

Women's Empowerment in Village Governance Transformation in Indonesia: Between Hope and Criticism

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Abstract

Since the launch of Law No. 6/2014 regarding villages, scholarly concerns on village studies are growing. However, studies focusing on gender equality in Village Law implementation are still few. This article discusses the responses of the village government to gender problems in their respective areas. Based on field research in two villages in Java, namely Panggunharjo and Lerep, this article recognizes that there is greater attention on gender issues since the implementation of the law. However, village heads still dominate village policymaking. Further, although gaining some supports, gender issues are still placed as the secondary among the village development priorities. They also lack of empowerment programs that will have a direct impact on the improvement of gender equality. Considering these criticisms, there is a crucial need for the national government to issue regulations that will encourage a stronger assertion of gender equality in Village Law implementation.

Keywords

Women's empowerment, gender equality, new Village Law in Indonesia, village governance transformation

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Introduction

The passing of the new Village Law, namely Law No. 6/2014, has been important for village governance in Indonesia.¹ The law has granted villages greater autonomy in governing their daily matters. There are three crucial aspects of the law that deal with village governance transformation: greater financial support for village governments in developing their local areas, clearer identification of policy and development areas where villages may exert their authority and stronger assertion of citizen participation. Today, after about four years the law was implemented, it remains unclear how it benefits women. This has occurred even though the law has clearly asserted gender equality as one of the principles of village governance in Article 26 and 63 and linked it to women's representation in Article 58.

This research assesses the law's assertion of gender perspectives in the initial stages of its implementation at the village level. It chooses two villages in Java, namely Panggungharjo, Bantul Regency, Special Province of Yogyakarta and Lerep, Semarang Regency, Central Java Province, for case study. According to Statistics Indonesia (2014), Panggungharjo has a population of 27,683 (8,739 households). About 21.17 per cent of the population live in poverty, with a further 44.49 per cent living slightly above the poverty line.² It consists of 14 sub-villages (*dusun*), which are located in rural areas in the south and urban areas in the north. Most of its residents are farmers and farm labourers (16.97%), private sector employees, including small enterprises and home-industries (12.69%) and merchants (7.37%). It is led by Wahyudi Anggoro Hadi, a former Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII) activist who graduated from Universitas Gadjah Mada.

As with Panggungharjo, Lerep is close to its province's capital city. In 2016, it had a population of 13,500 (4,148 households). The southern area of the village is characterized by its rural culture, with most of the population known as *penduduk asli* (native residents) and living in *kampung* (settlements), while the north is urban, with a population that consists mostly of newcomers who live in housing complexes. It covers an area of 682.32 hectares, with mountainous areas in the south and hilly ones in the north. It is divided into eight sub-villages. Lerep's enthusiastic and visionary village head is Sumariyadi, an engineer who graduated from Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Centre Sudirman GUPPI (Undaris).

The two villages were chosen for case study for wide success in many aspects of village governance reform, including village bureaucracy, enterprises and service provision. Panggungharjo is known to have been successful in promoting village bureaucracy reform, while Lerep has shown progress in its village tourism programme. As both villages are situated in Java, which has been known to be prioritized in Indonesian development policy over other islands in the country, it is reasonable to choose these two villages as cases for this initial study.

Studies on gender in the context of village transformation in Indonesia, such as this research, are motivated by the limited information on the issue despite the growing concern for village governance since the passing of Law No. 6/2014. Gender studies in the context of the implementation of Law No. 6/2014 have not

been common, and gender's assertion and use as a perspective in framing village policy has not been clear.

Theoretically, reform in village governance should bring women new hopes and opportunities to strengthen policy recognition and gain access and representation. Referring to Kabeer et al. (2008), historical trajectories, institutional arrangements and resource constraints may yield differences in terms of gender equality in public policy. As Kabeer et al. (2008, 4) indicate, the level of development, signified by the level of income, partially influences gender equality, which in this case is measured through the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). GDI refers basic dimensions of gender equality, such as earning, life expectancy and education, while GEM refers to access to jobs, wages, positions in professional institutions and parliamentary representation.

However, as Kabeer et al. (2008, 5) remind us, the level of development/income is not always linear with the GDI/GEM level or gender equality in general. Care should be taken when drawing a relational conclusion between the level of development and gender equality. Nevertheless, for an initial assessment, the idea of including women in smaller units of governance, such as villages, remains useful.

Kabeer et al. (2008, 2) also remind us that informal institutions, such as family, kinship and community, should be considered important when analysing gender equality and public policy/governance. In some cases, these institutions are more influential in explaining gender equality in particular contexts than formal ones. This means formal institutions that produce policies and legislation should not be considered the sole factors in the explanation of and search for gender equality. Therefore Kabeer, Magnus and Stark encourage us to understand the idea of governance more broadly in analysing gender equality; researchers should not only focus on formal organizations and indicators but also carefully examine the informal ones, which may not always present quantifiable measures of equality. This applies when assessment is conducted in smaller units of governance, such as districts or villages.

For this purpose, a fieldwork was conducted by observing and interviewing key actors in these two villages over a period of 6 months (from April to September 2017). Observations were conducted to see the daily services provided by village offices, as well as the meetings and activities of women. Interviews were conducted with village heads, village secretaries, village treasurers, village development division heads, village facilitators and village women.

From this case study, this article identifies the gender issues that have gained most attention in village policy and governance. Women enjoy more financial support for providing village services that promote *Posyandu*, PAUD, micro-credit and home industry training. However, in village governance women remain in supporting roles, rather than taking main ones together with men. Gender perspective in Village Law's implementation is still placed as secondary matters, rather than being mainstreamed in village policymaking. Gender equality is still identified as residual policy, with women's portions allocated only after all other policy areas are identified and budgeted.

In elaborating this argument, this article is arranged as follows. First, it portrays the main features of the law and explains the mission of village governance transformation. Second, it highlights the assertion of gender equality in the law. Third, it discusses the assertion of gender equality in village policymaking and governance through the implementation of Law No. 6/2014, drawing on the two selected interventions the villages conducts as case studies. Finally, it reflects on the gender issues identified in the two villages and the lessons learned before providing some recommendations for the future.

A Brief Conceptual Discussion of Gender Equality in Community Development

One of the foundations for understanding gender equality is of the World Bank's definition. The World Bank (2012) defines gender equality as 'equal access to education, health, and assets between men and women, equal opportunity to generate income and become agents in development and decision-making, as well as equal access to welfare' (2012, 4). Gender equality therefore relates not only to processes, but also to results, with men and women being equally involved in the decision-making and development processes to gain equal welfare benefits. It is an important perspective in development and policy, as referring to Kabeer and Natali (2013, 6) gender equality is empirically proven to contribute to poverty reduction and welfare improvement.

A similarly crucial area for assessing gender perspectives, which closely relates to people in rural areas, is community development. As villages mostly involve local people in their development processes, including infrastructure, village-owned enterprises and political development, village development can be considered as a community driven development (CDD). The World Bank defines CDD as programmes that 'operate on the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, administrative autonomy, greater downward accountability and enhanced local capacity'.³ This definition explains the processes of policy and development as being initiated and run at the village level, underlining the idea of local-based empowerment and governance, as well as local-based justification of development objectives, that is, to enhance local capacity and fulfil local demand. In relation to this, it is critical to ask: why is assessing gender in village development important? What is the real problem? What about engendered poverty in villages? Referring to Chant (2010), engendered poverty does not only imply the widening of the income gap between men and women. Affirming the views of Johnsson-Latham (2004, 26–27), Chant (2010, 3) emphasizes that engendered poverty is more importantly about the gap between men and women in terms of access to land, agency in decision-making, legal rights within families, vulnerability to violence and (self) respect and dignity.

Recognizing the importance of equality in gender relations, there has been strong concern for gender equality in government policy and in NGO advocacy in Indonesia. The central government has issued regulation that encourages any

government body to involve gender perspective and mainstreaming frameworks in its policies, although it is not yet implemented effectively. Similarly, NGOs have also often been urged by donor agencies to integrate a gender approach with the approaches they use to run development projects, despite some technical weaknesses that still require improvement. However, such gender concerns have not been discussed intensely in the area of village governance, especially in the context of the implementation of the new Village Law in Indonesia. In current discussions on the Village Law's implementation, most scholars still focus on institutional village arrangements. This includes villages' capacity for managing village funds, operating Internet, Communication and Technology (ICT), planning and implementing development, governing assets and building accountability and transparency. Meanwhile, gender issues in villages are wide and varied, thus requiring policy responses.

In many cases, women are constrained when attempting to maximally benefit from CDD programmes. Based on Browne's findings (2014), CDD in villages is often not free from elite capture and male domination. According to Dutta (2009, 3) and Platteau (2008, 1), elite capture is a kind of elite hijacking of social movements for the benefit of the elites rather than for the whole society. Meanwhile, male domination, as Browne (2014, 3) underlines, is identified as the relative lack of finances and education attributable to women having lower social status in villages than men.

Village governments often position women's empowerment last during the development planning. Advocacy for women's fight against domestic violence, for instance, has never been seen as a strategic issue in village policymaking, and thus is rarely included in village programmatic activities, even though it is clear that cases are common at the village level.

Given the new situation village governments are now encountering through the implementation of new Village Law, it is crucial to assess how the law and its implementation may transform gender relations in villages into more equal ones. To do so, it is necessary to analyse gender equality in village governance and development practices not only to scrutinize the processes and extent of women's inclusion in decision-making and village development practices but also to identify the outcomes of policy and development strategies for women. In addition, as villages are the lowest tier of government (Eko and Antlov 2012, 2), which also means the closest governance institution to the community, assessing the gender aspects of village governance reform requires us to deal with the daily modes of gender relations. This means that we will need a mixture of political and cultural approaches and perspectives.

Transformation of Village Governance Through Law No. 6/2014

Law No. 6/2014 regarding villages, henceforth the Village Law, is a breakthrough in Indonesian governance. It recognizes villages as autonomous entities in the governance structure of Indonesia. As asserted in the Village Law, there are at

least three areas that highlight village autonomy. First, it allocates financial support to village governments. Second, it deals with village authority in governing matters related to village residents' lives. Third, it asserts more strongly the need for village citizens' political participation in village governance.

Therefore the Village Law recognizes that villages have rights that the State must respect and fulfil. The General Director of Village Community Development and Empowerment at the Ministry of Villages, Development of Backward Areas and Transmigration, Ahmad Erani Yustika metaphorically asserted that, through the Law, the State positions villages not merely as its backyard, but as its front yard (Kurniawan 2015, 1). Table 1 shows the differences between the previous Village Law and Law No. 6/2014.

As Edi and Kusumawardani (2016) assert, unlike Law No. 32/2004, the previous law on decentralization, Law No. 6/2014 recognizes village-scale authorities (*kewenangan berskala desa*) and original village authorities (*kewenangan asal usul*). Having authority means villages are no longer seen as dependent entities in the Indonesian governance structure. Rather, they are now considered autonomous government institution with authorities that upper government institutions, especially regency/city governments, should respect.

This is not only written in the Village Law and its supporting regulations. In practice, some villages have transformed into more democratic, service-oriented and self-empowering governance institutions (e.g., Panggungharjo and Lerep). Panggungharjo was named Best National Village in 2014, an award given to recognize Panggungharjo's perceived capability to encourage civic engagement in the village development processes (Edi and Kusumawardani 2016). Panggungharjo is noted as having successfully built a healthcare system for its citizens, especially those who are not yet covered by the national health insurance programme (BPJS) and live in severe poverty. It is also known to offer university scholarships for young village residents. Panggungharjo is considered to have rapidly transformed following the implementation of the Village Law compared to the other villages, many of which are still preparing to respond to the law.

Like Panggungharjo, Lerep is also seen as progressing in transforming its village governance. Lerep has been especially successful in improving sanitation, significantly reducing open defecation, which has become a serious concern for most village governments in Indonesia, including in Java. Lerep has also begun initiated enterprises to sell milk and promote village tourism and agriculture. At the regency level, it won an award as the cleanest village, and at the provincial level Lerep was recognized with an award for the best development of village-owned enterprises (BUMDesa) in 2017. It often hosts other village governments that seek to study village tourism (*desa wisata*). Compared to most villages, these innovations have been phenomenal. They have all occurred when many other villages have yet to make any adjustments and preparations for the implementation of the Village Law.

Of course, Panggungharjo and Lerep do not represent the situations in all villages in Indonesia. Far more villages still face difficulties in identifying the starting point of their village governance transformation. When this research project was started in May 2017, other villages and village heads in Central Java

Table 1. Differences Between Previous and Current Village Law

Aspects	Previous Law	Current Law
Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law No. 32/2004 • Government Decree 72/2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law No. 6/2014 • Government Decree 43/2014 • Government Decree 60/2014 • Government Decree 47/2015 • Government Decree 22/2015
Main principle	Residual decentralization	Subsidiarity recognition
Position in government structure	Government organization under the authority of regency/city government	Community government that mixes 'community self-government' and 'local state government'
Position and role of regency/city government in relation to village	Regency/city government has broad and large authority to govern and control villages	Regency/city government has limited yet strategic authority in relation to the village government, including governing matters that do not require the direct handling of the central government
Authority and programme delivery mode	Village as target	Village as mandate
Politics of place in village	Village as location of projects regency/city, provincial and central government programmes	Village as arena for village community to conduct governance, development, empowerment and social relations
Village position in development	Village as object of development	Village as subject of development

Source: Kurniawan (2015).

Province, for instance, were focused on determining the kinds and coverage of village authorities and ensuring that they do not overlap with those of the regency/city governments. However, Panggungharjo and Lerep's experiences indicate that progress in the transformation of village governance should be considered a crucial step in the successful implementation of the Village Law.

Gender Perspective in the New Village Law

Although the progress of village governance transformation in the context of the implementation of the Village Law has been a strong concern of scholars in Indonesia, little attention has been given to gender aspects. Zakaria and Simarmata (2017) are among the few to recognize the assertion of gender perspectives in the Village Law as important progress in Indonesian policy.

Formally, the Village Law clearly asserts gender equality as part of its approach. As Articles 26 and 63 mention, gender equality is asserted as a perspective in village governance. More explicitly, Article 58 mentions the involvement of women in village representative body, called the *Badan Musyawarah Desa* (Village Discussion Council, BMD), further affirming the Village Law's recognition of women's participation.

The Village Law is reaffirmed by Article 121, Points (1) and (2), of Government Regulation No. 43/2014, which asserts that gender equality is a significant consideration in village development. Article 72, Point (1) and Article 80, Point (2), of this law assert the need for women's representation in village decision-making processes, either through the village representative body or through the community. This is strengthened by Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Backward Areas, and Transmigration No. 22/2015 on Priorities in Allocating Village Funds, which clearly mentions women as a priority group for gaining access to village development and empowerment programmes.

The aforementioned emphasis on gender perspective indicates the government's awareness that it has attempted to highlight in the Village Law. However, we should recognize that quantitatively the words *gender* and *women* are rare in the Village Law and in subsequent relations. Likewise, no explicit assertion is made regarding the significance of improving gender equality in villages, where women face a strong patriarchy and different opportunities in the economy, education and policymaking. Although the law deserves appreciation for its assertion of gender equality in terms of political participation and access to village development, empowerment and welfare programmes, further advocacy is still necessary for stronger emphasis on gender equality in the law.

Gender (In)Equality in Villages in Indonesia

Despite the formal assertion of the Village Law, gender relations in villages have shown us that complex problem of inequality remain. Despite continuous improvements in terms of access to politics, policy and development, women still face a greater risk of poverty than men. At the village level, the problem is

exacerbated by cultural barriers, limited education and economic hardship (Browne 2014). In many cases, women are most impacted, and many tackle the problem by participating in migrant works. This happens not only in villages that have good resources and governance but also in villages that lack resources.

Referring to Browne (2014, 7) and learning from the case of National Programme for Community Empowerment (PNPM) in Indonesia, women do not always feel programme benefits. Therefore, the impact of such programmes for women are not always clear. Women remain trapped in poverty, with double work burdens and bear the risk of becoming victims of domestic violence. This is because, as Browne identifies, 'women are more visible in decision-making processes (in PNPM programmes), but the quality of their participation remains low'. Women's participation, therefore, is instrumental, meaning that it is promoted merely to fulfil programme objectives but does not underpin empowerment issues and strategies.

Somehow, as Browne (2014) identifies, although donors' requirement that women be involved in development programmes has been asserted very clearly, their involvement is often pro forma. Woman participants are found in attendance lists, but this is often not followed with inclusion. Therefore despite participating women still lose opportunities to voice their ideas and contribute their thoughts. The PNPM programme failed on this count, as it could not substantially transform the gender equality platform it promoted into more substantive changes of gender relations. It was too formalist, lacking the capability to tackle what Haider (2012) terms 'the remaining strong traditional power structure' that hinder women's active participation in village decision-making.

In addition to the villages' political culture, some scholars also relate the picture of engendered poverty with national and local policymakers' urban bias perspectives in setting policy and development priorities (see Brickell 2010, 458). Prior the implementation of the PNPM programme, there was limited policy to mainstream gender in village development. Moreover, at the same time, villages were under the authority of regency/city governments. Therefore, sensitiveness to gender issues in villages was not strong. However, with the new emphasis on village autonomy, gender equality depends strongly on the political structure in each respective village.

Dealing with this, in village development and governance there are at least two areas where women are often left behind that need attention. The first is decision-making, including village planning and other decision-making processes (Pattiro 2016). The second is implementation and practice, including the development of village-owned enterprises, village asset building and village infrastructure and public facilities, as well as in village service provision (in administrative and social protection areas) (Edi, Anwar and Rangga 2016). If we look at Stokke's criteria of citizenship (Stokke 2017, 24), the first area relate to the issue of women's recognition and representation, while the second relates to redistribution. Recognition refers to villages' assertion and reaffirmation that women and men are equal citizens. Representation refers to the authority to influence decision-making. Redistribution refers to access to economic and non-economic resources to enjoy welfare and justice.

As widely known, decision-making is a place where the priorities of village governance are identified, and therefore, becomes the key area that will determine whether gender need is responded sufficiently or not. It makes sense, thus, that Moser (1993, 37) mentions women's participation among gender strategic needs because it influences gender relations so they can become more equal and just. Moser (1993) identifies gender practical needs as those related to women's survival in everyday life, including income, food, health, environment, water and housing. Meanwhile, gender strategic needs are understood as those related to the transformation of power relations, as in terms of access to decision-making, knowledge and information ownership, resources that influence gender relations and political participation.

Meanwhile, village development practices are another critical sphere allowing women's empowerment. Development is considered as a strategic area for promoting women's empowerment as it tells us about access, resources and practical benefits, which may be critical for the stronger assertion of gender strategic needs (Moser 1993). Development strategy, additionally, reflects the nature of gender relations in decision-making, as it determines which village priority to respond to.

In simple terms, Cornwall (2016, 342) identifies empowerment as, 'Grassroots struggles to confront and transform unjust and unequal power relations'. Cornwall (2016, 344) highlights power and control as the keys to understanding empowerment. It must be underlined that power and control are not necessarily present in hard and formal forms; they can exist in soft and informal modes (Hertog 2010, 54–59) through familial and neighbourhood relationships that change the circumstances of power relations in the village. Analysis of development and empowerment at the village level, thus, should also consider the informal institutions that may influence gender relations.

Based on the Village Law, decision-making in villages involves the village government body, the village representative body, the village development planning dialogue assembly and the village dialogue assembly. Meanwhile, in terms of village development strategy, this research will assess village-owned enterprises both in terms of establishment and of operations and village's social policy. Assessing these areas could be an initial step to see how gender is mainstreamed in village policy and development, and, further, how the Village Law transforms gender inequality at the village level.

Gender Interventions in Panggunharjo and Lerep

As argued earlier, there are two important intervention spheres to identify gender empowerment in village. The first is access to decision-making, which allows women to have opportunity to gain policy information and policy change that will impact their prosperity. The second is related village development programme that will improve the quality of their life (access to basic needs and social welfare). Following are the two aspects of interventions discussed in a bit detail.

Access to Decision-making to Women

First of all, there is an interesting fact we can see in the two villages in terms of women's inclusion in decision-making. In both villages, the positions of treasurer and secretary are devoted to women. As many scholars assert, one of the Village Law's concerns is its high demand for village accountability and its strict administrative requirement for annual reporting. When the researcher asked why, the village head of Lerep answered, 'Because women are usually better ordered and detailed than men (meanwhile, the village report needs detailed description, for which men usually do not have good skills)'. The common assumption that women are more diligent than men seems to have influenced how village heads make decisions in choosing their treasurers and secretaries. Of course, this can be a good news for women, but it can also be bad. On the one hand, women can gain wider access to policy information and policymaking. On the other hand, this also reaffirms the view that women function merely as secondary parts of village governance. Table 2 shows the structure of Panggungharjo and Lerep government and the positions women can hold.

An interesting point to note is Panggungharjo fulfilled the requirement of 30 per cent gender quota in public office. Meanwhile, in Lerep the percentage of women in village government structure is less than 30. However, although the percentage of women compared to men in village government structure in Lerep is less than in Panggungharjo, the position Lerep women handle in government structure is more strategic than in Panggungharjo. In Lerep, the village head not only appointed woman as village secretary and in financial division that focus more on administrative issues, or even staffs in lower position as in Panggungharjo, but also appointed women in key areas of policymaking, as in general affairs and development planning division and in leading village-owned enterprise. These positions are important because they directly relate to the issue of empowerment. Yet, whether by holding strategic positions in village government

Table 2. Women's Positions in Village Government Structure in Panggungharjo and Lerep

Women's Access to Decision-making	Panggungharjo	Lerep
Women's position in village government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary • Chief of financial division • <i>Dukuh</i> (sub-village head) • Village staffs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary • Chief of general affairs and development planning • Chief of financial division • Director of village-owned enterprise
Number of women in village's government structure	10 out of 32 (31.25%)	4 out of 21 (19.05%)

Source: Analysis result of Panggungharjo Government 2019 and Lerep Government 2017.

structure will result in better access for women to village development policy, must need further elaboration.

In both villages, there is also a female representative on the village representative body (BPD or *Badan Perwakilan Desa*), one of the body's 12 members. Although the BPD has not functioned optimally in both villages, and the number of women on the body is too small, the presence of woman is a sign of progress that should be appreciated. Indeed, encouragement is still needed to ensure that women's interests are well accommodated in village decision-making.

In both villages, women can in general be considered active participants in village decision-making processes. Women representatives, usually from the PKK (village woman organization) are often invited to village dialogue assembly and village development planning dialogue assembly. They are also always asked to draft the budget proposed during the latter assembly. Based on interviews, it is apparent that village heads in both areas are also active in disseminating information about village policy to women's organizations, including PKK, woman entrepreneurs' associations and the *pengajian* (periodical Islamic studies).

Although criticisms have been found, such as the tendency of the Panggungharjo village head to dominate the planning processes, including those proposed by PKK, and PKK's ideas are often filtered prior the drafting of legislation to suit the village head's own priorities,⁴ village governance reform remains supported. Similarly, although the Lerep village head's big idea of transforming his village's governance is seen as too ambitious, and he has gained the greatest support only from the residents that live around his house, his hard work is deeply appreciated by not only local residents⁵ but also by the regency and provincial governments. A crucial factor that may be worth considering in both villages is the need to facilitate women in becoming equal partners in village decision-making by providing them with venues and spaces to elaborate their ideas for village development.

Another important area related to decision-making is village budget, because it will practically determine the real access of women to village development programme. In both villages, women enjoy greater financial support in their monthly village activities promoting *Posyandu*, PAUD and home industry training. In Panggungharjo, the village head has even developed a system for village health and maternal care, in which women could directly benefit through free assistance with childbirth.⁶

In Panggungharjo, the total annual village income in 2016 was Rp. 4,182,285,759; in Lerep, it was Rp. 2,225,053,000. That same year, the village funds for Panggungharjo reached Rp. 871,642,000, and in Lerep it was Rp. 652,025,000 of the village's respective income. The annual budget allocated for *Posyandu* in Panggungharjo was Rp. 131,600,000 and Rp. 70,700,000 was allocated for PAUD. The village has also allocated Rp. 100,000,000 to support village-owned enterprises. In Lerep in 2016, *Posyandu* gained Rp. 5,500,000, PKK gained Rp. 12,500,000, pregnant women gained Rp. 3,000,000 and PAUD gained Rp. 4,500,000, a quite small amount compared to Panggungharjo's. Table 3 shows village's funding allocation for development programme related directly to women.

Table 3. Budget Allocated for Gender Development in 2016

Budget	Panggunharjo	Lerep
Total annual village income in 2016	Rp. 4,182,285,759	Rp. 2,225,053,000
Proportion of village fund in village's total income in 2016	Rp. 871,642,000	Rp. 652,025,000
<i>Posyandu</i> (community based-maternal and infant healthcare)	Rp. 131,600,000	Rp. 5,500,000
PKK (village woman organization)	Rp. 81,365,200	Rp. 12,500,000
Subsidies for pregnant women	Included in <i>Posyandu</i>	Rp. 3,000,000
PAUD (early child education)	Rp. 70,700,000	Rp. 4,500,000

Source: Panggunharjo Government 2016 and Lerep Government 2016 budget reports.

From Table 3 we can see that Panggunharjo allocated its fund more to women-related programmes than Lerep village. Based on field visit in both villages, Panggunharjo has wider space to allocate village income to women's need because the village does not have basic problem of infrastructure as found in Lerep. As society's demands for the betterment of road, drain and the other public facilities in Lerep is high, the village government prefers to prioritize infrastructure building and improvement. Consequently, fund allocation for issues directly related to women becomes less emphasized.

Village Development Practices in Two Villages: Female Enterprise and Social Policy

The second sphere of intervention important to figure out woman empowerment in village is community development practice. There are two most important programmes to look at in this matter, namely female enterprise and social policy. We will begin with discussing Panggunharjo, followed with Lerep.

Generally, Panggunharjo has at least four major areas of development in the implementation of the Village Law, namely village bureaucracy performance, social policy (health and housing for the poor), education and micro-economy. Referring to Edi and Kusumawardani (2016), village bureaucracy performance includes administrative service reform, incentives and disincentives for the village government apparatus, permission administration reform, village asset administration and village statistics administration. Health reform includes the building of a village-scale health system handled by an auxiliary village institution called BapelJPS (the body for implementing social security protection), which administers healthcare assistance for pregnant women, nursing women, the elderly and the poor. To promote education, Panggunharjo has also implemented a programme called *satu rumah satu sarjana* (one house one university graduate), through which the village government provides scholarships to residents based on their merits. In terms of micro-industry, Panggunharjo has assisted existing home industries owned by village residents in improving their marketing coverage.

Among the areas of reform mentioned earlier, micro-economy and social policy (maternal health and housing) can be said to have had the most impact on women. Bureaucracy performance reform and education, meanwhile, are not specifically designed to empower women, but meant for entire society. Below parts discuss a bit in details regarding female enterprise facilitation and social policy assistance in the area.

As identified through observation, home industries are the economic backbone of most Panggungharjo residents. An informant asserts, 'almost all women in this village can earn their own money. If they do not work in factory, they produce something or run small business'. Panggungharjo's strategic position that is passed by all visitors going to Parangtritis beach—the most popular beach tourism in Yogyakarta—makes it easier for the people, especially women, to sell souvenirs, and that is why self-made production—not importing from the other regions—becomes the most favoured option to gain the most benefit. Village government helps promote the business through building partnerships with the other tourism sectors as travel agencies, restaurants and bigger souvenir shops; and promoting eco-friendly small businesses by providing facilities for home industries that use waste as their raw materials.⁷

An informant shared her experience in interview how village government succeeded to persuade a big restaurant owner in Parangtritis street, to provide a space in his/her restaurant for souvenirs selling produced by women in his village as the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Village government then facilitated a group of female entrepreneurs to manage the design of the shop within the restaurant building, the distribution of space for each category of souvenir products and the schedule for serving the customers in the shop. One female business owner told me, 'I have never felt as supported as currently. Previously, the village government did not provide significant support for developing our business'. Another woman made the same assertion: 'It is just now that I (as small business owner) have become involved in such a programme (female small business development)'. Still another said,

I am a newcomer in this village. I ran a small business, focusing on traditional souvenir (production and distribution). Yet, I feel welcomed by the village head and my fellow female business owners. I am involved in village business development and my fellow business owners really help me improve. The business environment is conducive. We support and cooperate each other. We do not feel that we need to compete to make a profit.

Furthermore, the women's organization PKK also operates a cooperative called Dewi Kunthi. The cooperative assists female residents in overcoming their problems with village loan sharks, thereby lightening the debt burden born by female residents. In villages, it is common to find women trapped by loan sharks, that apply high interest for women borrowing their money. The problem gets more serious because sometime the female borrowers have to give their assets away to pay the lending. The cooperative is meant to release women from this burden, and provide financial literacy, so they could run their business healthily.

In social policy, Panggungharjo's policy to establish BapelJPS is seen as a breakthrough. BapelJPS is an abbreviation of *Badan Pelaksana Jaringan Pengaman Sosial* (Implementing Body of Social Safety Net), and meant to provide access to alternative social policy for the poor, women and children, elderly and disable people in terms of education and health. In education, BapelJPS is meant to provide scholarship for young people in Panggungharjo, who are from poor family but have academic potential to pursue higher education. There were 13 university students who received the assistance (Hestiwiningsih 2017). This programme is not gender specific because men and women are the same in having right to access the support. In health sector, BapelJPS is helpful for poor people who are not yet covered by national health insurance (BPJS). Pregnant women from poor families, as well as elderly, who live alone, are also the priority recipients of this programme. In this area, gender aspect is more apparent because women are specifically mentioned as the policy target. For pregnant women, village provides free facilities for 9 times pregnancy checking, normal childbirth, 2 times post-partum checking and 5 times immunization for infants. For elderly, who mostly are women, village provides free facilities for basic health service, health consultancy fee, health checking and treatment, medicines and emergency. For disable people, village provides training for business, as well as builds cooperation with NGOs focusing on disable people's empowerment to improve program effectiveness.

In Lerep, we will find out different development priorities. Since the implementation of the Village Law, Lerep has prioritized sanitation, housing improvements, village-owned enterprises, microfinance and agriculture. Among these programmes, sanitation and housing improvement are among Lerep government's most successful social policies. Unlike Panggungharjo, social policy scheme in Lerep tends to be not gender specific. All village's citizen, especially the poor, can access to this village's assistance. Yet, female elderly, who live alone, were prioritized in this policy. Sanitation involves assisting community members in having their own toilets. It is considered to have successfully covered more than 90 per cent of residents' sanitation needs, thereby significantly reducing open and unclean defecation. Housing improvement has also become a priority of the village head. He has covered more than two thirds of the homes of poor people in his area. Homes are now made with bricks and cement, rather than bamboo or wood. These homes are designed with safety in mind and have healthy shapes with windows and ventilation. Microfinance has also been used to finance the development of the village's dam, profit from which is shared annually based on the amount saved by the villagers. Other social policy that may provide more benefit for women include *Posyandu* and PAUD. *Posyandu* is monthly health consultancy and treatment for pregnant women, breastfeeding women and infants under 5 years old. Meanwhile, PAUD is early child education provided for village's citizen. Unlike in Panggungharjo, although *Posyandu* and PAUD are included in village's annual budget in Lerep, the amount is not significant (as presented earlier).

Village-owned enterprises are the next backbone for village development, because it has great potential to support village's economy. There are five

village-owned enterprise units, including village tourism (a water dam), waste management, catering, home industry (soaps and snacks) and electricity bill payment services. The village head of Lerep worked hard in promoting this business. He believes that village-owned enterprises are critical to the village's survival in the future. He said,

Receiving village funds is good news for the village government. However, I realize that it is political. It is from the national government, which means once they want to stop it, the village will not have any choice but to say yes. So, this is an opportunity, which may not come again in the future. Therefore, I utilized the money carefully. I would rather spend the money on some productive activities like village-owned enterprise development. I spent much on dam building, which is not only useful for farming, but also for tourism. When the village-owned enterprises earn a profit, then the village will no longer depend on the village fund. Whether the funds are given or not in the future, I hope that this will not be a problem anymore for the community.⁸

Considering the difficulty of controlling the rotation of money, the village government has chosen not to run a micro-credit programme. In Lerep, the microfinance programme only covers community savings. Money collected from community is used to support village tourism business. The profit is then distributed through saving interest. Every month, each family needs to save only Rp. 10,000 (less than \$1). The saving can be withdrawn on every Eid Mubarak celebration.

Finally, agriculture involves cattle production and farming. In cattle production, the village government supports the production of milk, while in farming, it focuses on cultivation of chilli peppers. Lerep is presently trying to build a partnership with Indofood, a noodle company located in Semarang city, to supply raw materials for noodle production. The purpose of this partnership, according to village head, is to help farmers enjoy stable prices. He said, 'We do not need high prices. We need reasonable, but stable ones. We are ready to supply as much as the (noodle) industry needs'.⁹

Among these programme, two areas have had the greatest direct impact on women, namely village-owned enterprises and agriculture. Village-owned enterprises involve significant numbers of women that run food processing micro-businesses, while agriculture involves female farmers groups (KWT or *Kelompok Wanita Tani*) as a motor for business. However, policy in these areas is not always implemented smoothly. Seneng, a KWT chief admits, 'We love when we get training or business capital assistance. But, we are seldom active except when the village head comes to us and asks us to take part'. Seneng realizes that it is not easy to develop business, and those businesses are mostly owned by the village rather than individual citizens. As Seneng explains, 'Unless the business unit is profitable, women prefer not to take part'. Currently, women have remained active in village farming and cattle production as they can earn additional income. In KWT, as Seneng says, 'Last year, each (active) member of KWT (of about 18 in total) got Rp. 300,000 from profit sharing. We are happy. From this money we can run soft loans and savings for our members'.

From the earlier discussion, we can see that gender empowerment in Panggunharjo and Lerep gains attention from village government after the

Table 4. Summary of Village Interventions for Woman Empowerment

Gender Intervention Spheres	Panggunharjo	Lerep
Decision-making area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to position in village government structure, that is, Village Secretary, Chief of Financial Division, <i>Dukuh</i> (sub-village head and village staffs • Fulfilled 30% gender quota 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to position in village government structure, that is, Village Secretary, Chief of General Affairs and Development Planning, Chief of Financial Division and Director Village Enterprise • Not fulfilled 30% gender quota
Access to budget	About 8% of total village revenue	About 1% of total village revenue
Social policy for women	Focused on health for pregnant women, infant and elderly	Focused on health and housing for infant and elderly
Female enterprise	Focused on training, facilitation and protection (cooperative) in home industry	Focused on training and facilitation in agriculture and home industry

Source: Analysis result of Panggunharjo Government 2016 and Lerep Government 2016.

implementation of Law No. 6/2014. However, village's context explains why these two villages are different in terms of giving support to gender intervention programme. If we resume, we can see gender interventions in both villages as shown in Table 4.

Gender in Village Governance Transformation: Between Hope and Criticism

With the new transformation opportunities offered by the Village Law, it is urgent to clarify how gender equality improves in villages. This includes the scrutiny of areas where improvement is conducive or unconducive and the challenges that may be useful to consider in future policy betterment.

From the discussion on village interventions earlier, we can see that as an implementation of Village Law, gender issues have gained increased attention in village policy and development. We can see that both villages have provided women more access to positions in their government structures compared to the former administrations. We can also see that development in areas that relate to women's interests has also gained significant support from both village governments. Most woman informants in interviews expressed appreciation for and showed gratitude towards the village heads for their willingness to develop small businesses run by female village residents.

However, some aspects still need improvement. First, women remain in supporting parts in village governance, rather than main parts together with men.

In both villages, village heads seek greater power in the village political arena. While in Panggungharjo the village head plays a dominating role in decision-making, in Lerep the village head appears to be willing to run too fast. As a result, women tend to be placed and place themselves in secondary venues in village decision-making. Meanwhile, there is a crucial need for stronger facilitation and wider deliberation processes from the village government, thereby allowing women to voice their ideas more freely in village decision-making processes. As we can see in Lerep, although women gain more accesses to government's organizational structure even including to areas strategic for village decision-making, budget allocation for directly improving women's welfare is too small compared to Panggungharjo. For women, there is a crucial need to strengthen their political consciousness and recognize that becoming active in village decision-making processes is a strategic right that can improve their well-being.

Secondly, the gender aspects of the implementation of the Village Law are still considered additional matters rather than mainstream perspectives in village policymaking. Compared to other areas of development, gender aspects are still considered a residual policy, with their portion allocated only after all other policy areas are identified. Both village governments still prioritize areas where women are more likely to gain indirect benefits. While in Panggungharjo, the village head has focused deeply on improving the performance of the bureaucracy, in Lerep the village chief is concerned with the dam and village infrastructure. Women's empowerment programmes, which equips women residents with knowledge and skills that they can use to empower themselves, have yet to be designed in both villages. Protection from domestic violence, for instance, has yet to be included in the villages' periodical programmatic policy. A similar trend is found in the protection of women workers and women migrant workers.

Nevertheless, we should not put the responsibility for improving gender equality in village policy and development solely on the shoulders of the village governments, particularly the village head. The national government must assess the grand design of the Village Law and its implementation. As widely known, no regulations have been issued to improve gender equality in the implementation of the Village Law, and therefore village governments lack precise guidelines for realizing gender perspectives in their policy and development. Apart from the urgent need to encourage village governments to improve the inclusion of gender perspectives in their village policies, there is also a crucial need to push the national government to pay greater attention to improving gender equality in the implementation of the Village Law.

Conclusion

The Indonesian government has tried to assert gender equality in its policy products, including Law No. 6/2014. The Village Law has clearly identified gender equality as a principle for village recognition, representation and redistribution. This should be recognized as good progress. However, stronger emphasis is needed. This relates especially to the fact that women in villages have long suf-

ferred from engendered poverty and double workloads in their daily lives. A strong formal assertion for improving gender equality through the implementation of the Village Law, for instance, may be a crucial breakthrough for promoting justice and welfare for village women.

In the implementation of the Village Law, we can see from the two villages studied, namely Panggunharjo and Lerep, that women have been offered greater opportunities to participate in village decision-making and development. However, there remains a tendency to place women in supporting roles rather than the core roles. Women recruited in village government organization are more likely to be assigned to administrative divisions than strategic ones. Progress has been made in Lerep, where the village head has appointed a woman as the director of village enterprises. However, in many other areas, women continue to play secondary roles. There is a crucial need for the village government to strengthen its deliberation processes and allow women to become more active in village decision-making process. It is also necessary for women village residents to understand their rights in village decision-making and development as well as their equal position as partners to village decision-makers as well as other village residents.

In terms of development programmes, few policies have directly improved gender equality, such as by preventing domestic violence and trafficking and by protecting woman workers and woman migrant workers. Most policies that directly affect women are related to health and the village economy. This is not to say that health and village enterprises are not important. Rather, it only means to encourage village governance that also prioritizes advocacy programmes for women. Women, no matter what, are not burdens, but offer village governments the potential to improve their villages' state of being. Therefore, asserting gender equality in village development should be seen as strategic.

Given its coverage in only two villages, this article does not mean to claim to provide a comprehensive assessment of gender aspects of the implementation of the Village Law in Indonesia. Further studies a broader range of villages are needed. A strong statistics assessment that uses data on GDI, gender education and gender income would be an important start. A later study can thus be equipped with strong qualitative data gained from deeper observation in villages' daily governance and thereby gain a more detailed picture of gender equality in each village.

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Notes

1. This article was first presented at the Indonesia International Forum 10, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 23–24 July 2017.
2. Source: <http://bkm.panggungharjo.net/profil-desa/potensi/>
3. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment/overview>
4. Interview transcript of Ashari Cahyo Edi and Indah Kusumawardani (2016), dated 6 October 2016.
5. Interview with Sulistyowati, a female village social activist in Semarang, 23 July 2017.
6. The critique which must be addressed is the policy only being used by women who live near the village centre. Those who live in the north, closer to the Yogyakarta city centre, rarely take benefits.
7. Interview with Tutik ‘Bros’ and Tyas ‘Tas’ on 25 July 2017 in Bantul.
8. Verbatim transcript, interview was conducted on 10 August 2017 in Bantul
9. Verbatim transcript, interview was conducted on 15 August 2017 in Bantul.

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