Helpdesk Research Report

Voting behaviour of marginalised groups in Indonesia

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Question

Do voters from marginalised groups choose candidates for subnational executive and legislative positions on the basis of performance or anticipated performance in public service delivery that are relevant to their particular needs? In what ways, if any, have successful strategies been used by marginalised groups to ensure candidates for election and elected officials pay attention to their concerns, and how have these differed from strategies used by non-marginalised groups?

Contents

1. Overview

This report provides an overview of the literature on the voting behaviour of marginalised groups in subnational elections and whether this is based on performance in service delivery that meets their particular needs. Particular emphasis is placed on Indonesia. The report also looks at successful strategies that have been used by marginalised groups worldwide to ensure candidates for election and elected officials pay attention to their needs.

The report looks at women, people with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities living in conflict-afflicted/post-conflict provinces. One expert notes that "minority groups in conflict-affected provinces should be classified as members of marginalised groups, on the basis that they have (a) usually been detrimentally affected by conflict and are still living with its consequences and (b) may not have the same access to public services/public office as majority groups, and (c) can often fall into the poorest socio-economic category as well" (Expert comment – Claire Smith). She notes that "this categorisation may apply to migrant Muslim minority communities in majority Christian areas (for example in parts of West

Timor and Maluku), or to Protestant or Catholic communities in majority Muslim areas (for example in North Maluku). It can also apply to some indigenous communities with mixed religious practices (for example in North Maluku)" (Expert comment- Claire Smith). While there is limited evidence on the voting behaviour of individual groups living in conflict-afflicted provinces, the literature provides some information about the voting behaviour of people living in ethnically and religiously diverse conflict-afflicted/post-conflict provinces in Indonesia.

This rapid literature review found very little evidence on whether other marginalised groups vote on the basis of performance in service delivery in subnational elections. Contacting experts in this field also produced very little evidence on this subject, although there is some work currently being undertaken which is relevant to the topic of this review. In the Indonesian case the lack of evidence could possibly be attributed to the fact that, as one expert notes, election campaigns in Indonesia tend to be run on populist issues, rather than on the basis of service delivery issues (Expert comment – Claire Smith). The expert notes that this is due to the fact that Indonesia has "a relatively immature party and electoral system" (Expert comment – Claire Smith).

There also appears to be limited evidence to suggest that marginalised groups use different strategies to non-marginalised groups in order to ensure candidates for election and elected officials pay attention to their concerns. Here the search was also broadened to include examples from other countries which may be relevant to the situation in Indonesia. Many members of marginalised groups may have multiple identities, and as a result their voting behaviour and strategies will depend on what they consider to be their primary identity. It will also depend on whether they opt for a middle path between their competing needs or priorities.

Minority groups living in conflict-afflicted/post-conflict provinces in Indonesia

Aceh

In the semi-autonomous province of Aceh's post-conflict direct elections (2006 – 2008) voters do not appear to have voted for candidates on the basis of performance or anticipated performance in relation to the delivery of public services. Rather, people voted for candidates who already had a connection with their village as this could potentially provide them with future access to government resources. In cases where there was no such connection, voters sometimes tried to associate themselves with candidates whom they deemed likely to win in a bid to establish a connection that might yield future benefits. In addition, village leaders often played a part in determining how villagers voted (Clark and Palmer, 2008).

There was a high level of support for Free Aceh Movement (GAM) affiliated candidates. This can be attributed to support for the pre-Memorandum of Understanding struggle, their pro-poor, pro-Aceh image, disillusionment with national parties and local bureaucrats, and a desire for change (Clark and Palmer, 2008, p. 33). However, there were also some incidents of voter intimidation by GAM (Clark and Palmer, 2008, pp. iv – v). According to Affiat, in Aceh women's voting behaviour is often influenced by their husband's or their family's political alliances (2012, p. 13). Clark and Palmer (2008, p. v) argue that the aforementioned patterns of voter behaviour "show a citizenry that is sceptical that government can deliver development and policy reform, but which at the same time expects the distribution of benefits via clientelistic networks and personal favours."

Papua

Mietzner (2009, p. 273) notes that individual candidates' election platforms in the 2006 Papua province election campaign had a significant impact on voting behaviour. The winning candidate in the 2006 gubernatorial elections in Papua, Barnabas Suebu, promised that Papua's special autonomy funds would be distributed directly to the villages. Under the plan, each community was to receive between US$10,000 and US$30,000. Mietzner (2009, p. 271) argues that the promise was a response to alleged corruption and because Papuans had not been benefiting from increased intergovernmental transfers from Jakarta. Mietzner (2009, p. 271) suggests that this promise was partly responsible for Suebu's early lead in the elections.

West Kalimantan

West Kalimantan is Indonesia's most ethnically and religiously diverse province. The province has a history of ethnic and religious conflict. According to Subianto (2009, pp. 333-334), voters in the 2005 local direct elections in West Kalimantan chose candidates on the basis of personality; ethnicity; religion; region of origin; local language; physical attractiveness and rhetorical skill rather than voting on the basis of the candidates' qualifications; track record; campaign programmes and political and moral integrity.

People with disabilities

This rapid literature review was unable to identify any recent English language literature on the voting behaviour of people with disabilities in subnational elections in Indonesia, or internationally. However, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is currently completing its 2014 survey of voter behaviour in Indonesia, which will enable the disaggregation of data by disability (Expert comment).

Women

This rapid literature review has not found any English language literature on whether women vote in subnational elections on the basis of performance in service delivery related to their specific needs. The research carried out for this paper looked for evidence in both the Indonesian and the global contexts.

2. Strategies used by marginalised groups

Rodden and Wibbels note that groups of people do not always have a "meaningful collective will" (2012, p. 7). There is no reason to expect marginalised groups to speak with one voice, or to have a coherent agenda. According to one expert, marginalised groups in Indonesia do not appear to have used specific strategies to ensure that candidates for election and elected officials pay attention to their concerns (Expert comment – Michael Buehler). In the same vein an expert discussing Latin America states that the strategies used by marginalised groups do not differ from the strategies used by non-marginalised groups (Expert comment). Some of the strategies that have been used by some marginalised groups in a bid to increase the responsiveness of elected officials to their needs are detailed below.

People living in conflict-afflicted/post-conflict provinces in Indonesia

This rapid literature review has not found any English language evidence on strategies used by minority groups living in conflict-afflicted/post-conflict provinces in Indonesia that are different to those of non-marginalised groups, in order to ensure candidates for election and elected officials pay attention to their concerns.

People with disabilities

Political platforms

Local Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) in the Dominican Republic received support from IFES to inform a working group to develop a political platform about key issues (Expert comment). The platform was presented to presidential candidates in a forum that was attended by four parties. Each candidate signed the platform, thereby committing to implementing its provisions if elected (Expert comment). The disability community conducted numerous follow-ups and the winning candidate's government has implemented recommendations from the document, such as building curb cuts in pavements (Expert comment). Prior to this intervention, the disability community in the Dominican Republic had lacked unity. Their new unified voice resulted in political parties paying attention to their demands, whereas they had previously used the factions within the disability community as a reason not to do anything (Expert comment).

However, the same expert notes that a similar exercise in Guatemala did not result in as many policy changes (Expert comment). However, with support from IFES, the disability community was very successful in lobbying for changes with the election management body. The expert notes that the key factor in both of these examples was that people with disabilities came together to conduct advocacy rather than concentrating on their specific disability or organisation. This allowed them to have a much stronger political voice and to be seen as a significant voting bloc by parties and candidates (Expert comment).

While this strategy has not yet been implemented, the ASEAN General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) has planned programmes in those Southeast Asian countries which have upcoming elections. These will follow a similar format to those outlined above. DPOs and public policy research institutions will host a nationally broadcast forum to incentivize political parties to adopt more inclusive practices and platforms (Expert comment). The expert notes that this strategy is similar to approaches implemented by women's groups to ensure that candidate's pay attention to their needs when developing their electoral platforms (Expert comment).

Women

Training in gender equity

In El Salvador, a women's movement association, Las Melidas, trained female councillors from 11 municipalities in how to implement gender equity policies (O'Connell, 2010, p. 5). Coordinated advocacy efforts between the Women's Citizenship Committee and local women's movements in El Salvador resulted in the establishment of a municipal Gender Unit. The unit's purpose is to implement policies and to build municipal institutions' capacities to respond to local women's needs (Smith, 2010, p. 14).

Community-based monitoring and gender responsive budgeting

In the Philippines, the Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies project developed a community-based monitoring system combined with a gender responsive budgeting initiative (O'Connell, 2010, p. 5). In Latin America participatory budgeting is being used to increase local government accountability towards poor women's interests (Mukhopadhyay et al, 2010, p. 12).

Participatory planning

In the Philippines, the Institute of Politics and Governance's (IPG) democratic urban governance programme developed local and urban governance actors' capacities in participatory and district municipal planning. This provided poor urban men and women with access to "equitable and gender-responsive decision making and service delivery" (O'Connell, 2010, p. 7).

Lobbying and legislation

In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) succeeded in winning the right for self-employed workers to register in trade unions. The association provides legal and paralegal assistance to self-employed women, and lobbies on their behalf. It has succeeded in enabling self-employed women to obtain ID cards; life and disability insurance; maternity benefits; pensions and health insurance (Dom, 2012, p. 14). SEWA also successfully lobbied the government to approve a minimum wage for garment workers. In addition, the government approved a policy for the protection of street vendors, and approved legislation on social security for informal workers as a result of SEWA's lobbying (Dom, 2012, p. 14).

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