

Policy Brief

April 2017

Strengthening the Sub-District to Improve Access to and Quality of Basic Services



Summary

The sub-district occupies a strategic position in Indonesia. Frontline basic services, such as junior high schools (SMP), community health centres (*puskesmas*), and citizenship administration processes, are based at the sub-district. Hence,

the sub-district is the meeting point between villagers and basic service providers. Consequently, sub-district administrations play important roles in ensuring that citizens can access basic services, while encouraging service providers to provide quality and affordable services to all communities, especially the poor and vulnerable.

This study of the role of the sub-district in the implementation of basic services was commissioned to inform Government of Indonesia efforts to meet the targets Indonesia's national medium term development plan (RPJMN) 2015-2019. Additionally, it aims to provide input regarding the improvement of governance, particularly the accountability of sub-district government and service providers to improve access to, and the quality of, basic services for the poor and vulnerable. The study analyses the implementation of education, health, and population and civil registration services at the sub-district level, and examines the potential role of sub-district administration in improving access to and the quality of these three basic services.

This study finds that without the clear delegation of partial authority of district heads/mayors to the sub-district heads, the sub-district cannot play an effective role in basic service provision. Without this, the sub-district coordination forum serves as an information exchange with no decision-making function; in some cases, it is only a formality. Development planning deliberation forums at the sub-district level are not effective, because they are not supported by accurate and complete data. Services are more expensive, as some services

that can be transferred to the sub-district are still handled by the district offices. Further, relationships that promote social accountability are not consolidated through sub-district forums; and, villages are less concerned with basic services compared to physical infrastructure development.

The study recommends that districts delegate partial authority of district heads/mayors to sub-district heads, to:

- (i) enable sub-district heads to strengthen cross-sector coordination forums, promote the accountability of basic service delivery, and administer basic services that can be delegated to the sub-districts;
- (ii) ensure that sub-districts obtain comprehensive data regarding the delivery of basic services in the sub-district area; and,
- (iii) assign clear tasks to the sub-district regarding guidance and supervision of village-administered basic services.

The delegation of these powers should be appropriately carried out by the district head/mayors to the sub-district heads, supported by central level policies and programs, and capacity building and technical guidance of sub-districts corresponding with their new roles.



Introduction

The Indonesian government has used non-monetary measures such as health and education services to alleviate poverty and social inequality. Basic services that reach the poor and vulnerable are one of the keys to poverty reduction. To reliably reach the poor, frontline services providers need to interact directly with communities, to ensure that all can access and benefit from the services.

The sub-district occupies a strategic position in Indonesia. Frontline basic services, such as Junior High Schools (SMP), Community Health Centers (*Puskesmas*), and operators who assist with citizenship administrative processes, are based at the sub-district. The sub-districts are the meeting point between villagers and basic service providers. Hence, sub-districts can play an important role in ensuring that citizens are able to access basic services, while encouraging service providers to provide affordable quality services to all communities, especially for the poor and vulnerable.

This study was conducted to provide policy input related to the Government of Indonesia's efforts to meet the 2015-2019 medium term development plan (RPJMN) targets for improving access and quality of basic services for the poor and vulnerable. RPJMN 2015-2019 includes the strategy of *strengthening the institutional and operational capacities of local governments and frontline service units*, known as the *frontline strategy*. This strategy focuses on enhancing accountability at the service-user interface through (i) enhancing the responsiveness of government administration and service provider units; and (ii) increasing inclusive participation of communities and citizens in basic service provision.

This study was conducted between October 2015 and March 2016 in four provinces and ten districts in Indonesia. It examines the delivery of education, health, and population and civil registration services at the sub-district level, focusing on four question areas:

1. What actors and institutions provide basic services in the sub-districts? How do sub-district service actors and service providers relate vertically to levels of government

under and above them? How do they relate horizontally to fellow service providers at the sub-district level?

2. What is the role of the sub-district in the provision of basic services? How does the sub-district support vertical relationships between service providers and levels of government under and above them? How does the sub-district support the horizontal relationships of service providers at the sub-district level?
3. What are the policies and support programs that are needed to streamline the role of the sub-district in supporting the provision of basic services?
4. What key competencies do the sub-districts need to have to support the provision of basic services?

According to the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 56/2015 on Codes and Government Administrative Area Data, there are 6,793 sub-districts in Indonesia. Therefore, improving sub-district support to basic services can bring major improvements to the quality of basic frontline services across the country.



Approach and Study Findings

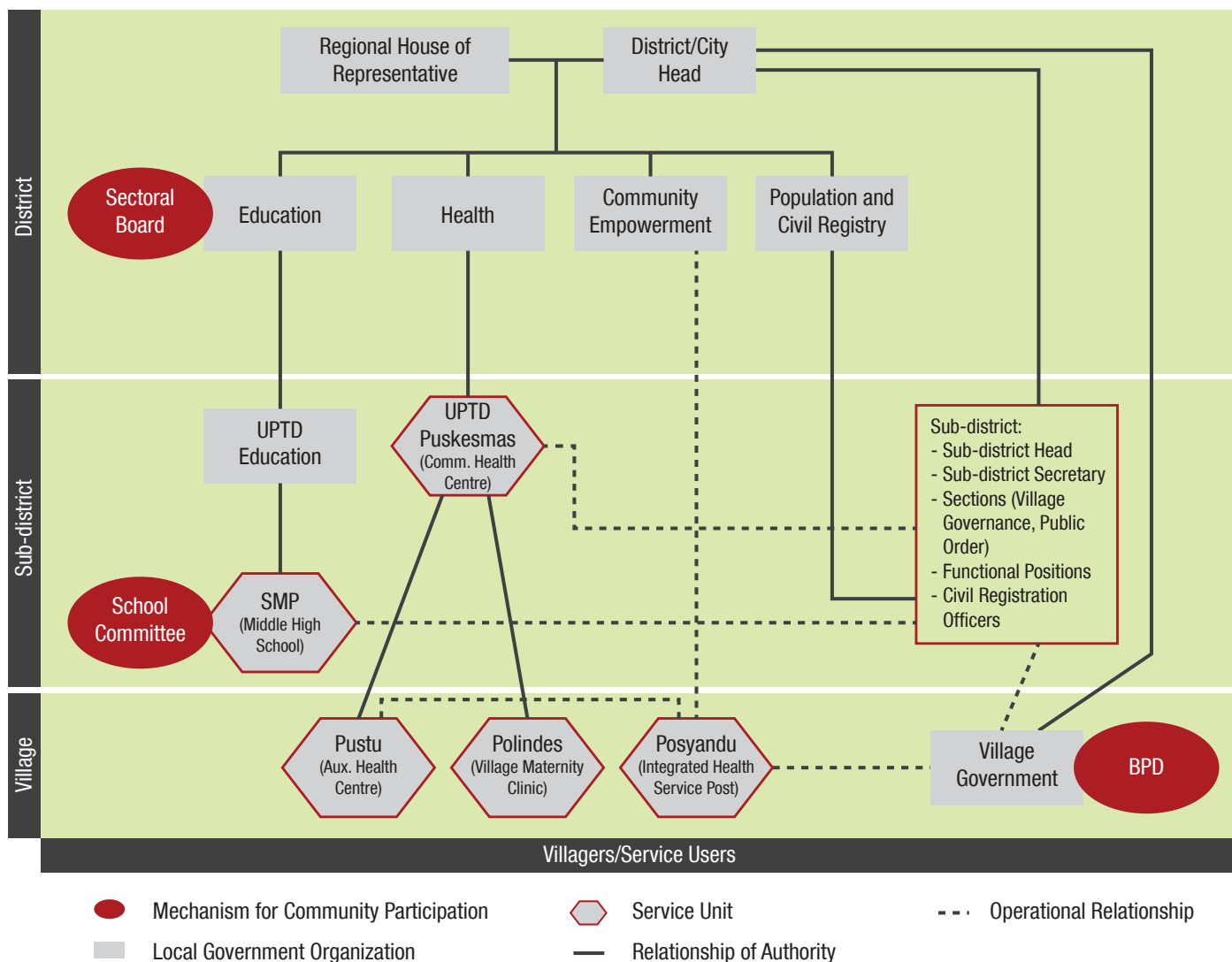
A Portrait of the Basic Services and the Role of the Sub-Districts in the Implementation of Basic Services

The provision of education, health, population and civil registration services at the sub-district/city level is administered by government service boards or *Dinas*. For example, the Education Board (*Dinas Pendidikan*) establishes an Education Regional Technical Implementation Unit (*UPTD Pendidikan*) that coordinates elementary schools (SD) and junior high schools (SMP) in the sub-district. The Health Board (*Dinas Kesehatan*) sets up a community health center (*Puskesmas*) which oversees the auxiliary health centre (*Puskesmas Pembantu/Pustu*) and village midwives (*Bidan*

Desa). The Population and Civil Registration Board (*Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil*) oversees the Population and Civil Registration Regional Technical Implementation Unit (*UPTD Dukcapil*), which is integrated within the district. Technically, the implementation of these three basic services is run by each Board according to the duties and functions of the service as outlined in the regional regulations. Figure 1 shows the institutional constellations responsible for the delivery of health, education and population and civil registration services in the sub-district.

In accordance with Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, some basic services are carried out by the village administration, particularly the implementation of integrated health service posts (*Posyandu*), early childhood education (*PAUD*), and arrangement of personal and family identity documents.

Figure 1. Constellation of Agencies Providing Basic Services



Source: Wetterberg, Anna and Hertz, Jana C. 2016; in *Sub-District Studies Phase 1 Report*, not published

Services at the village level are usually organized by the village government and community institutions. Village-level services are connected to and assisted by higher level services under the *Dinas*, such as for capacity-building of personnel and to implement government programs. The *Dinas* usually deals directly with villages for program implementation; the sub-district is only informed and aware.

In practice, service provision still faces problems that cannot be solved through purely technical means. These include: lack of citizen participation in accessing services; weakness in data accuracy and its continuous update; planning and budgeting support issues; incomplete service facilities and infrastructure; ineffective evaluation mechanisms; a need for closer monitoring, reporting and attention to social accountability; and a less than optimal mechanism to reach poor and vulnerable communities. These problems impact on access to and the quality of basic services, especially for the poor and vulnerable. Resolving these problems requires support from other work units, and linking of these issues across sectors. At the sub-district level, this cross-sector coordination is assigned to sub-district heads.



These service issues are also present at the village level. Even though village governments play an important role in supporting basic service delivery, they face several obstacles:

- Village heads do not fully comprehend the policies made by the district government.
- Village governments do not support the sustainability of an independent basic services program.
- Village heads do not report the condition of basic services and service programs in their villages to the sectoral boards.
- Village budget allocations to basic services are still very small compared to allocations for rural infrastructure development.

The study found that if basic services providers experience constraints in the villages, they will seek assistance from the sub-district. Respondents stated that village governments are more likely to pay attention to directions from the sub-district head than to appeals from service providers.

In accordance with Laws 32/2004 and 23/2014 on local government, the sub-district should coordinate and oversee these five areas:

- community empowerment activities
- activities that promote peace and public order
- the implementation and enforcement of the law and regulations
- the maintenance of infrastructure and public service facilities
- the implementation of government activities at the sub-district level

Sub-districts should coordinate vertically with districts and villages, and horizontally with UPTDs and other government work units at the sub-district level. Field studies show that the sub-district coordination role takes four forms:

1. **Carrying out tasks ordered by district work units including basic service provider work units**, such as organizing meetings requested by work units, assisting *Dinas* activities to be successful, and liaising between the *Dinas* and the village for information delivery.

2. **Supporting basic services through sub-district and village planning and budgeting mechanisms.** The sub-districts are responsible for coordinating village and sub-district planning processes. Sub-districts facilitate scheduling and review proposals from village community consultations on development planning (*Musrenbang*). Proposals from the village level are then discussed in the sub-district *Musrenbang*. At the sub-district *Musrenbang*, village proposals and service units at the sub-district level are selected on a priority basis, to be proposed to the district *Musrenbang*. Further, sub-district approval is required for some service developments. For example, the Board of Education proposal template for the building of a new school unit requires the approval and signature of the sub-district head.
3. **Supporting basic services through coordination meetings,** including those organized by the sub-district, or by a *Dinas*, UPTD or a service provider. The sub-district head usually attends meetings held at the beginning of the school year that are organized by early childhood

education institutions, through to senior high schools, to get information about the school curriculum. Sub-district officials usually attend regular coordination meeting forums organized by community health centres, which they call *Puskesmas* mini workshops.

District boards of education, health, and population and civil registration often invite the sub-districts to attend their respective coordination meetings or working meetings. Sub-districts also sometimes try to invite the boards to a coordination meeting in the sub-district. However, according to sub-district respondents, Board officials rarely attend the sub-district coordination meetings, let alone the heads of the boards, who are in higher ranking positions.

4. **Resolving problems at the local level, which are difficult to settle by the basic service providers.**¹ For example, issues regarding the poor's access to services, frequent absentee service providers, and institutional conflicts at the village level.



¹ This categorization of coordination roles is based on that proposed by Wetterberg, Anna and Hertz, Jana C. 2016, in the Phase 1 Kecamatan Study Report. Adjustments were made on the basis of data obtained in the second phase of the study. The categories in phase I were: I) Implementing delegated responsibilities; II) Solving shared problems; III) Contributing to service delivery.



Delegation of Partial Authority from the District Head to Sub-district Heads

The tasks of the sub-districts are defined in Article 225 of Law 32/2004 on regional administration. Five of these are coordination functions (as specified above). Two other tasks are related to their role in advancing the organization of the village government, and in carrying out community services that have not yet been implemented by the village administration. Apart from these functions, article 225 paragraph 2 of Law 32/2004 states that in the execution of their duties, the sub-district heads obtain a delegation of partial authority of the district heads/mayors to deal with matters of regional autonomy. When this study was conducted, the policy to delegate partial authority of the district heads/mayors to sub-district heads had not yet been widely implemented.

This study shows that the delegation of partial authority of the district heads/mayors to sub-district heads for the provision of basic services is essential to improve the access to and the quality of those services. The findings of the study show that this policy void has implications for:

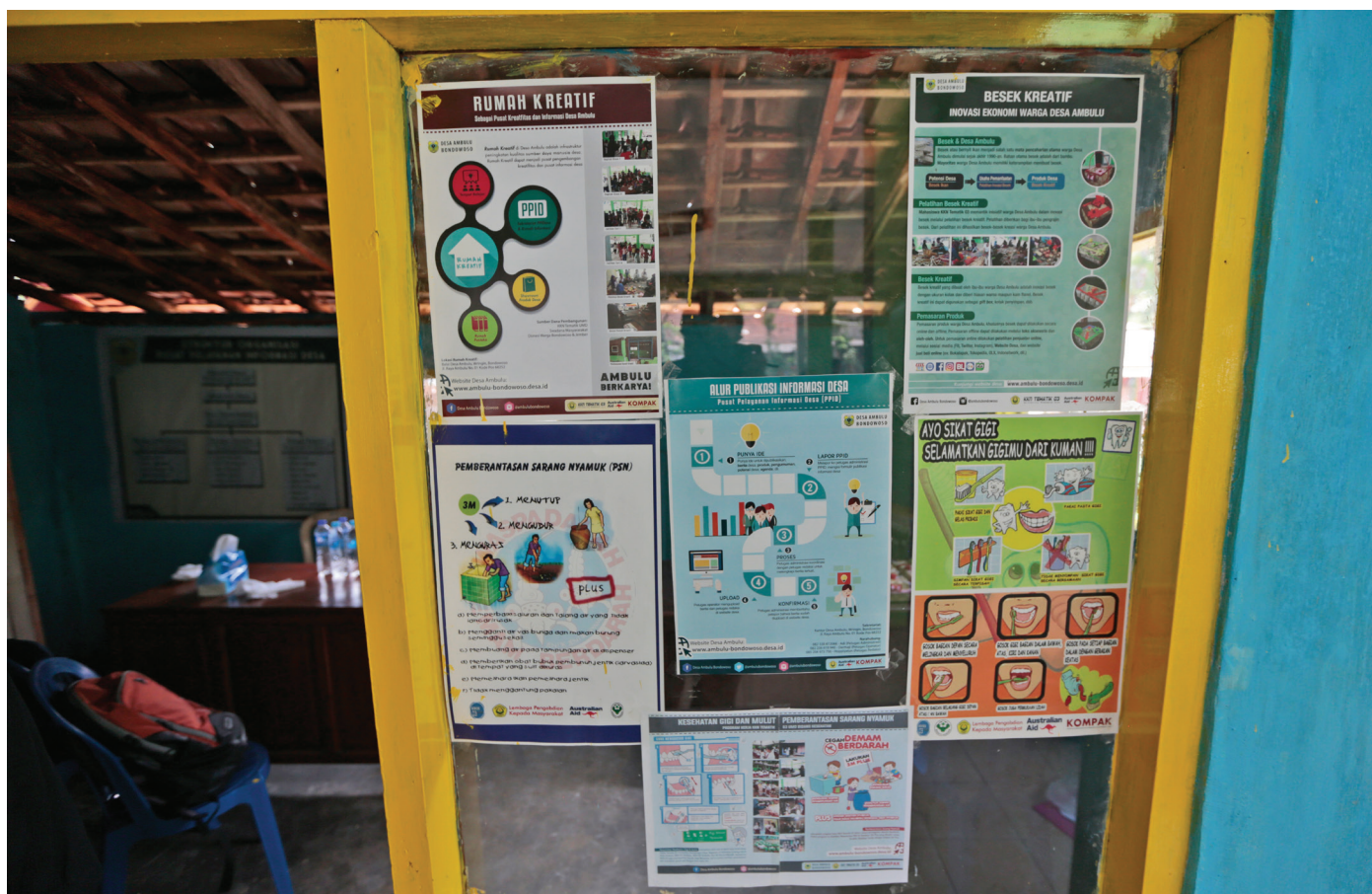
1. **The role of sub-district heads in the cross-sector coordination of basic service delivery:** This is currently not optimal. Many do not consider sub-district heads to have the authority to develop and implement concrete activities to support implementation of basic services. Consequently, cross-sector coordination organized by the sub-district is just a formality. Service units do not expect sub-districts to participate actively in program implementation beyond this superficial coordination, or ceremonial activities.
2. **Budget allocations to improve basic service delivery:** Ambiguity in the authority of the sub-district related to basic service delivery leads to an inadequate budget for the sub-district to undertake initiatives to strengthen service quality and accessibility. The sub-district budget is generally used for salaries and office operations. However, district/city heads often ask questions of sub-district heads regarding basic services, especially if there are implementation problems. The lack of budget constrains sub-district ability to conducting coordination meetings during crises; report on the delivery of basic services; and conduct field visits to check community access to village services.
3. **The role of the sub-district in strengthening community participation and addressing public complaints on the quality of basic services:** In many cases, villages and village heads complained about the provision of basic services to the sub-district, expecting that the sub-district will submit complaints to the respective service units. Because of limited funds, the sub-district can only submit these complaints during coordination meetings. Sub-districts do not have adequate funding sources to systematically address these complaints, for example by developing a complaint system to facilitate discussions between citizens and service providers.
4. **Opportunities for sub-districts to obtain information regarding basic services:** The Health Board, the Board of Education, the Board of Population and Civil Registration, community health centres, the UPTD for Education, and schools provide information to sub-district heads through coordination forums. Most of the information is delivered orally. Written reports, which are more detailed, are sent

directly to the respective sectoral boards by the service units, without being copied to the sub-districts. Sub-districts also cannot easily obtain data on the implementation of services in the region. Without information, it is difficult for the sub-districts to carry out responsive follow-up.

Insufficient data and information at the sub-district level has an impact on the quality of planning processes. Development planning deliberations sway towards accommodating village proposals without proper analysis. For example, village plans and budgets tend to be focused on repairing infrastructure and roads, rather than programs that enhance the quality of teachers, health workers, or improving environmental health. A further consequence is that service sectors do not see any benefits to be gained from the sub-district development planning deliberations (*Musrenbang*), and ultimately attempt to take advantage of other channels. One of these is the Regional House of Representative's aspiration fund. This can result in funding being allocated with greater attention to political gains

and power relationships, rather than a full assessment of needs. Proposals that are approved are often those from service units that are located close to the district capital and that have a close relationship with decision makers.

5. Implementation of sub-district heads' duties in guiding and supervising basic services in the village: Article 225 of Law 23/2014 on regional government explicitly assigns responsibility to the sub-district head to guide and supervise the administration of the village. Law no. 6/2014 on the village and its implementing regulations, specifically government regulation 43/2014 article 154, details the wide range of duties of the sub-district in the guidance and supervision of the village. However, to date, the role of the sub-district head has been limited to supporting preparation and disbursement of the village budget, and has tended to focus on the administrative completeness of the documents. Consequently, sub-district heads have not been able to push the village governments to allocate a budget for basic services in the village.





Conclusion

Resolving the problems in the implementation of basic services requires a cross-sectoral coordination at the sub-district level. The sub-districts are the meeting point of various frontline service providers, such as community health centres, schools and population and civil registration, with villagers directly accessing these services in the village. The sub-districts, as regional bureaucratic units with territorial characteristics, have an important role in the linking of interests between service units through coordination (via a horizontal relationship) and the relationship between service units with the community and the Boards/*Dinas* (social accountability). For this to be a strong role, it is necessary to delegate some of the authority of the district heads/mayors to the sub-district heads, so that they have the authority to: push service providers; attend coordination forums; provide service delivery reports and situation data; organize services that cannot be executed by work units or would be

more efficient if managed by the sub-district; developing a system for a sub-district-based social accountability; and, guide villages to accommodate basic services within the village budget.

Without a clear delegation of authority from the district heads/mayors to sub-district heads, the sub-districts will not have an effective role. The sub-district coordination forum serves as an information exchange with no decision-making function for collective action; in some cases, it is only a formality. Development planning deliberation forums at the sub-district level are not qualified, because they are not supported by accurate and complete data at the sub-district level. Services will be more expensive as some services that can be transferred to the sub-districts are still handled by the district offices; the social accountability at the sub-district level is not consolidated through sub-district forums; and, villages are less concerned with basic services compared to physical development.



Recommendations

This study proposes two key recommendations: i) the delegation of partial authority of district heads/mayors to sub-district heads and, ii) capacity building of sub-district heads in carrying out the delegated authority.

Delegation of the Partial Authority of District/City Heads to Sub-District Heads

This study recommends that districts delegate partial authority of the district/city heads to the sub-district heads, including:

1. **To strengthen cross-sector coordination forums; strengthen the accountability of the delivery of basic services; and, to implement service activities that can be held directly by the sub-district.** Sub-districts need to have the authority to ensure that cross-sector coordination forums in the sub-district run, are attended by authorized parties, and that decisions made in coordination meetings can be executed by the service providers and sub-districts. Sub-districts also need the

authority to take substantive steps and lead collective action following these coordination meetings. For example, sub-districts require the authority to reprimand service units that prevent or deny the poor from achieving access to services or who do not perform well, and develop a system for the social accountability of services. Services that would be more effective if they were provided by the sub-districts, such as population and civil registration, should be directly operated by the sub-district for the community.

2. **To ensure that sub-districts obtain comprehensive data on the implementation of basic services in the sub-districts.** Access to comprehensive data will increase the understanding that the sub-district head and staff have of the situation in the sub-district, so that they can better lead coordination efforts. Additionally, comprehensive data will help the sub-district in organizing development planning forums at the sub-district level that are higher in quality; follow up on planning at the sub-district level to the district; and improve the coordination and the effective response of service units and villages.

3. **So that sub-districts have clear guidance and supervisory tasks to ensure that basic services at the village-level are organized by the village.** This should include technical guidance related to facilitating the preparation of the five-year village development plan (RPJMDesa) so that it connects with the priorities of the district/city for basic services; to provide technical guidance for the preparation and evaluation of the village budget (APBDesa); and take part in the evaluation of the village government accountability report.

To implement the delegation of partial authority of the district/city heads to the sub-district heads in an accurate manner, districts need to:

1. **Create technical guidelines for sub-district heads and districts** that aim to: i) identify problems and solutions regarding basic services in the sub-districts; ii) identify the effectiveness, efficiency, and tiers of government officials involved in the implementation of basic services; and iii) provide guidance from the district to the sub-districts. This mechanism makes it possible to delegate partial authority of district/city heads to sub-district heads in an asymmetric manner between the districts, depending on the situation, the needs, and the effectiveness of the service delivery. For example, sub-districts which are far from the district capital may gain greater delegation of authority for population and civil registration services than sub-districts in the capital region.
2. Identifying public services appropriate to the characteristics of the sub-district should require **discussion through a forum that engages all interested stakeholders in the districts, sub-districts and villages.** Discussion forums should also involve service delivery units, so that the effectiveness and efficiency of services can be formulated properly. The discussion forum will also provide a better understanding to the service units so they are less likely to resist the authority that has been delegated from the regent to the sub-district head.
3. **The regional secretariats and the sub-district regional government budget teams need to undertake detailed budgetary calculations** to enable the execution of the partial authority of district/city heads that has been transferred to sub-district heads. This is required to guarantee that sub-districts can perform the assigned that have been transferred to them.

The delegation of partial authority of the district/city heads to sub-district heads should also be supported by **central-level** policies, including:

1. **A policy that provides incentives for districts/cities to delegate partial authority to sub-district heads, accompanied by technical guidance from the central level.** The central government can also measure the performance of local governments from the level of delegation of partial authority to the sub-districts.
2. **The Government needs to encourage and reward sub-district innovations.** For example, sub-district innovation to integrate village data with service data at sub-district level into one database; innovation in the form of sub-district engagement in strengthening the formal and social accountability of the service units in the delivery of basic services; and innovation in transferring basic service tasks directly to the sub-districts when it is more feasible, effective and inexpensive to do so, such as population and civil registration services.
3. **Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the delegation of partial authority of district/city heads to sub-district heads** in each region, related to the tasks and duties of the sub-district head, budget usage, and the coordination with related work units and villages.

Capacity Building for Sub-District Heads in the Management of the Delegated Authority

The new tasks and duties assigned to the sub-districts require new capacities for the sub-districts. To increase the capacity of the sub-districts, capacity development for sub-district heads and their staff will engage with other entities including:

1. **The local/regional secretariats to improve the leadership skills and the managerial capacities of**

the sub-district heads to implement the delegation of partial authority. Key topics are knowledge of the basic services sectors in the sub-districts, so that sub-district heads can communicate with sectoral work units, facilitate cross-sectoral coordination, and follow up on complaints by the community.

2. The Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) needs to improve the data processing capability of sub-

district heads and sub-district staff, so that they can define and decide priority activities for planning and budgeting.

3. The Village Community Empowerment Agency needs to improve sub-district heads' knowledge of village planning and budgeting, and enhance their communication and facilitation skills to encourage village governments to allocate resources in the villages to improve basic services.

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