



CAN WE USE OPEN DATA TO ADVANCE GENDER-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT?

LESSONS FROM YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA



LESSONS LEARNED PAPER

1. Background

On a regular day, lin Narniyati from Bantul District in Yogyakarta, Indonesia rises early to prepare her kids for school, cook breakfast for her family, and open up her small business to early customers. Aside from these duties, she believes she has an obligation to participate meaningfully in village meetings and ensure that women like her have a voice in how village development funds are spent. She is committed to making sure these funds are used to address the issues that concern her: the health and welfare of her and her children.

This is why, when village planning meetings are called, lin participates, along with other members of the local women's organisation she is part of. She is aware that planning and budgeting to achieve development results is crucial, because it determines the priorities that will be funded by the village budget. When the village started publishing planning and budget data in an online portal, the organisation wanted to learn how to access and understand these data, to help them participate meaningfully in discussions.

lin is not the only one with such a desire. But globally, access to budget and spending information and underlying data is hampered by the digital divide. In many low and middle income countries the internet penetration rate is relatively low, and in Indonesia specifically, is only around 50%.¹ This inequality is further exacerbated by gender, age, income and education. Our Women's Rights Online [research at the Web Foundation](#)² has shown how the digital gender divide is pervasive: women are less likely to be connected to the web than men, and less able to use it productively. Furthermore, women who are older, with less education and low income will likely lose out.

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¹ Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/wearesocial/digital-in-2018-in-southeast-asia-part-2-southeast-86866464>

² Access the Women's Right Online research at: <http://webfoundation.org/our-work/projects/womens-rights-online/>

2. What did we want to achieve?

At the Web Foundation's Open Data Lab Jakarta, we wanted to know if providing women like Lin access and capacity to use open data would give them more power as advocates. In this project, we worked with Perkumpulan IDEA, a local organisation in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with many years of experience working on budget transparency, to test whether increasing the capacity of rural women to understand budget and spending data effectively helps them to engage in the budget process, monitor budget implementation, and advocate for increased allocation for gender mainstreaming activities.

This is critical because in 2014, the Government of Indonesia passed the Village Law 6/2014³ requiring the central government to allocate specific funding to 74,093 Indonesian villages so they can define and chart their own development based on their needs and priorities. These funds are equivalent to 10% of the state budget allocated for regional administration. The law also specifies that planning and use of the fund should follow a participatory process, including representatives from religious leaders, farmers, fishermen, women, and marginalised groups.

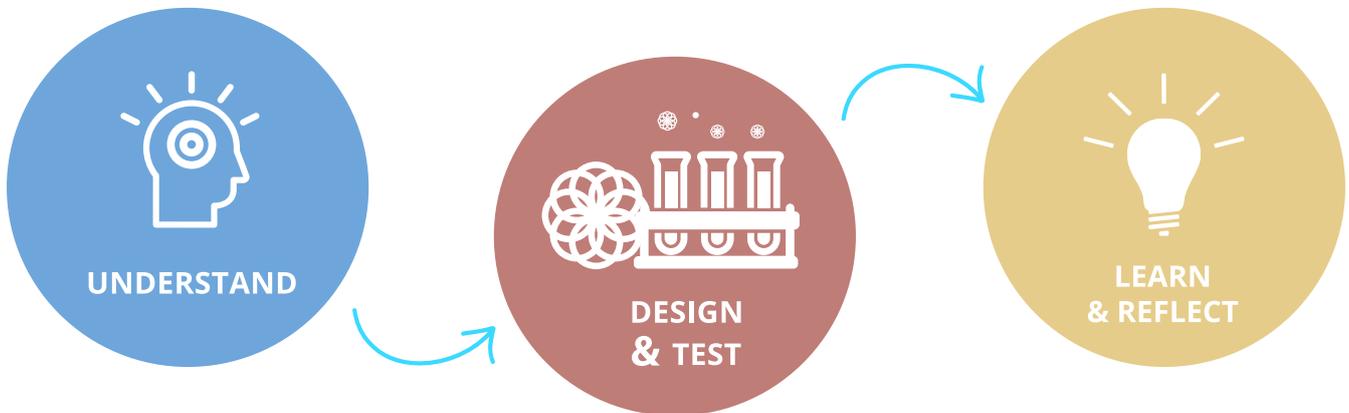
Picture 1. Lin Narniyati in one of the women actively participating in the village meetings in Bantul District in Yogyakarta.



³ Source: <https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/sites/default/files/pdf-peraturan/16.pdf>

3. What did we do? And what did we find?

With the Responsive Open Data Model⁴ in mind, we embarked on a three-phased approach for the project:



PHASE 1: UNDERSTAND

Selecting the villages and right issues to work with.

After a series of discussions with Perkumpulan IDEA, we chose to implement an action research project in two villages: Girisuko⁵ in Gunung Kidul and Wonolelo⁶ in Bantul District, both in Yogyakarta. We chose these villages because both already have a “Village Information Portal” where local data about the villages are published. These proactive disclosure practices are implemented at the village level in both online and offline formats. Additionally, we chose these villages because women were already participating in local budgeting processes. As such, in both villages, the process of bringing together, organising and selecting women to be involved in the project was no longer necessary, because women’s groups, representing the all most women in the villages were already organised and engaged.

We initiated several community discussions with the women and found they were deeply interested in knowing how Village Development Funds are planned for, used, and monitored. We used our tested “Responsive Open Data Model” to implement the project, and asked women what types of data that they wanted their government to disclose in order to address pressing challenges or issues they had. They identified a need for data on the following issues:

- Gender equality
- Early marriages
- Cases of violence against women
- Women participation in decision making
- Economic access by women groups
- Participation in family planning activities
- Children and women in conflict with the law⁷
- Women engaged in home industries
- Village budget

⁴ The responsive open data model requires that government should prioritize the publication of open data sets needed by citizens. For more information as to how the Jakarta Lab came up with this model, please see <http://labs.webfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/How-to-Guide-FOIODAceh-EN.pdf>

⁵ Learn more about Girisuko at: <http://www.girisuko-panggung.desa.id/index.php/first>

⁶ Learn more about Wonolelo at: <http://wonolelo.bantulkab.go.id/index.php/first>

⁷ The term “in conflict with the law” means that the children or women are in contact with the justice system as a result of being suspected or accused of committing an offence.

3. What did we do? And what did we find?

PHASE 2: DESIGN AND TEST

Building women's capacity to engage with issues that matter to them.

We worked the local government to publish the datasets the women wanted to access. When these became available, we trained the women's groups in both districts to access, read, understand and use

Picture 2. Women reading a newspaper about the budget and spending information of Yogyakarta regularly produced by IDEA.



the data to discuss community concerns and advocate for more resources to be allocated to women. For those without access to the web, IDEA produced a local newspaper so they could access and analyse data offline.

We found that there is common interest both from government officials and women's groups in making information openly available to the public. On the part of the government officials, especially the team maintaining the village information system, it was the first time that they received technical assistance to make data disclosure more efficient. They were deeply interested in finding ways to better share information and the women participating in the project found the activities very useful in helping them understand how their village government allocates resources.

3. What did we do? And what did we find?

PHASE 3: LEARN AND REFLECT

Identifying practices that worked.

We spent several meetings with the women discussing what they learned from the project activities. We also conducted post-training surveys to gather their thoughts on the capacity building activities to understand what worked and what did not. Finally, we held meetings with local government officials in Yogyakarta at the village, district, and city levels, to get their perspectives on the process.

One of the primary challenges of the project was the lack of data that can enable women to advocate for the issues they care about. The women knew what types of data they wanted, but several of these datasets were not collected on a regular basis, or if collected, were frequently not sex-disaggregated. For example, some women knew, based on observation of their communities, that there was a significant gender gap in educational achievements — but official data on this was not available at the village level. Consequently, the reason the project ended up focusing on budget monitoring is because this was the data available with sufficient granularity at the time the project was conducted.

Pictures 3-4 (top). Photos from the village start-up programme.
Picture 5 (bottom). Group photo from one of the workshops.



4. What did we learn?

Over the course of project implementation, we learned the following:

Open data initiatives directed towards gender issues and concerns can identify opportunities to make data collection more gender-responsive.

When we spoke with local government officials about the types of data that women wanted access to, we found there were several datasets of interest to women that the government did not collect, that did not have sufficient granularity, or were not sex-disaggregated. First, while there was data on formal employment, there was no data on women engaging in home-based industries or trade. Second, while there was data on school participation and completion rates aggregated at the district or city level, there was no village-level data that showed the differences in educational achievements between girls and boys.

Government-managed data collection systems in Indonesia are not yet sufficiently gender-responsive. This impacts the allocation and use of development funds. Connecting open data with gender issues and concerns will reveal the gender-blind nature of data collection systems and the need for improvements. The village leaders (who are mostly men) whom we engaged with in this project realized the importance of sex-disaggregated data in development planning.

Open data can provide women opportunities to advocate for more programmes that address women's needs.

Opening budget datasets of the Village Fund proved instrumental for women to understand how local governments are allocating resources and how they could influence this process. Women were given access to the datasets, taught relevant skills to analyse budget data, such as scraping, data cleaning, sorting and classifying, and used these to advocate for the allocation of resources towards children's health and education, women's economic empowerment, and women's safety in the households.

In our work in the two villages, we observed that open data provided a valuable platform for conversation between women groups and village leaders, as well as among women themselves. We saw how discussions in women's groups were influenced by data they were able to access, especially using the [offline printed newspapers](#), and how this enriched their sense of civic involvement. As a result, the knowledge and learning they derived from working with data strengthened their resolve to participate more meaningfully in public consultations and engage with government officials.

As a result, women in both villages were able to influence the allocation of village development funds, to problems that are prioritized by the women themselves. Their access to the data, especially on village budget, have given them the idea that there are resources that can be allocated to the problems that they discussed in their regular meetings. They were able to lobby for the inclusion of their priority problems in the village planning and budgeting. This development was welcomed by the village leaders and government agencies working on women, children, education and health.

4. What did we learn?

Open data initiatives involving women's groups have the potential to unmask underlying structural inequalities and bring to the fore issues that are considered culturally inappropriate to be discussed publicly.

There are culturally-sensitive datasets that highlight women-specific issues that are not collected or are under-reported. For example, while there is data on violence against women, the data does not necessarily reflect reality, as villages do not want to tackle or even report these issues because some local leaders treat the issue as a domestic concern. In one of the villages we worked with, official statistics showed that there were no cases of violence against women in the previous year. However, the women we interviewed were sure that more than five cases of violence against women happened.

Cases of early marriages, family planning and decision-making and voice in the household are further examples of datasets that are not publicly available even though women consider them critically important. The fact that these are not collected shows how the patriarchy can manifest aggressively in Indonesian society, and especially in rural villages.

For sensitive issues, government data may need to be complemented with “thick data”, data that is gathered through qualitative methods such as observations, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Collecting these data should be done responsibly to ensure safety, anonymity, and protection of women who offer data and information.

Picture 6. Participants of the gender-inclusivity and data training held in Yogyakarta last September 2017.



5. What are our key take-aways?

This is the first time that the Lab has worked on open data with a particular sector focus in mind and engaging specifically with a group of women. While in the past, we were mindful of how open data initiatives impact men and women differently, and how, in a context like Indonesia, women and men have differing capacities, social status and opportunities, this was the first time that these differences have been the central focus of a project. The lessons we have learned in this project will help us better design, implement, and monitor open data projects in the future and inform others doing the same.

Lesson

1

Access, voice and participation of women in open data projects are conditioned by social, political and economic context. In traditionally patriarchal societies, women face significant barriers to act on the data they are able to access and understand.

Increasing access to data and improving capacity to understand these is not a guarantee that women can and will voice their ideas and recommendations. Deeply-seated biases and culturally-ingrained perceptions on the role and capacity of women affect their voice in public discussions. In the villages we worked with in this project, women often need to prove their skills and abilities, and show that they are more competent than their male-counterparts, to be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, women in these two villages had to do more. Not only did they need to understand data, and create analysis and visualisations, they should had to speak clearly, with authority and confidence and show what they knew that others do not, to earn their seat at the table. But doing this also had negative repercussions. They may be viewed as arrogant, noisy and talkative, and need to be dismissed, though for men, these characteristics are perceived as the norm and even encouraged. Thus, they were asked to carefully navigate a web of unspoken rules and behaviours in their interactions with others in a male-dominated public space.

Designing gender-inclusive open data interventions requires a significant amount of sensitivity and implementing them necessitates a good understanding of gendered power dynamics. While increasingly, there is public recognition of what women can do in community building, open data initiatives should be careful not to replicate or reinforce existing gender biases and to consciously promote gender equity in all activities. As a starting point, project teams should have gender trainings and awareness programs. Also, project teams need to be gender balanced.

5. What are our key take-aways?

Lesson

2

Discrimination based on gender is a systemic problem. Open data is an important ingredient in the process of combating gender discrimination, but more is required: changed mindsets, a vibrant civil society, capable intermediaries, and local governance structures open to the contributions of women.

When we started working on the project, we thought we would replicate an approach that we had successfully implemented in other contexts, though but this time around gender. However, it was clear from the start that we would face a unique set of challenges, as incorporating women into village planning processes were met with resistance even by their own households.

Before we could start talking about the problems women wanted to solve and what data they would need to access, our partner Perkumpulan IDEA needed to reinforce messages on the role of women in community-building and how women and men should work together to achieve common goals. Perkumpulan IDEA also needed to remind village leaders why gender needs to be part of the local agenda, pointing to legal frameworks that promote women's participation in Indonesia, and to global goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

Designing open data projects requires not only an analysis of stakeholders and their power relationships, but also the interactions between cultural norms and societal goals, legal frameworks and gender biases, community responsibilities and household roles. It requires an understanding beyond what open data can do; it requires an honest admission that open data can only do so much.

6. Areas for Future Research

While implementing the project, we realised the enormous data gaps that exist, preventing a fuller understanding of the state of women and girls in Indonesia. There is no village-level, sex-disaggregated data on people with disabilities, child welfare, educational achievements and literacy, domestic violence, and labour and employment. Research on how these datasets can best be collected at the village level is important and critical to inform government's data collection, aggregation, and reporting procedures, especially since official statistics are dependent on sampling and estimation methodologies. Without village-level data on these issues, it is difficult to allocate resources and target particular development issues to solve, as well as sectors to work with.

We also found out that there has been no analysis of how gender-inclusive development initiatives are at the village level. While an analysis has been conducted on how the Village Development Law has been implemented, albeit in a smaller scale, this analysis does not take into account how women are participating and benefiting from the process. It is critical that this research is conducted to inform future improvements in the village development policy in Indonesia and ensure that village development prioritises the priorities of women.

For more information on this project, visit our website at labs.webfoundation.org or get in touch with us directly at info@labs.webfoundation.org. Other resources, such as our How-to Guide, other Lessons Learned Papers, and more are also available in the resources section of our website.

About the World Wide Web Foundation

The World Wide Web Foundation was established in 2009 by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee to advance the open Web as a public good and a basic right. We're building a future in which the Web empowers everyone, everywhere, to take part in building a fairer world.

Part of our vision is that data - the lifeblood of digital societies - should be used for the public good. We're working to open up data so that everyone can understand and use it to tackle the problems that matter to them.

About the Open Data Lab Jakarta

Established in 2014, the Web Foundation's Open Data Lab Jakarta is working with communities and governments across South East Asia to find innovative ways to use data to solve civic challenges. Our goal is to empower people to make data work for them.

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While our successes are shared with our colleagues and collaborators, any inaccuracies or errors in this paper are ours alone.

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