

# Putting the law into practice in Indonesia



**In Indonesia, Raising Her Voice has made huge progress. In the project area, participatory village budgeting has taken place for the first time, and has government backing to be replicated throughout the district. The project has achieved new funding for women's projects; cultural and religious leaders have given their support; and women have led prayers and been accepted into village 'decision-making houses' – signalling a significant shift in attitudes about the role of women in public life.**



## Background

After 32 years of strong, centralised rule, Indonesia has rapidly decentralised. Most state functions have been devolved to district and village governments which have little experience of local development or how to engage with civil society. Despite national and provincial laws that uphold gender equality, women are blocked from participation in public life. According to law, village development plans should be developed through a process of consultation and prioritisation with villagers, and are supposed to be driven by their needs. In reality, women's participation in developing and monitoring these plans has been very low.

*"I used to watch only. I was afraid to talk... These meetings encourage women and give them opportunities to talk. So, after a while I thought, why should I worry about saying what's on my mind if it is the truth?"*

Mama Theresiana, Papua

## Objectives

Raising Her Voice is working in Paniai (Papua) and Aceh Utara districts, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by rapid decentralisation and relative stability following years of conflict. The project works with government institutions to enable women to participate in village planning and decision-making, and to increase awareness about women's roles, needs and interests. Specific objectives are to:

- Establish functional women's networks that can advocate for women's rights and issues.
- Put pro-women and pro-poor participatory planning processes in place.
- Ensure recognition for community women's organisations among local leadership.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring gender dimensions of government programmes.
- Strengthen the role of the media in reaching out to women and covering women's issues.

## Achievements

### Women involved in successful participatory budgeting

With support from Raising Her Voice, Paniai district in Papua held its first-ever public consultation on the district budgeting process; 44 per cent of those attending were women. The project enabled communities to put forward their recommendations, 16 of which were accepted. These include minimum standards on public services and housing, and budget priority given to nutritional status and education. In addition, 15 per cent of village expenditure was earmarked for women's empowerment interventions, when previously only infrastructure projects were eligible for funding. The district's highest official committed to adopting Raising Her Voice and participatory budgeting in all villages during the 2011/2012 financial year.

### Development planning agreement signed

In Aceh, an online information system has been established to support the development planning process to become more transparent, accountable and participative. An agreement between *Bappeda*,

the regional body for development and planning, and Raising Her Voice partners has been signed to guarantee that the system will be used by the government from the 2011 financial year. *Bappeda* has committed to raising awareness of the system across the district.

***“Men should understand what women want. Because what we want is [good things] for men and our children, so they become a healthy and bright generation.”***

Mama Nelly Yumame, Papua



### Women's groups have formed and women are speaking out

Several women's groups have been formed and women activists have been given training and support to develop funding proposals, and to participate in planning and budgeting. As a result, poor women are becoming increasingly aware of their rights and their ability to influence decisions that affect their daily lives. They are becoming visibly more outspoken, confident and determined. Women's groups in Paniai have successfully lobbied for funding for their activities, for example, to establish a village health post. In Aceh Utara, a women's partnership forum has been established and acknowledged by local government. The challenge now is to get more women involved in the political arena. In Paniai, for example, just one of the 35 local parliamentary members is a woman. However, there are signs that things are moving in the right direction. In early 2011, two women in Paniai were selected as candidates for the leadership of the Papuan Representative Board, the provincial-level government body. Raising Her Voice gave them the confidence to put themselves forward.

### Support from government, religious and community leaders

Events and consultations have been held with tribal and religious leaders, who are almost universally male, to foster their support for the aims and activities of the project in their communities, especially amongst men. Community leaders and government officials are showing increased awareness of women's rights as a result. Leaders of the Catholic Church have expressed their commitment to the project and are delivering its messages in services. In the words of one religious leader in Papua: *"I realise now that women want to be involved but they have not enough opportunity to speak out. We have to start to listen to women's voices."* They have also become more aware of the importance of community participation – of both men and women – in village planning, and are better equipped to implement this (see box, below).

### Women being given access to traditionally male spaces

Women are gaining access to spaces where they weren't previously allowed, for example, leading prayers for the first time. The project also achieved a major success with indigenous cultures when a woman was accepted into a village 'decision making house'. Until now, these have been – quite literally – closed spaces for women. In Aceh Utara, five women have successfully entered into the *tuhapeut* structure (village legislative board) for the first time.

### Putting the law into practice

*Musyawah* is a law which aims to ensure that decisions are reached with the consent of local people. Raising Her Voice is enabling local government officials and village leaders to put it into practice, through training programmes on village planning. Elia Keiya, who works for a government programme to facilitate village development, is enthusiastic: *"Through this training, it is clear why participation is needed, and why we need to listen to women's voices. Women's aspirations are not only to reduce women's burden, but also to help children and the family."*

Raising Her Voice is a five-year programme which promotes the rights and capacity of poor women to engage effectively in governance at all levels. This is to be achieved through enabling their voices to be heard and increasing their influence, and by making institutions more accountable to women.

Working through local partners in 17 countries, Raising Her Voice has significant funding from DFID and is co-ordinated by Oxfam GB.

