Democracia directa y entrega local de bienes públicos en Indonesia

Investigadores/as:

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Sector(s): Economía Política y Gobernabilidad

Ubicación: East Java, North Sumatra, and Southeast Sulawesi provinces, Indonesia

Muestra: 48 villas

Grupo objetivo: Rural population

Resultado de interés: Citizen satisfaction

Tipo de intervención: Community-driven development

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Research Papers: Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in In...

Socios Implementadores: UK International Development, Indonesia Decentralization Support Facility (DSF), World Bank

Problema de política pública

Los bienes y servicios públicos básicos, tales como carreteras fiables e infraestructura de agua potable, son insuficientes en gran parte de los países en vías de desarrollo. Si bien la prestación de estos servicios es a menudo administrada centralmente, muchos abogan por la descentralización y la participación de la comunidad como un enfoque más eficaz. Las comunidades locales pueden llegar a tener mejor información acerca de que bienes y servicios son necesarios, y por tanto pueden estar en una mejor posición para reconocer y responder rápidamente a la ineficiencia o corrupción en la implementación de los mismos. Este aumento de la participación local en la toma de decisiones gubernamentales ha sido facilitado por una gran variedad de reformas políticas, pero las implicaciones de estos mecanismos políticos todavía no se comprenden en su totalidad.

Contexto de la evaluación

Con cerca del 20% de la población viviendo por debajo de la línea de la pobreza[1], mejorar la infraestructura de las zonas marginales es una prioridad para el Gobierno de Indonesia. Un programa del gobierno de Indonesia, apoyado por fondos del Banco Mundial, “Kecamatan Development Program” (KDP), financia proyectos en aproximadamente 15,000 pueblos cada año. Cada pueblo recibe en promedio US$8,800, que a menudo se utiliza para pavimentar caminos de tierra. Los subdistritos participantes, que típicamente contienen de 10 a 20 pueblos, reciben un subsidio anual por bloque por tres años. Cada pueblo realiza dos propuestas – una en nombre de todo el pueblo y otra propuesta en nombre de grupos de mujeres – para proyectos de infraestructura de pequeña escala.

Normalmente, los representantes de diversas áreas se reúnen para discutir los méritos, y para decidir acerca de las dos propuestas de proyecto. Aunque el programa ha mejorado la infraestructura local en muchos de estos pueblos, no es claro si el procedimiento actual está dominado por élites y no provee suficiente infraestructura para aquellos miembros de la comunidad que más necesitan de estos servicios.



Villagers vote in Indonesia.

Photo credit: Elena Mirage, Shutterstock.com

Detalles de la intervención

The policy experiment took place at the second stage of the KDP process, the selection of village-level proposals. Forty-nine villages across three subdistricts in different parts of Indonesia were randomly assigned to an intervention or comparison group.

Group	Selection process for local infrastructure projects

Intervention	Villagers selected from among the proposed projects by voting at a local election. All adult villagers could vote for the general project, and all adult women could vote for the women's project.
Comparison	Project proposals were selected at a local village meeting, consisting of representatives from each hamlet of the village.

Researchers collected data on the types (e.g., road, bridge, clean water, etc.) and locations of the general and women's projects selected by treatment and comparison villages. They also collected data on the relative size of the hamlet where the project would be located, the distance of the hamlet from the village center, and the relative affluence of the hamlet (poorest in the village, richest in the village, or in between, as ranked by the village head). To evaluate the impact of the elections on voter perceptions, researchers conducted a survey before and after the selection process. A separate survey of village and hamlet heads measured local elite preferences.

Resultados y lecciones de la política pública

Turnout for the direct elections was high: Nearly 80 percent of villagers voted, which means that about 20 times as many villagers participated in the elections as attended village assembly meetings in comparison villages.

Elections had little impact on the types of projects chosen: For the general projects, there was almost no difference between representative meetings and elections on the types of infrastructure projects chosen. For the women's projects, the elections led to more road and bridge proposals, more water and sanitation proposals, and fewer irrigation proposals, but the differences were not statistically significant, perhaps due to the small sample size.

Elections resulted in more women's projects located in poorer areas, but brought the women's projects into closer alignment with elite preferences: Elections led to a 14 percentage-point increase in the probability that the women's project would be located in the poorest hamlet in the village. At the same time, elections increased the likelihood that women's projects resembled the types of projects preferred by elites.

One explanation for these seemingly conflicting results is that the elections intervention did not affect the proposal generating stage of the KDP process. If women in poor hamlets had little power to affect which projects were proposed by the hamlets, it would make sense that those projects reflected elite preferences. Nonetheless, women in the poorest hamlets apparently were not deterred from voting for the projects in their own hamlets, as these were more likely to win at the election stage.

Elections increased satisfaction with the projects and the selection process: People in the elections group were significantly more likely to say that the project was chosen in accordance with their wishes, that it would benefit them personally, and that they would use the project. They were also more likely to say that the proposal was fair, that it was chosen in accordance with the people's aspirations, and that they were satisfied with the KDP program.

To help determine whether these differences truly reflected people's attitudes on the KDP projects—and not a shift in views on government more generally—researchers also asked the respondents to rate the performance of the president of Indonesia and the head of the local village. Having the direct elections did not influence these approval ratings, suggesting that changes in people's feelings about government in general were not driving these results.

People in villages with elections were more likely to know about the projects and to express willingness to contribute to them. Survey respondents in the treatment villages were 40 percent more likely to correctly identify the type and location of the general project in their villages, and 49 percent more likely to know those facts about the women's project. People in villages that had elections were also 17 percentage points more likely to state that they would voluntarily contribute something—especially labor—to the project.

Higher satisfaction was not caused by transfers from elites wanting to influence people's votes: A possible alternative explanation for voter satisfaction was that local elites "bought" votes, either through festivals or parties tied to the elections (a common practice in Indonesia) or direct transfers. However, there were virtually no campaign-style festivals or transfers to villagers reported in the survey.

Direct participation can substantially improve satisfaction with the political process, even if the final outcomes do not change much: More people expressed positive views of the projects and the selection process in villages that had elections. More people stated that they were willing to contribute voluntarily to the projects and more people could correctly identify details of the projects in election villages. These differences were all statistically significant despite the similarity of the mix of projects chosen in election and comparison villages, and there was no evidence that they were driven by transfers from elites wanting to influence the vote.

Voting is only part of participation in the policy process. The elections treatment affected only one stage in a three-stage process. The proposal generating stage and the final funding stage may still have been elite-controlled, even though the village selection stage was subject to a vote. Fully enfranchising women and the poor may require increasing their participation at other stages in the policy process as well.

Women's participation, women's preferences: When asked about their preferred project type, women more frequently identified drinking water projects (23 percent of women, 3 percent of men), and men preferred roads and bridges (38 percent of women, 64 percent of men). These ratios closely match the actual project selections for women's and general projects, suggesting that the women's projects reflect the preferences of women in the village and the general projects reflect the preferences of men. The elections led women—but not men—to more favorably view the women's projects. This suggests that the increase in satisfaction was tied to increases in participation since only the women were involved in choosing those projects. An evaluation of India's quota policy for female village leaders found similar results: men and women have different preferences for local public goods and having female leaders led to more projects that matched women's preferences. For example, village councils randomly selected to be led by a woman were significantly more likely to invest in drinking water facilities, which was the issue most frequently expressed as a priority by women.[1]

Olken, Benjamin A. 2010. "Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." American Political Science Review 104(2): 243-67.

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1. Chattopadhyay, Raghabendra, and Esther Duflo. "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India." *Econometrica* 72, no. 5 (2004): 1409–43. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0262.2004.00539.x.