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Strengthening local governance arrangements for sanitation: case studies of small cities in Indonesia

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Abstract

Local governments in Indonesia have the primary responsibility for delivering sanitation (wastewater) services. However, in large part due to governance factors, local governments invest little in sanitation services and delivery of services is weak. This research adopted a participatory, case study approach to investigate governance and institutional arrangements for planning, budgeting and implementing sanitation services in small cities and towns in Sumatra, Indonesia. The research focused on the effectiveness of city/regency planning for sanitation, the effectiveness of *pokja sanitasi* (sanitation committees), the links between planning and investment, and local government roles and responsibilities. This paper presents the findings of three case studies. Barriers to effective delivery of sanitation services include: prescriptive local budgeting and approval systems; lack of local government ownership of assets; and policy, funding and technical arrangements that are biased against strategic delivery.

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1. Introduction

In Indonesia, since administrative, fiscal and political decentralization in 2001, local governments have had primary responsibility for delivering various services, including *air limbah* sanitation (management of domestic wastewater).

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However, investment by local governments in sanitation services and infrastructure remains low: only 1 per cent of urban wastewater and 4 per cent of septage is treated, while 14 per cent of urban populations practice open defecation due to low sanitation coverage (World Bank and AusAID, 2013). Poor sanitation affects public health and the environment. In many locations the target of universal access to sanitation by 2019, set in the Government of Indonesia National Long-Term Development Plan (*RPJPN 2005-2025*), will not be met.

It is widely recognized that institutional and governance arrangements for planning, budgeting, financing and making decisions about the delivery of sanitation services – within and across levels of government – play a major role in inhibiting effective delivery of sanitation services by local governments. Weak governance may have a greater influence on low investment than the lack of access to finance (World Bank and AusAID, 2013). This research sought to deepen understanding of this observation by investigating how the mechanics of sanitation planning, funding, budgeting, approvals and administration affect and constrain service delivery at the local level. In recognition of the multi-sector nature of sanitation, cross-departmental sanitation working groups (*pokja sanitasi*) are expected to lead, coordinate and oversee a unique, national model for sanitation planning in local governments. Conducted in six small cities in Sumatra from October 2014 to April 2015, the participatory research sought to generate evidence and findings to help local governments, central government and donor partners to strengthen local governance arrangements for sanitation. This paper outlines the findings of three of these case studies (table 1).

2. Scope of research

There is no single definition of the term ‘governance’. For the purposes of our research, we adopted the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade definition of ‘good governance’, which is “competent management of a country’s resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people’s needs” (Ray *et al.*, 2013). The key governance factors identified from theoretical and analytical frameworks for governance and institutional analysis (Scott, 2014; Harris *et al.*, 2011; Ostrom, 2005) are: context (structural/exogenous factors); institutions (rules of the game); actors/stakeholders and incentives; and drivers and barriers (Chong *et al.*, 2016). In considering these governance factors in the context of the delivery of sanitation services, the primary focus of the research was the actions of *actors* in *pokja sanitasi* and other local government staff in planning, budgeting and implementing *air limbah* (sewage) activities. According to the Minister of Public Works (Kirmanto, 2014), the greatest challenges in financing the sanitation sector lie in building competent, efficient, business-like and service-oriented institutions.

The research focused on the City Sanitation Planning (*Strategi Sanitasi Kota/Kabupaten*, [SSK]) process, which is intended to produce comprehensive city- or regency-wide strategic plans for sanitation and is at the core of the Government of Indonesia’s sanitation programme, Accelerated Sanitation Development for Human Settlements (*Percepatan Pembangunan Sanitasi Perkotaan*, [PPSP]). A Circular from the Minister of Home Affairs in 2012, No. 660/4919/SJ Guidelines for PPSP Management (SE660), describes roles and responsibilities in developing and implementing SSK. The SE600 is intended to guide the *pokja sanitasi* to function as a collegial collaboration between key *dinas* (local representatives of national ministries) in leading local sanitation planning processes. Community-based total sanitation (*Sanitasi Total Berbasis Masyarakat*, [STBM]), aimed at changing household behaviour in hygiene, a programme implemented in parallel with the city-level SSK process, was not a focus of this study.

The case studies were ‘small cities or towns’, *kota* or *kabupaten*, and the local governments with jurisdiction over the *kota* or *kabupaten*. Small towns with a population of up to 150,000 were chosen for the study as the sanitation requirements and governance capacities of small cities differ from the requirements and capacities of both large cities and rural areas.

We examined the following governance dimensions influencing the delivery of sanitation services:

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