



SIMPLIFYING THE VILLAGE MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RPJM DESA)



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, every village has to make the village medium-term development plan (RPJM Desa). RPJM Desa essentially serves as a reference for the village government's annual work plan and is the manifestation of the village's being a self-governing community in determining the direction and objectives of its development.* However, villages are still facing some issues in implementing RPJM Desa. The issues include (i) the contents of RPJM Desa that are too detailed, making villages unable to accommodate the dynamics of their communities' problems later on; (ii) the villages' inability to meet the three-month deadline for the enactment of RPJM Desa because the drafting process requires a considerably long time; and (iii) villages having never received sufficient information on the *kabupaten* (district)/*kota* (city) development plans to be harmonized with the RPJM Desa.

This policy brief recommends that (i) RPJM Desa's scope be limited to macro-level plans, (ii) the sequence of activities during the drafting process be reduced so that the deadline can be met, and (iii) the harmonization with *kabupaten/kota* development plans not be done in the case of RPJM Desa but the annual village government work plans (RKP Desa) instead.

*Further information on the importance of RPJM Desa can be read in the Village Law Policy Brief Series No. 6 (forthcoming)

Law No. 6/2014 on Villages (Village Law) requires every village to make a village medium-term development plan (RPJM Desa). Apart from being required by the law, RPJM Desa is essentially needed by every village as a reference for its annual work plan. Having an RPJM Desa shows a village's capability as a local government. The drafting and enactment process of RPJM Desa, which has to involve the village community, is the manifestation of the village's being a self-governing community because RPJM Desa is the synthesis of ideas from all elements of the village community.

Problems in Drafting RPJM Desa

Village Law and the more specific regulations under it emphasize that RPJM Desa is the masterplan serving as a reference for village governments in preparing annual work plans. However, there are several regulations that still cause problems for villages when they are preparing the RPJM Desa.

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First, villages have to draft a detailed medium-term work plan spanning six years. However, the obligation to include details of the activity plan makes RPJM Desa unable to capture the dynamics of the problems and needs of the community that emerge later on.¹

Second, the process of drafting RPJM Desa actually requires a long time. However, villages are only given three months to finish it after the inauguration of the new village head.² In the same year, villages also have to finish drafting the village government work plan (RKP Desa), whose process also takes time. As a result, villages are unable to complete their RPJM Desa by the deadline.

Third, it is written in Village Law that village development planning has to be carried out with reference to the *kabupaten* (district)/*kota* (city) development plan.³ However, during the RPJM Desa drafting process, villages never receive sufficient information to harmonize their plans with that of the *kabupaten/kota*.

Due to those problems, villages have never been able to implement Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014 in full. In fact, RPJM Desa tends to be considered as merely a formality. RPJM Desa is made solely as a prerequisite to obtaining funding from the central, provincial, and *kabupaten/kota* governments. In consequence, some villages use consultancy services to draft their RPJM Desa or even copy other villages' plans. Instead of being a planning guide, RPJM Desa in some villages keep being adjusted to suit the annual work plan.

Several aspects in the RPJM Desa drafting process are also regarded as mere formalities. For example, in one of the villages, the village head manipulated the number of residents attending the village meeting to appear as if all elements of the community were represented.

Recommendations

1. To be taken seriously as a planning guide, RPJM Desa has to be limited to macro-level plans.

In the study villages, RPJM Desa generally appears to be subject to and is often adjusted to the village's annual development plan. This is because RPJM Desa contains detailed and micro-level plans and thus often fail to capture the entirety of the community's problems and needs. After the RPJM Desa is enacted, there usually appear new suggestions deemed urgent in the yearly meeting held to determine priority development plans. In some villages, rule-abiding officials are "obliged" to reject the suggestions at the risk of disappointing the community. Meanwhile, in other villages, the RPJM Desa keep being adjusted to accommodate the suggestions.

After its enactment, RPJM Desa is not supposed to be changed except for two reasons: (i) the occurrence of special events, such as a natural disaster, political crisis, financial crisis, and/or prolonged social unrest; or (ii) the incidence of a fundamental change to the policy of the central, provincial, and/or *kabupaten/kota* governments.⁴ This means that under normal circumstances, in planning its annual development, a village can only choose activities from the RPJM Desa's list.

To avoid RPJM Desa and RKP Desa from overlapping, it is recommended that RPJM Desa cover only aspects of village development at the macro level, i.e., policies or programs that are the syntheses of the elected village head's vision and mission, as well as ideas from other village officials and the community. However, the policies and programs still have to be workable. For instance, instead of saying "footpath construction in Dusun (Hamlet) X" (micro), the RPJM Desa should state "improving the connectivity between *dusun*" (macro yet doable) to explain the direction of the policy or program. Details regarding activity plans, such as the types, locations, and volumes of the activities, can be included in the RKP Desa as the annual development plan.

Such separation will give village governments the freedom to capture the dynamics of community-proposed annual activities that are micro in nature. Also, village residents still have the opportunity to propose activities without being confined to the detailed plans of existing activities. The RPJM Desa then becomes the reference to determine whether a proposed activity can be accepted or not. The clear division between RPJM Desa (macro) and RKP Desa (micro) will restore RPJM Desa's position in the hierarchy, which is above RKP Desa.

2. The sequence of activities during the process of drafting the RPJM Desa needs to be reduced so that villages can meet the deadline set by the law.

According to the workflow arranged in the Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014, in three months, villages have to carry out at least eight activities, which include hosting a series of deliberation meetings in every *dusun* to collect suggestions, harmonizing with various development plans of the *kabupaten/kota*, and holding village deliberation meetings twice (Figure 1). This study finds that not a single village could do the whole activities during the drafting process of RPJM Desa. For instance, many villages did not study their own conditions beforehand. There were also those that skipped the village deliberation meetings (*musdes*) and directly held the village development planning meeting (*musrenbangdes*). The reason was the same, i.e., not having

¹ Appendix XIV of Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014 on Village Development Guideline requires villages to specify the activity plan which covers, among other things, the types of activities, estimated volume of work, beneficiaries, estimated costs, and funding sources. In addition, according to the regulation, there are at least 16 appendices needed to be attached to the RPJM Desa document.

² Article 117 section 4 of Government Regulation No. 43/2014 on Implementation Rules of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages.

³ Article 79 section 1 of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages.

⁴ Article 120 section 1 of Government Regulation No. 43/2014.

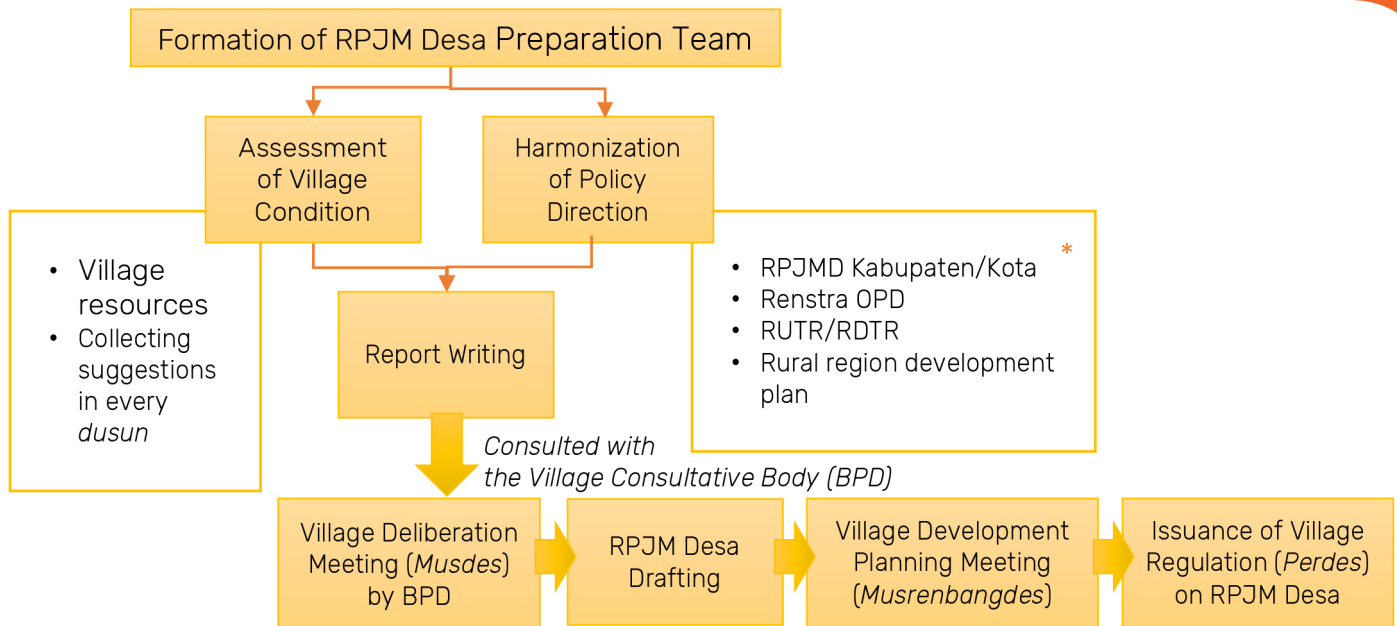


Figure 1. RPJM Desa preparation flowchart based on Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014

* See footnote no. 8.

enough time or the opportunity to gather for such activities in the RPJM Desa drafting process.

Among the study villages, none was able to meet the three-month deadline of RPJM Desa drafting process,⁵ coupled with the fact that in the same year, they also needed to draft the RKP Desa, followed by its budgeting. In this situation, village governments chose to prioritize the completion of RKP Desa and its budget plan instead of the RPJM Desa. This was done to maintain the sustainability of village development because RKP Desa is one of the prerequisites to receiving Village Fund.

A village head expressed his discontent about his village's inability to complete all stages in the RPJM Desa drafting process. He said that he had to carefully schedule deliberation meetings in order for the people to keep attending amid their busy farming work. Apart from that, there was the responsibility to make sure that the results of the meetings were properly recorded in accordance with the requirements. At the same time, he still had to coordinate many activities such as serving the community and attending various meetings at the *kecamatan* (subdistrict) and *kabupaten* office. On top of that, there was also the need to adapt to changes in many government regulations, such as having to arrange the rotation of village officials to be in line with the new organizational structure. As a new official, he admitted to feeling "dizzy" in fulfilling all the requirements related to Village Law.

The series of activities in the RPJM Desa drafting process needs to be reselected and reduced. Those meant to develop detailed activity plans should be moved to the RKP Desa drafting process. In drafting the RPJM Desa, the main activity is a forum for the village government, community, and the Village Consultative Body (BPD) to discuss and agree upon matters at the macro level. Aside from that, the RPJM Desa drafting process can be a meeting point for the village head's technocratic vision and mission⁶ and the community's aspirations. This activity is participatory with a focus on formulating the directions and strategies for achieving the goals of village development.

3. Harmonization with the development plans of the *kabupaten/kota* should not be done for the village's medium-term plan (RPJM Desa) but its annual plan (RKP Desa) instead.

As one of the activities in the RPJM Desa drafting process, the harmonization of the village development plan is mandated by Village Law.⁷ In practice, what happened was a one-way lecture by government officials to the elected village heads during the information dissemination. None of the village heads and village officials had been facilitated to understand the development plans of their *kabupaten*. Documents on regional planning were never sent to the villages.⁸ As a result, none of the villages conducted the harmonization process.

⁵ Our monitoring results show that RPJM Desa could take six to nine months to finish. However, some villages deliberately manipulated the issuance date of the village regulation (*perdes*) on RPJM Desa to appear as if the RPJM Desa had been completed within three months.

⁶ In this study, most of the village heads have no technocratic capabilities. However, in one of the villages, the village head has a fairly good technocratic vision. He admitted to having difficulties in incorporating his vision in the activity plan in each development planning meeting because his vision had always clashed with people's pragmatic suggestions meant to be achieved in a short term.

⁷ The harmonization as intended in Village Law goes both ways (Article 79). However, Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014 only explains the top-down harmonization process, namely collection and sorting of *kabupaten/kota*-level development plans for programs and activities that will be implemented in the villages (Articles 10–11). Meanwhile, the bottom-up harmonization process is done through development planning meetings, as stipulated in Law No. 25/2004 on the National Development Planning System and Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 86/2017 on Regional Development Planning, Control, and Evaluation Procedures.

⁸ As mentioned in Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014, the plans include the *kabupaten/kota* medium-term development plan (RPJMD Kabupaten/Kota), strategic plan of local government organizations (Renstra OPD), *kabupaten/kota* general spatial plan (RUTR), *kabupaten/kota* detailed spatial plan (RDTR), and rural region development plan.



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Other than that, *kabupaten* governments have never examined the contents of RPJM Desa to provide feedback or at least measure how they are aligned with the regional development plans and programs. *Kabupaten* governments will learn the contents of RPJM Desa only when they are about to compare it with the draft RKP Desa.

Due to the lack of harmonization, regional development plans often clash with their village-level counterparts. For example, one of the study villages was planning to become a center for agricultural nursery, only to find out later that the *kabupaten* government had determined the *kecamatan* where the village is located as a center for fish farming.

In fact, there were village activities whose planning overlapped with the *kabupaten's* plans. In one of the study villages, the same activities related to infrastructure development were both planned by the village and *kabupaten* governments in the same year and place. The coinciding plans were only found out after the village-initiated activity was completed by the village government and had to be dismantled because the *kabupaten* government was going to build the same infrastructure using the *kabupaten* budget.

Based on the description of the problems, harmonization of the medium-term plans is indeed not realistic. Not a single *kabupaten* government has ever provided adequate information regarding its development plans to the village governments. Likewise, the RPJM Desa has never been taken into consideration in the making of RPJM Kabupaten.

Harmonization is more feasible for annual development plans. Gradually from the bottom toward the top, annual development planning meetings have to consistently accept suggestions from villages. As for the top-down process, *kabupaten/kota* governments need to regularly distribute program/activity plans in the RKP Kabupaten/Kota which will be implemented in villages before the villages start drafting their RKP Desa.⁹ This can be done conventionally by inviting village government officials to attend the annual information dissemination activity. Another way is to adopt existing policies in some *kabupaten/kota*. For instance, in Kabupaten Lombok Tengah, there is an initiative to compile and distribute the village information package (PID), which is intended to provide preliminary information to villages about programs that will be implemented by OPD.¹⁰

The harmonization process should only be done for village and *kabupaten/kota* annual plans, not their medium-term plans. Therefore, it will be easier for both governments to obtain the information needed. Facilitators at the *kabupaten/kota* and village levels need to be involved in facilitating the harmonization process. ■



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⁹ According to Law No. 25/2004, the development planning meeting (*musrenbang*) for the making of RKP Kabupaten/Kota has to be held in March at the latest. This gives sufficient time to distribute RKP Kabupaten/Kota to villages because according to Regulation of the Minister for Home Affairs No. 114/2014, the drafting of RKP Desa starts in July.

¹⁰ Syukri, Muhammad, Hastuti, Akhmadi, Kartawijaya, and Asep Kurniawan (2014) 'Studi Kualitatif Proliferasi dan Integrasi Program Pemberdayaan Masyarakat di Jawa Tengah, Nusa Tenggara Barat, dan Sulawesi Selatan' [Qualitative Study on the Proliferation and Integration of Community Empowerment Programs in Central Java, West Nusa Tenggara, and South Sulawesi]. Draft research report. Jakarta: The SMERU Research Institute.