

Indonesia: Lessons Learned
Cultural influences
Helpful hints for project
preparation and monitoring



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Are you preparing or monitoring activities in the eastern islands of INDONESIA?

If you are, you may find the following two sections useful:

This first section is drawn from the report on Lessons Learned from the Implementation of Aid projects in the Eastern Islands of Indonesia completed in January 1998. The report is available in hard copy from PIA Section and, electronically, from AusAID's Internet site.

Design:

- Has AusAID worked with the target agency before and what did we learn from that experience?

If the project will be with an agency new to AusAID, the team may need more time in the field to understand the operations of the agency and to identify key stakeholders.

- Are arrangements in place for the translation of documents into Bahasa Indonesia?
- Have we made realistic assessments of GOI capacity to find counterpart costs, especially if the project will be in a social sub-sector?

Institutional capacity in the eastern islands is less well resourced than in, say, Java. The capacity of the district to fund local costs will be limited and that includes recurrent costs to maintain project outputs. Budget from Jakarta may be slow to arrive. Recent economic difficulties may influence GOI capacity to fund counterpart costs.

Terms of Reference

- Have we been realistic about the scope of the project and kept it tightly focussed both institutionally and geographically?
- Are the objectives achievable especially in light of the institutional constraints in the eastern islands? Are the objectives focussed?
- Do the TORs include a requirement for performance indicators related to project objectives?
AusAID must be able to measure, where possible, the achievements of projects.
- Do the TORs direct the team to establish a link in the design between Jakarta and the target agency and will they have enough time to identify the right GOI personnel to ensure the link?

The strength of this link may be the deciding factor in the long term sustainability of project outcomes. The link must also include systematic transfer of information and/or skills at both regional and central levels.

- ④ Have we given the team enough time in-country to conduct baseline surveys as well as to identify the key GOI personnel whose support for the project will be essential for success?

Baseline surveys will provide the basis of measuring outputs and thus provide milestones for project payments. The baseline and follow-up surveys will also be the assist identification, during ex-post evaluation, of how well project outcomes are being sustained.

- ④ Alternatively, have we given the team the flexibility to arrange for the surveys to be concluded and fed into the design document within a reasonable period of time?

- ④ Have we given the team enough time to ensure that the design process is participatory and inclusive of all key agencies at the national and the local level?

Local input will be essential to the sound design of institution strengthening, identifying the likely level of participation by women and gaining key insights into local practices, such as in fishing or land use, which impact on the environment and which may determine project components.

- ④ How realistic is the proposed institution strengthening (IS) component?

If the target agency is a long-established organisation, IS will be difficult and modest objectives may be achievable. If the target agency is new, IS may be easier and more comprehensive objectives may be achievable.

- ④ Do the TORs allow for a design, which takes the GOI budget cycle into account as well as the time usually taken for funds to actually reach the target agency?

The further away from the Centre the project is located, the longer it will take for funding to arrive.

- ④ Do the TORs allow for the development of a design that ensures project start-up will be gradual?

The AMC needs time in-country, prior to the staggered arrival of advisers, to assist counterparts with the documents they need for funds approvals, translations of key documents and the establishment of relationships.

- Do the TORs allow for a design that includes the development of an implementation strategy that allows for phasing in the recurrent costs essential to sustainability of project inputs and outputs?

The design also needs to take account of the constraints on transport to the eastern islands.

- If NGOs will be involved in project implementation, do the TORs direct the team to develop an implementation strategy that will take into account a phased withdrawal by the NGO?
- Do the TORs specifically direct the team to avoid cross-conditionality where possible?

Implementation of a significant component of the project can be delayed because of failure of another component or activity.

Selecting the team:

- How many of the team have prior experience in Indonesia?
- How many of the team speak Bahasa Indonesia?
- How many women are included on the team?
- Does the team have the capacity to ensure a truly participatory approach to the design process?
- Does the team have the capacity to train (if necessary) Indonesians in the conduct of baseline surveys?

Briefing of Team:

- Does the team have information on the GOI structure and budget cycle in addition to project preparation documents, the report on Lessons Learned, report formats and AusAID policy statements?
- Have all AusAID officers and advisers who have been involved in the preparation of the project, or in previous phases of the project, including reviews, been asked to participate in the briefing?

Contracting an AMC for implementation:

- Are inputs clearly defined and separated from outputs?
- Are personnel/skills inputs clearly specified?
- Were the baseline surveys of sufficiently high quality to allow for productivity measurements to be specified as a basis for payment in the contract?

If the winning bidder argues that the baseline surveys were done by someone else and will not take responsibility for them, it may become necessary to either allow for the findings to be reconfirmed by the AMC or for an independent consultant to confirm the quality. If an independent consultant is chosen, you may like to consider using that consultant as the nucleus of a TAG.

- Are courses in Bahasa Indonesia and briefing on local administrative and cultural conditions included in the contract?

Monitoring:

- Has the AMC provided language training and cross-cultural briefing for advisers?
- What linkages have actually been established between Jakarta, the counterpart/target agency and the project?
- How are these linkages managed by the AMC?
- Are meetings between the AMC, counterparts and other stakeholders regular and is there a regular flow of information and feedback via these meetings?
- Is the project jointly monitored? What are the formal arrangements in place to ensure joint monitoring?
- Are Project Co-ordination Committee meetings held at intervals specified in the contract and are all participants actual stakeholders?
- Are all key documents being translated?
- Do training programs accept participation by personnel other than those who are immediately targeted ie does training take account of likely attrition of trained personnel?
- Are the training programs inclusive of women?
- Is the AMC working with Indonesian counterparts to ensure the participation of women in training programs?
- If advisers have been placed in ministries or other government agencies, what are their work programs, how often do they meet with Indonesian colleagues, have channels of communication been established between the adviser, Indonesian colleagues and the project?
- Is the adviser really abreast of current policy development in the agency?
- Is the AMC developing strategies for sustainability together with counterparts, GOI officials in Jakarta and other stakeholders?

- ④ Are Indonesian personnel involved in the process of measurement of progress based on the base-line surveys?
- ④ Is the project making too many demands on counterparts?
- ④ Is the project making too many demands on Australian advisers?
- ④ Is the AMC providing opportunities for younger professionals?

Indonesia: Culture, Tradition and Aid Projects

This section draws on a paper by Terence Hull and Valerie Hull - *Politics, Culture and Fertility: Transitions in Indonesia* - which deals, *inter alia* with the influence of Indonesian cultural traditions and political ideologies on the institutions of government.

Why should I read this?

This section identifies some key elements of culture and political ideology in Indonesia that may influence the ways in which we implement projects and activities in Indonesia. You may even recognise a few parallels with Australian culture.

Some aspects of Indonesian culture and tradition which may be useful to think about when planning aid projects and activities:

We ... are obliged to submit to and obey all the regulations that emanate from the legitimate government. We are convinced that the purpose of the Government with all its regulations is to improve the life of its nationals.

Pancasila Morality Training manual used in schools.

- 🌐 *Pancasila* focuses Indonesian minds on the traditional value accorded to the sharing of a common set of values.
- 🌐 The New Order Government of President Suharto came to power more than 30 years ago with a dedication to stability and harmony.
- 🌐 The army is committed to dual roles of national defence and national development. This is translated into daily life by the slogan that the armed forces (ABRI) are stabilisers and mobilisers. (Don't be surprised if an ABRI rep turns up on the project coordination committee - s/he has an important role to play.)
- 🌐 Hierarchical relations in Indonesian society (including the army) are modelled on familial structures. This means that the *bapak* (father) has the role of patron-leader of a family collectivity and the *anak buah* (followers/children) have a duty to follow the *bapak's* lead. The President is the quintessential *bapak* of the nation. The *bapak* is also very aware of his responsibility to his family or followers to put their welfare first.
- 🌐 *Ibuism*, or the maternal counterpart to the *bapak* is a medium for the exercise of the power of the *bapak* as well as a major force of control of informal power. The wives of government officials constitute a shadow hierarchy called the *Dharma Wanita*. (Their

support for a project or activity can mean the difference between a successful activity and just another aid project in Indonesia).

- ④ The respect accorded traditional authority structures (aristocrats, intellectuals, religious leaders and the *nouveau riche* elite) also limits the power and scope of bureaucrats and military officials. (The most influential NGOs tend to be elite-based rather than grass-roots organisations). Such informal leaders may also play key roles in the promotion of aid projects and activities.
- ④ At least in formal discourse, all Indonesians are expected to support the ideas of a unitary state, Pancasila, and familial economic institutions (cooperatives and state enterprises) as the foundation of the economy, and to condemn communism and 'liberalism' as un-Indonesian.
- ④ The institutions of government may be thought of as pyramids within pyramids. At the peak of each pyramid is the *bapak*. Officials at the corners of each layer of the pyramid, while loyal to their *bapak*, may also be *bapak* at the top of a pyramid of authority. They, in turn, expect respect from below just as they give it to their superiors.
- ④ As in Australia, the exercise of top-down power is moderated by the acceptance that a superior should not undermine the power of those reporting to him/her.
- ④ A more junior official who steps out of line in a moral or social sense can expect to be counselled or reprimanded by a superior. Paternal authority may be exercised in the workplace on matters of a private nature.
- ④ Ideological training begins at school and extends through to the workplace. The training emphasises the moral aspects of relationships in hierarchies more than functional aspects of relations
- ④ The terminology of this moral instruction is often Javanese. Although, this can cause some resentment in this multi-ethnic society, key project documents should be translated into the national language Bahasa Indonesia.

Who are the spirits in a Javanese village today? The police and army commanders, the village chief and the Muslim teacher. Get them on our side and we've won the battle.

BKKBN provincial head, quoted in *The Economist* 25 November 1978

Specific issues for AusAID projects and activities:

- ④ To ensure support for our projects and activities, we need the support of the interlocking horizontal layers of *bapak* figures.
- ④ The ‘pyramids within pyramids’ of authority image is important for planning, analysing, implementing and evaluating activities.
- ④ Models of reporting and feedback in terms of goal-oriented bureaucracies do not always translate accurately into systems of pyramids within pyramids where goals relating to position supersede technical efficiency.
- ④ The political culture of Indonesia is more deeply, sensitively, and systematically averse to direct criticism than, for example, South Asian or European cultures. It may be useful to remember, especially for project coordination meetings, that direct criticism would be unacceptable and probably counter-productive. As far as possible, it may be worthwhile sorting out difficult issues well before the meeting.
- ④ Internal GOI monitoring reports may be interpreted as having a *malu* (shame) loop. Results are presented in a confirmatory light. This type of report ensures no loss of face by the *bapak* responsible for the activity. A separate, critical version of the report may be presented orally and in subtle ways, producing a critique which forms the basis for proposals to extend, enhance and develop the activity. Change is thus indirect and does not shame the leadership.
- ④ Reports are likely to be modified to ensure they reflect the *bapak's* expectations irrespective of realities on the ground.
- ④ This pattern of reporting is famous in Indonesia where the acronym ABS - *Asal Bapak Senang* (As Long as the Boss is Happy) - is commonplace.
- ④ The message here is that written instructions or criticisms may challenge the power and authority of *bapak* at each level of the bureaucracy. Beware agreements on documents if the *bapak* have not been appraised of what they give up in terms of authority and control. It is crucial to the success of projects that all *bapak* who have a stake in the outputs of projects should be kept fully informed of all project activities.
- ④ In a conflict of interest between technical and moral authority, the moral authority will probably win.
- ④ As with any bureaucracy, complex packages of written technical instructions may present an unwelcome challenge to hierarchical moral authority thus jeopardising the success of an activity.

Senior *bapak*, at some remove from the coalface of the project, need to be drawn into the transfer of information as their approval of manuals developed under a project will be crucial.

- ⊗ Laws, regulations, strategies, and plans are only as strong as the hierarchies that support them.

How can I use this information?

The following checklist may come in handy as you design and monitor activities.

Design phase:

- ⊗ Has AusAID had a long-standing relationship with the host Indonesian organisation?
- ⊗ If not, have I given the team enough time in country to identify the *bapak* essential to GOI ownership and support for the activity?
- ⊗ Are qualified Indonesian personnel available to participate in the design mission? GOI insists, for example, on the use of local community development experts.
- ⊗ Are the local experts recruited for the design mission acceptable to the host ministry for the proposed project?
- ⊗ How many Australians on the team have a sound working knowledge of Indonesia and speak Bahasa Indonesia?
- ⊗ Does the team have enough time to identify (and, perhaps, train) locally recruited Indonesian personnel to carry out baseline surveys of the skills and knowledge bases of the target institution?
- ⊗ Are the key project documents written well enough, (ie in clear, unambiguous English, free of jargon) to be easily translated?
- ⊗ Have I allowed enough time and budget for the cost of translation of key project documents?
- ⊗ Does the resultant design contain strategies for effectively engaging the *bapak* essential to the success of the activity?
- ⊗ Does the design document contain information which may be read as criticism? Can it be re-phrased and carry the same import?
- ⊗ Does the document contain specific reference to membership of the Project Coordination Committee? Can the Post confirm that this membership is appropriate?
- ⊗ What arrangements are in place for translation of the design? What measures can I take to ensure the quality of the translation and also ensure that it will be acceptable to GOI?

The Contract:

- ④ Have I allowed sufficient time for the AMC to get to know the key *bapak*, ensure the translation of documents, develop the documents essential to the GOI budget process and release of counterpart funds?
- ④ Have I allowed for a gradual start-up so that Australian Advisers arrive in stages.
- ④ Does the contract include timely translations of key documents as an output?
- ④ Does the contract price allow for translation costs for key documents?

Implementation phase:

- ④ How well are the strategies for involving key *bapak* working?
- ④ Are decisions on timing of and attendance at project coordination committee meetings made jointly?
- ④ Is the membership of the project coordination committee inclusive of those whose approval is essential to the success of the project?
- ④ Are there too many people attending the project coordination committee meeting to ensure major issues are resolved?
- ④ Are all relevant counterparts and senior officials being debriefed orally and regularly?
- ④ Is sufficient control being exercised over the language used in technical documents and project reports to ensure they can be readily translated?
- ④ Are the key project documents being routinely translated?
- ④ Are the Australian Advisers briefed on arrival about the locality and the counterpart organisation and its relationship with Jakarta?
- ④ How well does the Team Leader interact with his Indonesian counterparts?
- ④ Is the behaviour of the Advisers consistent with the moral values of the local community?
- ④ Does the AMC expect too much of the counterparts' time given that they will have other responsibilities and may also be moonlighting?
- ④ Has the AMC arrived at a satisfactory accommodation with the counterparts on the allocation of their time to the project to ensure GOI ownership of the project?