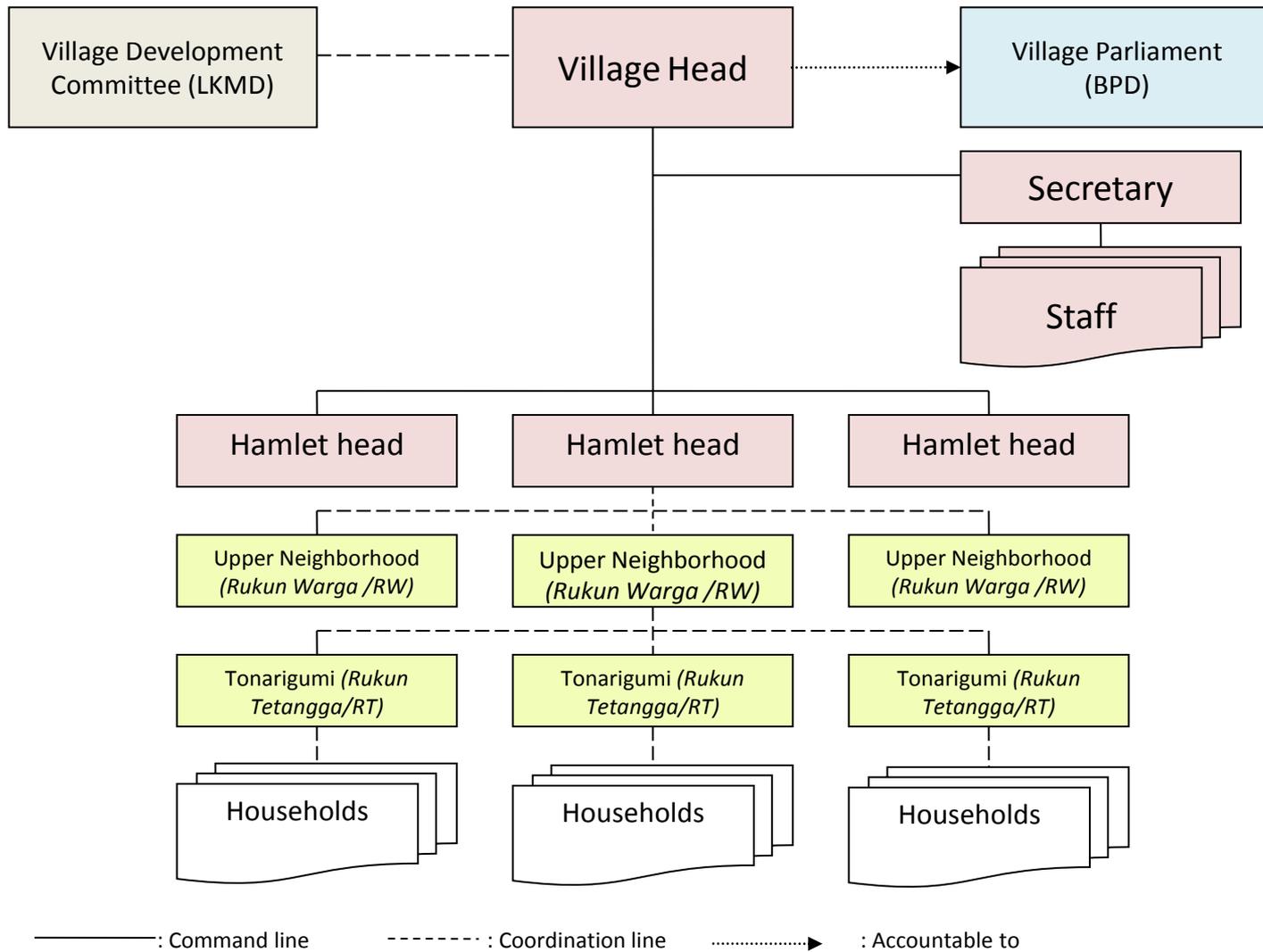


Figure 1. Structure of Village Government

Literature Reviews continued..

- ❖ As the lowest level of administration, *tonarigumi* plays important roles both for government and community.
- ❖ During Suharto regime, [Antlöv \(1995\)](#) finds that participatory processes in *Tonarigumi* was just a formality. *Tonarigumi* just became a tool of the state to collect taxes and mobilize cash and labour.
- ❖ [Grootaert \(1999\)](#) finds that community perceived *tonarigumi* as one of the most important institutions helping their livelihood problems. Most *tonarigumies* had monthly meeting to discuss local issues like road maintenance, infrastructure reparation, religious ceremonies and local festive.
- ❖ [Evers \(2000\)](#) finds that within village area, community initiatives and collective actions were focused and limited within *tonarigumi*. This was because community had no formal instrument to influence village head and trust between them was low.

3. Research Methods

- ❖ Fieldwork was conducted in Serang, Kedarpan and Sumilir villages in Purbalingga District, during June to July 2014. 8 *tonarigumies* in each village and 10 households from each *tonarigumi* were selected. Total respondents were 240 households.
- ❖ Respondent's perception is arranged from poor (score 1), slightly poor (score 2), good enough (score 3) and good (score 4). A mean is created by dividing total scores by total respondents. The interpretation of the mean is:
1-1.74: poor; 1.75-2.49: slightly poor; 2.5-3.24: good enough; 3.25-4: good
- ❖ To measure the capacity of tonarigumi heads, this study uses indicators created by [Sutiyo and Maharjan \(2014\)](#), which are derived from combination of leadership concept and traditional roles of leader in Javanese society. The indicators are informativeness, responsiveness, encouragement, creativity, fairness, accountability, submission to consensus
- ❖ With regard to community empowerment, this study emphasized empowerment as a process to improve villager's skill to participate in decentralization. Measurement was based on proxies of understanding on terms of decentralization, government programs and some village institutions.

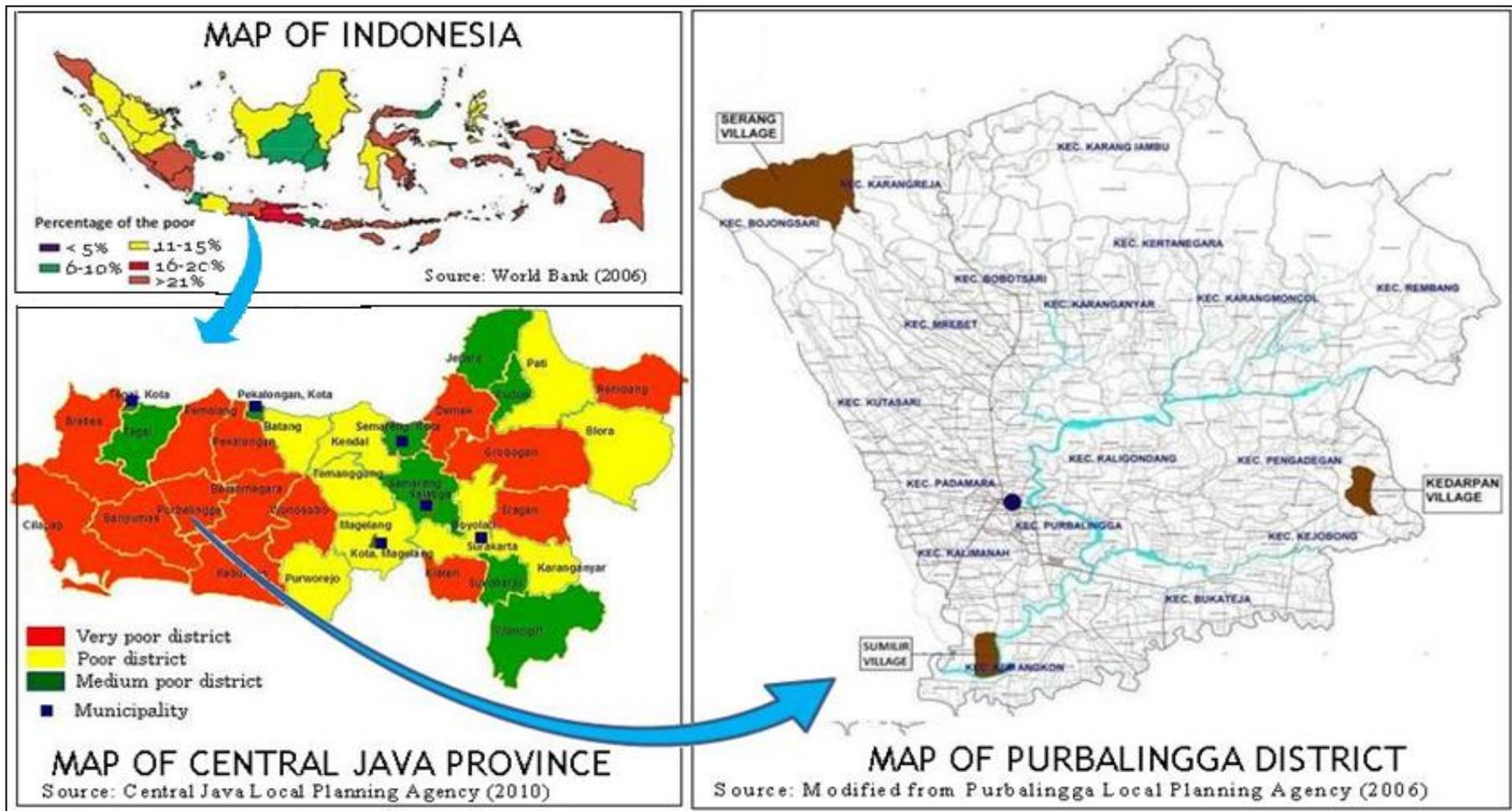


Figure 2. Map of Research Location (Not for Scaling)

4. Findings

4.1. Description of Research Locations and Respondents

Table 1. Profile of Study Villages

No	Condition	Serang	Kedarpan	Sumilir
1	❖ Covered land	13.09 km ²	2.25 km ²	2.26 km ²
2	❖ Main farming commodity	Cabbage, carrot, potato	Cassava	Paddy
3	❖ Number of households	1,246	585	547
4	❖ Agriculture households	77%	46%	52%
5	Education of Household Heads			
	❖ None	21%	14%	16%
	❖ Primary	67%	62%	56%
	❖ Lower secondary	7%	14%	15%
	❖ Upper secondary	3%	8%	10%
	❖ University	2%	2%	2%
6	Administration			
	❖ No. of hamlets (sub-village unit)	5	3	3
	❖ No. of Tonarigumi (<i>Rukun Tetangga</i> /RT)	33	11	9
7	Physical infrastructures within village			
	❖ Number of elementary schools	6	2	2
	❖ Number of kindergartens	3	2	1
	❖ Number of village clinic	1	1	1

Source: Purbalingga CSA (2013a, 2013b, 2013c)

Table 3. Profile of Respondent

No	Profile	Village			Total
		Kedarpan	Serang	Sumilir	
1	Sex				
	❖ Male	75 (94)	77 (96)	67 (84)	219 (91)
	❖ Female	5 (6)	3 (4)	13 (16)	21 (9)
2	Age				
	❖ <30 years	1 (1)	2 (3)	1 (1)	4 (2)
	❖ 30-39 years	12 (15)	11 (14)	3 (4)	26 (11)
	❖ 40-49 years	29 (36)	28 (35)	30 (38)	87 (36)
	❖ 50-59 years	28 (35)	31 (39)	27 (34)	86 (36)
	❖ ≥ 60 years	10 (13)	8 (10)	19 (24)	37 (15)
3	Education				
	❖ None	14 (18)	14 (18)	19 (24)	47 (20)
	❖ Primary	43 (54)	51 (64)	47 (59)	141 (59)
	❖ Low secondary	11 (14)	10 (13)	10 (13)	31 (13)
	❖ High secondary	10 (13)	2 (3)	4 (5)	16 (7)
	❖ University	2 (3)	3 (4)	0	5 (2)
4	Occupation				
	❖ Agriculture	45 (57)	61 (76)	61 (77)	167 (70)
	❖ Business	10 (13)	7 (9)	6 (8)	23 (10)
	❖ Labour	16 (20)	6 (8)	10 (13)	32 (13)
	❖ Salaried job	9 (11)	6 (8)	3 (4)	18 (8)

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Note: Number in parenthesis is percentage

4.2. Community participation in tonarigumi

- ❖ 17 *tonarigumies* had periodic meeting, mostly monthly. 2 *tonarigumies* in Serang and 3 *tonarigumies* in Sumilir held meeting as per need. In Kedarpan, 2 *tonarigumies* never arranged meeting for years.
- ❖ Most respondents (59%) often or always came to attend the meeting. However, most of them never generated idea, and just came as listener.
- ❖ Resources mobilization was high.
 - ❑ Days of labour contribution were averagely 22 days per year. Most activities were routinely scheduled, e.g. once a month to clean road, early rainy season to maintain irrigation, once a year to maintain cemetery, public well and mosque.
 - ❑ Cash contribution was averagely IDR 149,183 a year. This amount was equivalent to a wage of 4 days-labour.
- ❖ Social pressure, in which a villager was fearful of being criticized by neighbors, was part of the motivating factor to contribute cash and labour.
- ❖ Most respondent perceived that participation was the same as ten years ago. However, substantial number of respondent perceived that it was increased

Table 4. Community Participation in Tonarigumi

No	Indicators	Kedarpan	Serang	Sumilir	Total
1	Attending the meeting				
	❖ Never	4 (5)	4 (5)	2 (3)	10 (4)
	❖ Rarely	25 (31)	29 (36)	35 (44)	89 (37)
	❖ Often	28 (35)	28 (35)	25 (31)	81 (34)
	❖ Always	23 (29)	19 (24)	18 (23)	60 (25)
2	Generating idea during the meeting				
	❖ Never	33 (41)	33 (41)	33 (41)	99 (41)
	❖ Sometimes	27 (34)	23 (29)	26 (33)	76 (32)
	❖ Often	20 (25)	24 (30)	21 (26)	65 (27)
3	Average days of labour contribution	25	22	19	22
4	Average days of paid labour	3	3	3	3
5	Average of cash and material contribution (IDR)	66,250	139,400	241,900	149,200
6	Frequency of meeting compared 10 years ago				
	❖ Decrease	2 (3)	2 (3)	0 (0)	4 (2)
	❖ Same	43 (54)	38 (48)	50 (63)	131 (55)
	❖ Increase	35 (44)	39 (49)	30 (38)	104 (43)
7	Labor contribution compared 10 years ago				
	❖ Decrease	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (3)	4 (2)
	❖ Same	45 (56)	35 (44)	54 (68)	134 (56)
	❖ Increase	34 (43)	43 (54)	24 (30)	101 (42)
8	Cash contribution compared 10 years ago				
	❖ Decrease	0	3 (4)	0	3 (1)
	❖ Same	44(55)	40(50)	50(63)	134(56)
	❖ Increase	36(45)	35(44)	30(38)	101(42)
9	Material contribution compared 10 years ago				
	❖ Decrease	0	2(3)	0	2(1)
	❖ Same	46(58)	42(53)	50(63)	138(58)
	❖ Increase	34(43)	34(43)	30(38)	98(41)

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Note: Number in parenthesis is percentage



Figure 4. Periodical meeting in a tonarigumi in Kedarpan Village



Figure 5 . Participation in Infrastructure development

4.3. Capacity of Tonarigumi Heads

- ❖ Most indicators of leadership capacity, like informativeness, submission to consensus, responsiveness, encouragement, creativity and fairness were good enough. Yet, accountability was slightly poor (Figure 6).
- ❖ *Tonarigumi* heads were perceived informative enough, in which they informed and socialized government programs to villagers in *tonarigumi* meeting.
- ❖ Any decision made during the meeting was followed by the *tonarigumi* head, thus submission to consensus was perceived good enough.
- ❖ Tonarigumi was the lowest institution dealing with daily community problems and complaints. *Tonarigumi* heads were perceived responsive enough to those problems.
- ❖ Creativity was perceived a little bit low since the way to solve problems was without innovation.
- ❖ During project implementation, *tonarigumi* head motivated and encouraged villagers to voluntarily contribute labor.
- ❖ *Tonarigumi* head was perceived fair enough, in which they treated every villagers without discrimination.
- ❖ Community were rarely given report of village budget. Information about name of programs and what the villagers should do was given before the projects. Yet, after the projects finished, report of budget utilization were rarely shared. Thus, accountability was perceived slightly poor

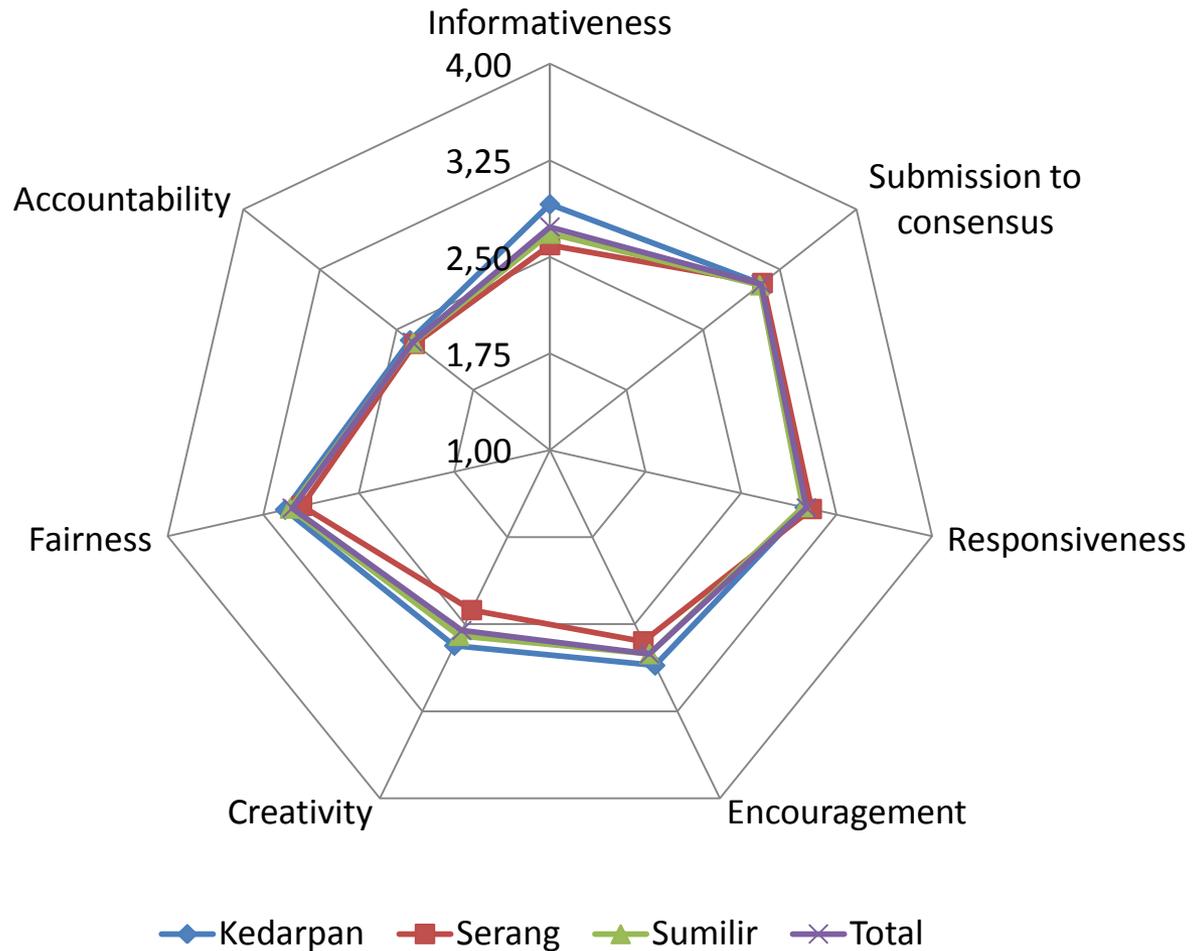


Figure 6. Community Perception on Leadership of Tonarigumi Heads

Source: Field survey, 2014

Note: Score 1-1.74: poor; 1.75-2.49: slightly poor; 2.5-3.24: good enough; 3.25-4: good

4.4. Community Empowerment through Tonarigumi

- ❖ Community empowerment did not effectively happen in tonarigumi . After 10 years of decentralization, community still had low understanding on decentralization
 - ❑ Community understanding on terms of decentralization (*Otonomi Daerah*), which was broadly quoted in Indonesia, and participatory budgeting (*Musrenbang*), which was annually held, were slightly low.
 - ❑ Understanding on some major development programs, like National Program for Community Empowerment (*Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*), House Renovation Program (*Program Pemugaran Rumah Miskin*), and Village Budget (*Dana Alokasi Desa*) were slightly low. Most respondents just ever heard the program, but did not know the meaning, program recipients, amount of fund and its utilization. Whereas, the programs were implemented in their villages.
 - ❑ Understanding on matters related to village government, like Village Parliament (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa / BPD*) and Village Development Committee (*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa / LKMD*) were low. Most respondent did not know members of these institutions and their tasks.

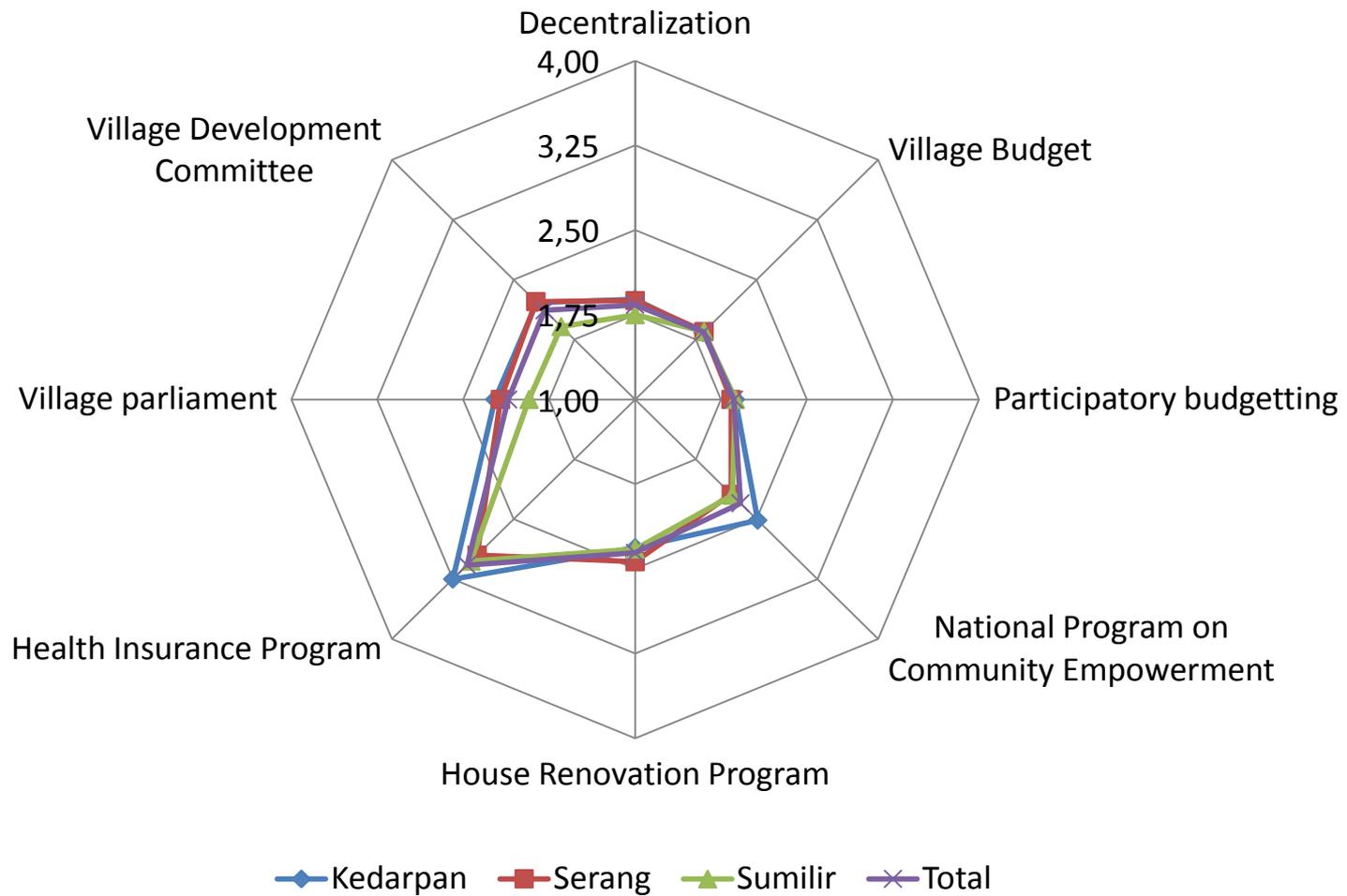


Figure 7. Respondent's Understanding on Decentralization Matters

Source: Field survey, 2014

Note: Score 1-1.74: poor; 1.75-2.49: slightly poor; 2.5-3.24: good enough; 3.25-4: good

5. Discussion

- ❖ Generally, this study finds that community involvement is pseudo participation emphasizing more on resource mobilization but less in decision making. Leadership capacity of *tonarigumi* heads is good enough, but with low scores in accountability and creativity. Thus, it is not surprising that community empowerment does not effectively happen
- ❖ Tonarigumi, as pseudo administrative institution, is not completely successful in promoting participatory development. This was contrary to the findings of Grootaert (1999) and Evers (2000), where *tonarigumi* as a community groups, could help villagers solve their livelihood problems.
- ❖ Yet, some potentialities is identified. For example, most *tonarigumies* held scheduled meeting, substantial number of respondent perceived that participation is increased in the last ten years, or during decentralization. *Tonarigumi* heads also have performed their role as a good enough community leader.

Discussion continued

- ❖ Policy of decentralization and participatory development should be continued. What the government should do is to optimize the potentialities of *tonarigumi*
- ❖ Looking at the current conditions of *tonarigumi*, there are two options can be done for improving the success of decentralization
 - ❑ The first is to develop the capacity of *tonarigumi* head, so that they can practice accountability, improve creativity and transfer their knowledge on decentralization to community
 - ❑ The second, hand in hand with capacity development to *tonarigumi* heads, the government should not limit the bottom-up proposal and participatory development only through *tonarigumi*. The other institution in rural areas should be involved to complement the roles that cannot be played by *tonarigumi*.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendation

- ❖ Tonarigumi is not completely successful in promoting participatory rural development.
- ❖ Capacity development should be delivered to tonarigumi heads. Hand in hand with this, the government should involve the other rural institutions to complement the roles cannot be played by *tonarigumi*

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank to the Sumitomo Foundation of Japan, which provides research grant for this study through the program of Grant for Japan-Related Research Project, 2013

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