MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Complaining to improve governance: four stories of complaint-handling systems in Indonesia

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Summary

Since joining the Open Government Partnership in 2011, the Indonesian Government has shown some commitment towards implementing initiatives that increase citizen voice and social accountability. These include a series information and communications technology (ICT)-based complaint-handling systems that give members of the public an opportunity to highlight problems with the delivery of public services to those in a position to fix them. Yet the reach and uptake of these systems – which are both national and local – varies considerably across the country, for a number of reasons.

This research examines four cases of complaint-handling systems. At the national level, it reviews LAPOR!, a one-stop complaint-handling platform set up by the Indonesian Government to manage citizens' complaints and requests via SMS, smartphone apps and a website.

At the subnational level, it looks at the wider ecosystem of complaint-handling systems in three regencies: Bojonegoro, Indragiri Hulu and Indramayu. As well as evaluating how LAPOR! is used subnationally, the research looks at other systems in these regions, ranging from radio shows to regular face-to-face consultation spaces with local officials.

The research asks how, and by whom, complaint-handling systems are used, in order to establish what makes a complaint-handling system succeed or fail. It identifies a series of barriers to citizens using complaint-handling systems, and identifies the factors influencing success.

Key findings

- **Campaigning** is a necessity for raising citizens' awareness of newly established complaint-handling systems.
- **Leadership** is a key factor in implementing complaint-handling systems, at both national and local levels.
- Local governments need to make better use of complaint-handling systems to **monitor and evaluate** their performance, and ultimately improve it. Bureaucracy often gets in the way of responding to citizen complaints.
- Introducing advanced ICTs is **no guarantee** that systems will be widely used. Governments need to identify locally relevant technologies and adapt new systems accordingly.
- **Building trust** is a major factor behind optimising the use of complaint-handling systems. Eradicating people's fear of making complaints – a longstanding issue in Indonesia – is a large part of this.
- The more **non-state actors are involved** in using and promoting a complaint-handling system, the more likely it is that ordinary citizens will be keen to use it as well.

The ability to use public reporting technologies varies across Indonesia, and public communications tools have yet to reach citizens at large.

Introduction

Open governance in Indonesia

The use of information and communications technology (ICT) tools to create new channels for public participation has been widely acknowledged, particularly in the developing parts of the world, where ICT is regarded as a key factor in bringing about positive development across various sectors within state and society (IDS 2013). Introducing ICTs that have the potential to open up governance has been a major focus in recent years, across many regions of the world, despite the questions that persist regarding how to sustain their impact and widen the access for people at the bottom of the 'ICT pyramid'.

In Indonesia, technology for transparency and accountability (T4T&A) initiatives and social accountability[1] have proliferated in the last few years, especially since 2011 when the country joined seven others[2] in creating a global initiative called the Open Government Partnership; Open Government Indonesia was established shortly afterwards in 2012. Since then, Indonesia has shown some commitment towards implementing open government initiatives, with several measures taken to 'walk the talk'.

New initiatives include a number of public reporting tools that have emerged at national, ministerial and local levels. On the government side, initiatives such as LAPOR! (Layanan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat / Citizen's Aspiration and Complaint Online System)[3] and the One Map and One Data open data platforms, as well as electronic procurement and open-budgeting systems, have become triggers for public officials to prove their commitment to greater transparency and accountability. Regents and mayors across the country also established dedicated phone lines to receive complaints and reports from citizens, either as part of their monitoring systems or to showcase their transparency and openness. On the other side, civil society initiatives such as

CekSekolahKu (Check My School)[4] and WikiDPR.org[5] provide important channels to monitor public services and / or officials.

However, the ability to use these technologies varies across Indonesia, and public communications tools have yet to reach citizens at large. For example, the government has used ICTs to improve public communication by reducing barriers (such as bureaucracy) and better connect with its citizens. Initiatives include online complaint-handling systems for public services, which are available all over the provinces. Yet the outreach of these still needs to be examined to determine whether it is actually being used by the public as a system for handling complaints.

Research design and objectives

Understanding context has become increasingly important in scrutinising social accountability initiatives (Fox 2014; Bukenya, Hickey and King 2012; Tembo 2012). Most literature suggests that to understand 'what works and what does not' in the realms of ICT-enabled citizen voice, one should first aim to understand context, which is the 'make or break' factor of social accountability interventions (O'Meally 2013). Yet despite this acknowledgement of the need to understand context, it is still difficult to shift from a 'best practice' mindset to a 'best fit' approach. Acknowledging on-the-ground experience is crucial in pushing for that shift.

This study puts a strong emphasis on understanding the differing systems that use ICTs to enhance citizen voice and social accountability. Context here means understanding the users, or demand side, of complaint-handling systems: any such system needs to adapt to its users and be tailored to the needs of citizens. We believe that, in the realm of public service delivery, technology needs to adapt to users, not the other way around.

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1   Social accountability can be defined as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e. one in which ordinary citizens and / or civil society organisations participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability. Systems of social accountability can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom up (Malena, Forster and Singh 2004: 3).
2   Brazil, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.
3   www.lapor.go.id
4   http://ceksekolahku.or.id
5   http://wikidpr.org

This research sought to understand the following questions in particular:

1. What drives the use of technology-based complaint-handling systems?

2. Who are the users of these systems in Indonesia? Who is excluded from using these systems, and why?

3. What are the drivers of, and barriers to, the implementation of technology-based complaint-handling systems in Indonesia?

To achieve this, we used four case studies:

1. LAPOR!, a national-scale, technology-based complaint-handling system

2. Bojonegoro, a regency in East Java

3. Indragiri Hulu, a regency in Riau

4. Indramayu, a regency in West Java.

Section 3 describes each of these case studies in more detail.

Structure of this research report

To help make sense of the research findings, we used three main dimensions to structure this report:

1. The use of ICT and ICT-based complaint-handling systems

2. Governance

3. Citizen participation.

After a review of the methods used (Section 2), Section 3 looks at the characteristics of complaint-handling systems, the citizens that use them, and how the state and citizens interact through these systems. Section 4 looks at governance, which is understood as the supply side of social accountability and information. Here, governance is elaborated into two parts: political will and institutional capacity.

The last dimension, citizen participation, is understood as the demand side of social accountability. Section 5 describes how complaint-handling systems affect the participation of citizens within each context. It also illustrates how further T4T&A initiatives are being created, beyond the formal complaint-handling systems that have been implemented, to create space for the expression of citizens' views (Halloran and Flores 2015; Tembo 2012). These 'democratic spaces' (Cornwall, Robins and Von Lieres 2011) are a source of social capital that can be used further to deepen democracy in Indonesia. We conclude with recommendations for citizens and policy-makers.

Methodology

This research used a mixed method approach, collating both qualitative and quantitative data. We used qualitative methods to investigate the context of implementing complaints-handling and reporting systems in Indonesia, and quantitative methods to identify the users and non-users of these systems in our case studies. Table 1 summarises the methods used for each case study.[6]

Qualitative data

We conducted **in-depth interviews** with the key actors involved in establishing and implementing complaint-handling systems. These were conducted to obtain information about the drivers of, and barriers to, implementing complaint-handling systems, and the extent to which each system has fulfilled its objectives.

Table 1. Research methods

LAPOR!	BOJONEGORO	INDRAGIRI HULU	INDRAMAYU
• One focus group discussion in Jakarta • Nine in-depth interviews • Secondary data	• Two focus group discussions • Four semi-structured interviews • One recorded participatory observation • Survey • Secondary data	• Two focus group discussions • Six semi-structured interviews • Survey	• Two focus group discussions • Three semi-structured interviews • Secondary data

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6   See Annex I for a detailed list of interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were also used for this purpose, and to complement the data gathered from surveys, as well as secondary data such as statistics and information from media articles and other literature. All informants were chosen based on their role in implementing complaint-handling systems, and their respective positions within the institution were considered while selecting.

Participatory observation was used to examine the actual social processes within government units. This was done in one particular case study within a very limited time frame. We had full consent to undertake the observation and received permission to document the process in audio-visual format.

Focus group discussions were conducted for all four case studies to explore the users of existing complaint-handling systems. In particular, we wanted to find out which groups were excluded from these systems. This method was also used to identify the drivers of, and barriers to, using complaint-handling systems.

Quantitative data

In this study, surveys were mainly used to collect information on user behaviour with technology-based complaint-handling systems. These data helped to answer the second set of research questions, i.e. who are the users of these systems in Indonesia? Who is excluded from using these systems, and why?

We conducted surveys in Bojonegoro and Indragiri Hulu. In each case, we worked with local enumerators to ensure that questions could be asked in the local language. The survey was conducted via telephone for existing users of complaint-handling systems (using a purposive sampling approach), and face to face via a field survey for non-users (using an accidental sampling approach). It is important to highlight that the two survey findings are not comparable at the population level, as we have used purposive sampling.

Due to political reasons (i.e. a lack of local government trust in academics) there was a closed, repressive atmosphere, which made it was impossible to conduct a survey of citizens' voice and aspirations in Indramayu. We also chose not to conduct a survey at the national level, given the availability of such data from LAPOR!.

The use of technology-based complaint-handling systems in Indonesia

Complaint-handling systems at the national level: LAPOR!

LAPOR! is a platform that was set up by the Indonesian Government. It provides a one-stop system to manage citizens' complaints and requests: citizens no longer have to find out which agencies they need to address with their concerns; they just submit them to LAPOR!.[7]

Citizens can file a report, request or complaint on public service delivery through three main channels: (1) text messages (SMS, or short message service) sent to the number 1708; (2) the LAPOR! website; and (3) smartphone mobile applications (apps) that are free to download on BlackBerry and Android devices. Table 2 shows that since its introduction in 2011, the use of LAPOR! by Indonesian citizens has increased across all three channels.

SMS is the commonest way to access LAPOR!. Considering the number of mobile phone subscriptions

in Indonesia (125.4% of the population, i.e. some people have more than one phone) and 100% mobile network coverage,[8] LAPOR!'s SMS system is accessible to the entire population.

The growth in users of LAPOR! cannot be separated from the social and political context in which it came into being. LAPOR! was established at a time

Table 2. **Number of complaints submitted to LAPOR! via different channels, 2012–2015**

	2012	2013	2014	2015
SMS	12,696	402,530	113,827	41,743
Website	232	7,715	12,977	7,481
Smartphone apps	88	1,162	1,361	1,013

Source: LAPOR!, February 2016

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7   Focus group discussion about LAPOR!, 15 May 2015.
8   This refers to the fact that all provinces and regions in Indonesia have coverage, but there may be some coverage 'black spots'.

The geographic spread of complaints [submitted to LAPOR!] corresponds with the varying state of development across Indonesia, [but it] has not been able to reach more isolated citizens, who have no access to basic ICT infrastructure.

when social media and connectivity were becoming increasingly effective and widespread tools for producing and circulating information. This process, which is still continuing, took place all over the world, but in Indonesia, being 'connected' has never been more important.

LAPOR!'s statistics reveal that the majority of users are 31–45 years old, and 80% of reports filed with the system originate from Java. Overall, the geographic spread of complaints corresponds with the state of development across Indonesia, with fewer complaints came from the eastern parts of Indonesia, especially Papua. The statistics also reveal that the majority of users are men (86.5%), educated to degree level (59.3%), and 46.6% are private sector workers.[9]

By contrast, LAPOR! has not been able to reach more isolated citizens, who have no access to basic ICT infrastructure. Any efforts to make the system accessible to these groups should be accompanied with efforts to increase their connectivity. This is especially important at a time when the central government is using LAPOR! to monitor the use and disbursement of village funds.

As Table 2 shows, the most significant increase in users occurred in 2013. This was during the early stages of LAPOR!'s engagement with numerous government institutions, at national and subnational levels. As the number of complaints increased, the number of categories of complaint also expanded, including the priority programmes of the current administration.

The most popular categories for complaints also varied slightly over the whole period. In 2013, the top three categories for complaints were infrastructure, bureaucratic reforms and other topics. In 2014, these three still dominated, and the topic of bureaucratic reforms covered issues related to public services, employment and ICTs. This should be seen as confirmation of the huge issues with bureaucratic reforms at the national level, and the limitations of public reporting systems in speeding up complex bureaucratic systems. By 2015, however, complaints about health issues were highest. This change happened after the national health-care system (Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial, or BPJS) was integrated into the LAPOR! system in January 2015.

As well as improving the connection between citizens and the government at different levels, LAPOR! aimed to integrate existing public agencies into one system. In terms of vertical integration (Aceron and Isaac 2016; Fox 2016), LAPOR! administrators tried to use their political leverage to include all national-level ministries and local government agencies in its system. As of April 2016, ten provincial governments were connected to LAPOR!, as well as five district-level local governments / regencies.

Complaint-handling systems at the regency level: Bojonegoro and Indragiri Hulu

The implementation of complaint-handling systems also needs to be understood within local contexts. Each subnational case study demonstrates regional characteristics, such as the attitude of local government towards complaint-handling systems, as well as the perception and use of the systems by citizens. By understanding each context, we can further analyse who is excluded and who is not in each case. Table 3 lists the main complaint-handling systems used in each regency.[10]

Bojonegoro

The population of Bojonegoro is comparatively well connected to the Internet and ICT infrastructure in general. At the time of our survey, 60.8% of respondents were connected to the Internet, 52.2% used a smartphone, and 28% had use of a laptop PC (personal computer) and / or tablet device.

When asked about their knowledge of LAPOR!, most citizens in the region were unaware of the platform. They were more aware of the radio show Radio Malowapati (see Box 1), on which people can make complaints. This show is particularly popular among older citizens. SMS Halo Bupati is an official complaints channel in Bojonegoro. Citizens can send a text message to a dedicated number that is then directed to the regent. Figure 1 summarises these results.

This analysis helps to explain why the two biggest user groups for LAPOR!, in terms of age, are those aged 41–45 years old, and those aged 51 and above (see

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9   Statistics are for April–June 2014, taken from a survey of 1,395 respondents. They are taken from a thesis written by Dinur R. Sadat (2014).
10   A regency is a political subdivision of a province in Indonesia.

Table 3. Complaint-handling systems in the three case-study regencies

	BOJONEGORO	**INDRAMAYU**	**INDRAGIRI HULU**
Complaint-handling system	• Dialog Jumat (since 2008) • Radio Malowopati (since 2008) • SMS (since 2008) • LAPOR! (since 2012)	• Regent and Citizens forum (Bupati Ketemu Rakyat / BKR) (2010–15) • Indramayu Public Reporting Information System (Sistem Informasi Pengaduan Rakyat Indramayu / SIDURA) (since 2013) • Head of District and Citizens Forum (Camat Ketemu Rakyat / CKR) (2010–15)	• SMS (since 2010) • LAPOR! (since 2012)

Box 1. Radio Malowopati

in Bojonegoro, and radio is popular with the middle-aged audience, particularly in remote areas. In terms of occupation, self-employed people (24.7%) are Bojonegoro's largest user group of LAPOR!, followed by farmers and fisherfolk (21.5%) and freelancers (9.7%).

The local government in Bojonegoro established Radio Malowopati in 2001 as a public broadcasting service. One of its aims was to help speed up the flow of information to remote areas. Accordingly, Radio Malowopati broadcasts a weekly two-way dialogue programme involving the representatives of relevant officials of the Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah (SKPD, or local government agency). The programme either disseminates news from the local government or responds to people's complaints.

Public broadcasting radio has successfully grabbed the attention of people in Bojonegoro. The key appeal of the two-way dialogue programme includes its down-to-earth approach, combined with its charming announcer, Kang Prabu, who uses the local language (Bahasa Jawa) to broadcast news and engage with people. He has become one of the most influential people in Bojonegoro, well known even among people who live in remote villages. Radio Malowopati

has gained considerable support and the local government is continuously improving the system to reach more audiences, especially in villages.

The content of text messages to Radio Malowopati is somewhat amusing, varying from greetings to personal life stories to song requests. And, through some of the text messages to the show, over the years it slowly developed into one of Bojonegoro's complaint-handling systems. When Suyoto was chosen as the new regent of Bojonegoro in 2008, Radio Malowopati was officially recognised as such. Kusnandaka, Bojonegoro's Head of Department of Communication and Information (Diskominfo), has helped to integrate people's complaints submitted via Radio Malowopati into the LAPOR! system since 2014.

Unfortunately, despite the growing audience for Radio Malowopati, it is still too dependent to Kang Prabu's enormous popularity. As a result, when he left at the end of 2015 to establish his own radio station (Prabu FM), many people switched to that instead. At present, the number of people who complain via Radio Malowopati is still growing, yet the future of Radio Malowopati is dependent on local government officials' plans and initiative.

Figure 1. Awareness of different complaints-handling systems in Bojonegoro
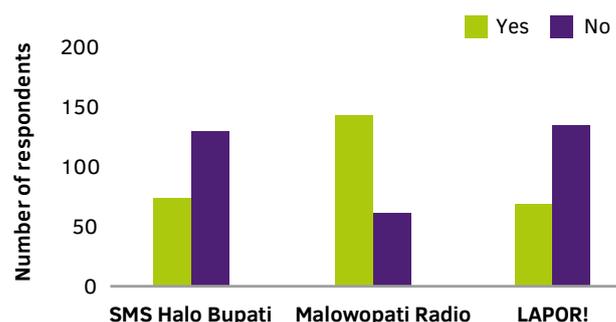
Figure 2). The figure is plausible considering radio was used to publicise these complaint-handling systems in Bojonegoro, and radio is popular with the middle-aged audience, particularly in remote areas. In terms of occupation, self-employed people (24.7%) are Bojonegoro's largest user group of LAPOR!, followed by farmers and fisherfolk (21.5%) and freelancers (9.7%).

Indragiri Hulu

In 2012, Indragiri Hulu was selected as one of the three pilot projects for the Open Government Indonesia initiative. Transparency was a crucial matter at that time in Riau, which was under heavy public scrutiny after its governor was named as a corruption suspect. In that spirit, the regent of Indragiri Hulu, Mr Yopi Arianto, showed some commitment to initiating improvements and moving towards a more transparent and accountable government. However, it seems that they are yet to inform the public in the region about LAPOR!, as many of our survey respondents (73.9%) were not aware of it.

Other survey data from Indragiri Hulu reveal some interesting insights. Users who send reports to LAPOR! are mostly aged 31–35 years old (27.3%), followed by younger citizens aged 18–25 and 26–30 (both 18.2%; see Figure 3). One explanation for this is that this age group corresponds with the largest group of users by occupation, namely entrepreneurs (30.3%). The joint second-highest number of complaints came from civil servants and private employees (e.g. professionals, corporate workers), both at 12.1%. These groups also have the greatest interest in government programmes and policies in Indragiri Hulu.

In terms of the category of complaint, infrastructure (41.6%), bureaucratic reforms (22.8%), and energy and natural resources (20.8%) were the highest-ranking complaints. Indragiri Hulu is one of Indonesia's largest palm oil-producing areas, which explains the high number of complains about natural resources. Complaints about energy are mostly related to the instability of the region's electricity supply.

# Citizen's motivations for reporting complaints

Transparency and accountability are improving at the national and subnational levels in Indonesia. To explain why this is happening, it is important to understand what motivates citizens to make complaints.

## *National-level motivations for using LAPOR!*

In the five years since its implementation, LAPOR! has become a reliable tool for users. During our focus group discussions with users from different backgrounds, respondents conveyed several motivations for using LAPOR!. These included the following:

Figure 2. Age of LAPOR! users in Bojonegoro

Note: We did not include people aged under 18 in our survey, as LAPOR!'s previous surveys did not include this age group.

- 18–25 years old
- 26–30 years old
- 31–35 years old
- 36–40 years old
- 41–45 years old
- 46–50 years old
- >51 years old
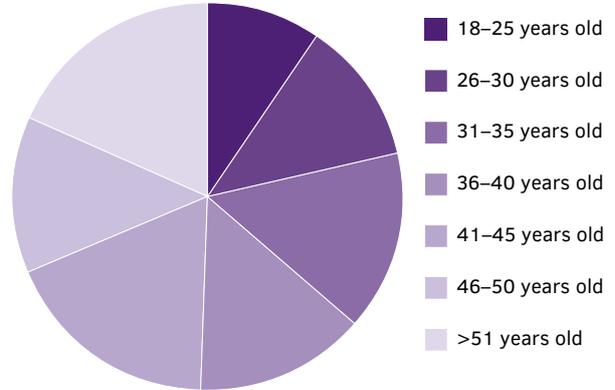
Figure 3. Age of LAPOR! users in Indragiri Hulu

- 18–25 years old
- 26–30 years old
- 31–35 years old
- 36–40 years old
- 41–45 years old
- 46–50 years old
- >51 years old
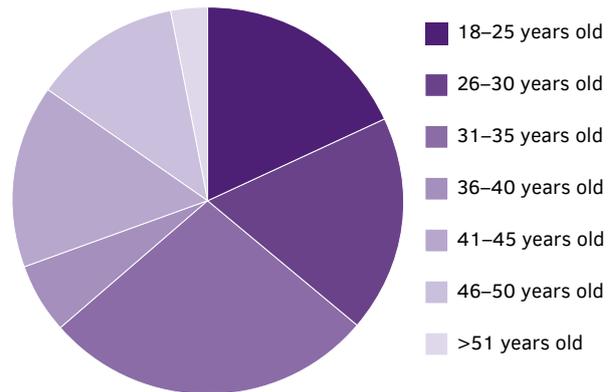
- They want to support their government to fulfil its obligations.

- They still have belief in the government.

- They trust the regional leader to address the complaint.

- They believe that there is always the possibility that a complaint will be addressed by the authorities.

Respondents chose to complain via LAPOR!, a national-level complaint-handling system, instead of complaining directly to the responsible agency, for different reasons. Some users do not know which government agency they should report to; the channels to some agencies are not available; and some users want to avoid rent-seeking behaviour among authorities. Also, they perceive LAPOR! as being more trustworthy than reporting directly to a government agency.

The research revealed that some users do not follow up on their complaints once submitted. Some argued that the feedback received from the system is too

rigid; others were dissatisfied by the feedback from the responsible agency. Some users chose not to be too active in reporting issues that are close to their homes, due to worries about being labelled as a 'snitch' (informer), which can lead to a backlash and ostracism. Respondents agreed that protection is needed to ensure users' safety, while field investigators should directly clarify the validity of the reports. LAPOR! has a feature for users to remain anonymous, which may increase participation. Fox (2014: 27) mentions that one key element of social accountability is the degree of voice enabled, particularly for criticising the government, by providing anonymity.

Subnational perspectives

Users of complaint-handling systems at the subnational level, which have different political and social conditions across Indonesia, shared their different experiences. The two main motivations for using LAPOR! in Indragiri Hulu were the need to criticise the government (19.5%) and the effectiveness of the system (19.2%). Respondents from Bojonegoro revealed a wider range of motives for using LAPOR!, as shown in Figure 4.

The respondents were also asked whether they had provided complaints or inputs to local government through other channels, such as public dialogue, mass media and social media. In general, users express their concerns and provide inputs more via social media than other forums.

Most of the respondents in Bojonegoro had two major issues with the platform: (1) not receiving confirmation upon submitting their complaints (35.3%); and (2) not receiving a response from the relevant agency (35.3%). By contrast, respondents in Indragiri Hulu experienced fewer barriers in terms of receiving confirmation of their complaints; however, half (50%) were not satisfied with the follow-up from the relevant agencies. Figures 5 and 6 show the full results for this analysis.

Compared to Bojonegoro and Indragiri Hulu, between December 2013 and June 2014 people in Indramayu only used SIDURA (see Table 3). Respondents here were asked about the kinds of channels they needed to express their views to local government. During one focus group discussion,[11] most respondents mentioned quite radical channels, including demonstrations, as well as indirect channels such as the community, social media and local media.

Even where a complaint system is present, citizen's voice can be constrained by fear (Fox 2014: 27). The barriers for Indramayu's respondents in filing complaints ranged from fear of physical intimidation to negative impacts such as difficulties in finding a job.

Figure 4. Reasons for using LAPOR! in Bojonegoro

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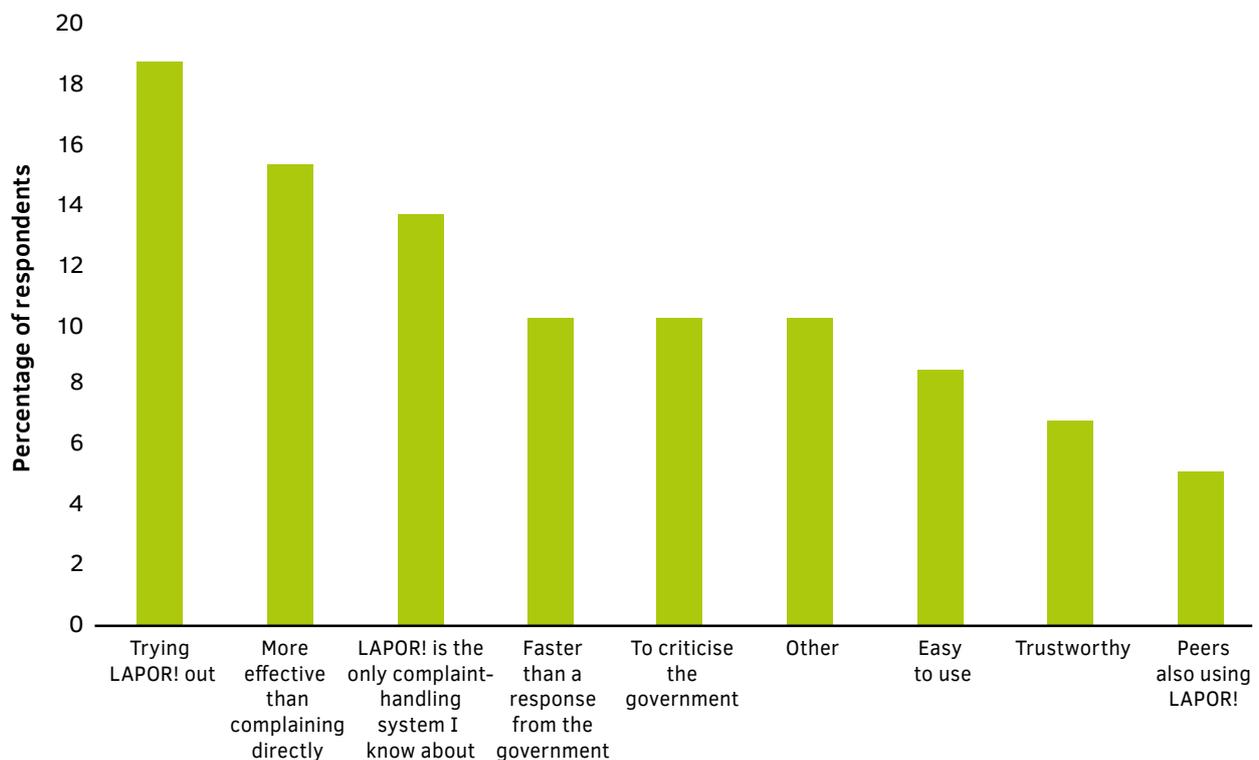
11   Focus group discussion held in Indramayu, 29 September 2015.

Figure 5. Issues with using LAPOR! in Bojonegoro
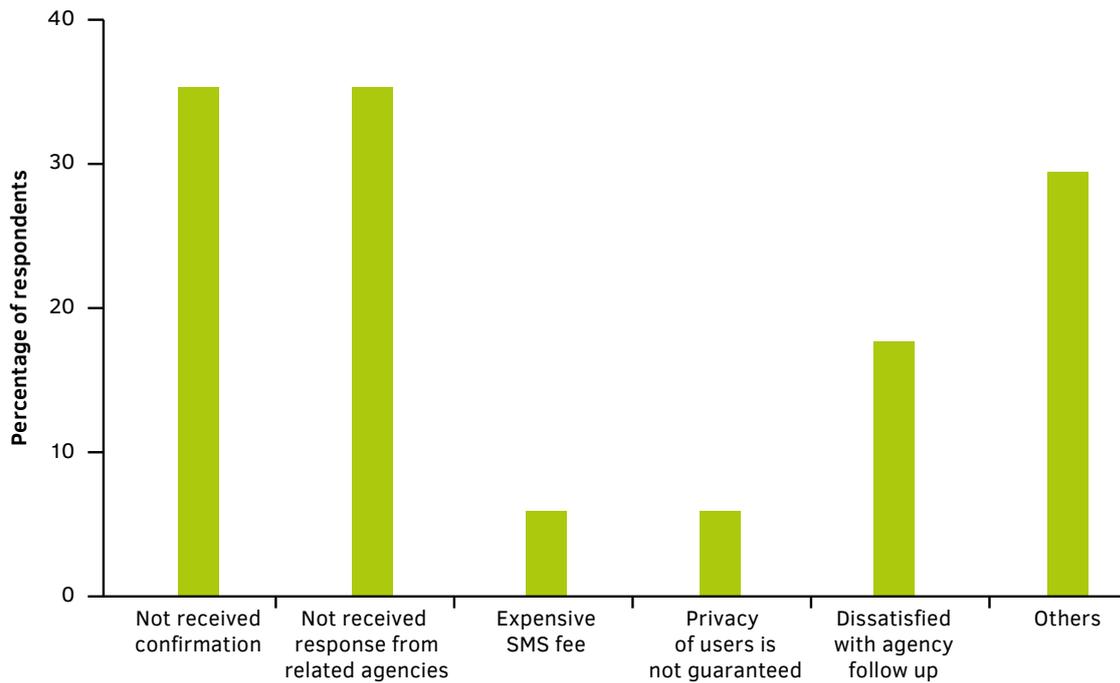
Figure 6. Issues with using LAPOR! in Indragiri Hulu
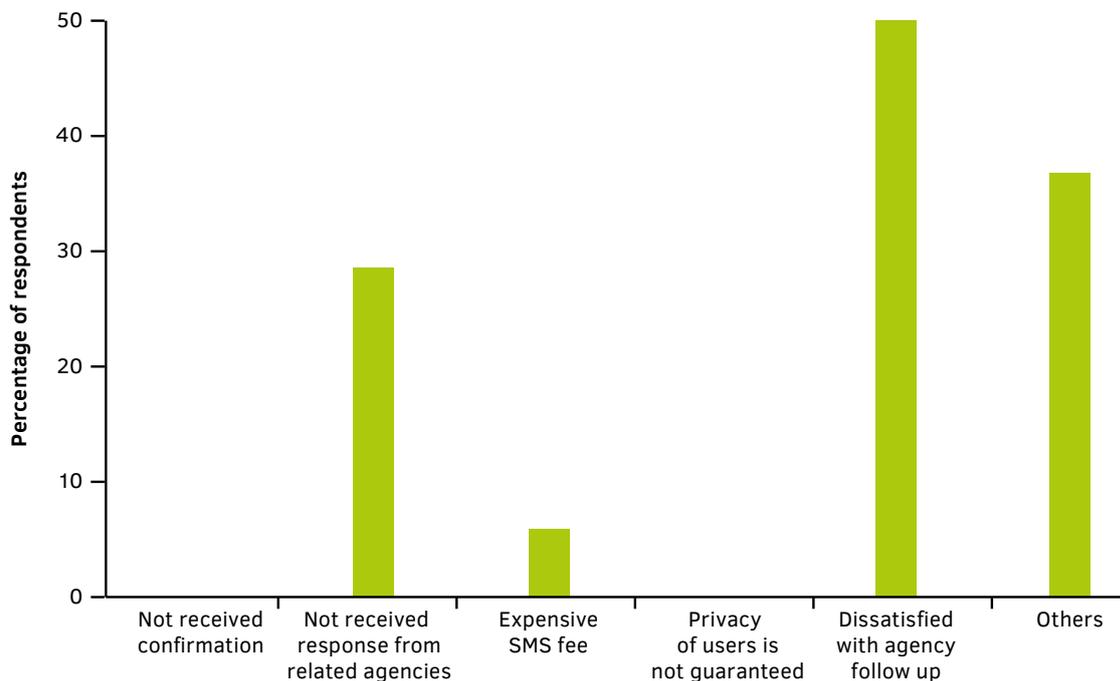
These reflect the political conditions in Indramayu, where citizens consider the local government to be a closed institution with a strong patronage system.[12]

Preferred channels of communication

Being able to speak out to the government and government officials is something most Indonesians need to get used to. Having lived under the authoritarian and suppressive regime of Suharto's New Order, this transitional period towards a more open government is proving to be a 'training ground' for both the state and citizens in terms of freedom of speech and expression. It is therefore no surprise that our questions concerning the preferred channels for public communication were met by either a long pause or incomprehension.

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12 Focus group discussion held in Indramayu, 29 September 2015.

Being able to speak out to the government and government officials is something most Indonesians need to get used to … this transitional period towards a more open government is proving to be a 'training ground' for both the state and citizens in terms of freedom of speech and expression.

Indonesian citizens are eager to communicate with their public officials, but rarely realise that this process needs to take place in a certain way. In general, the absence of open dialogue and formal communication channels meant citizens often resorted to rallies and demonstrations to express their opinions. Most of our informants concurred that people still had to raise the level of 'noise' just to get a response, and that without having a united voice when expressing their concerns, government officials will rarely listen.

Yet citizens have to realise they are more than just individuals when they want the government to listen. They need to raise their voice collectively (Loureiro, Cassim, Darko, Katera and Salome 2016: 57). "Demonstrations are a form of halted expression," one official said during an interview. "Once you open the opportunity to communicate with them, demonstrations will eventually stop taking place." There might be some truth to his suggestion.

In assessing the categories of complaint and the level of urgency in handling responses, we discovered that citizens prefer different modes of communication according to a complaint's urgency: the more pressing a matter is, the more directly they want to address it. Direct dialogue remains a preferred way of communicating with public officials, according to our focus group discussions.[13] This is considered effective given the possibility of getting an immediate response from an individual who can later be held accountable. The desire to communicate directly with the responsible public official also implies issues of trust, as well as the urgency of the matter itself.

However, direct dialogues are not the only possible means of communication. If the case is less urgent, addressing it using ICT-based complaint-handling systems (such as LAPOR!) is deemed adequate. These communications tools can be effective when used in the right context. The use of radio in Bojonegoro (see Box 1) remains the best example in our study of having the 'right technology in the right place'. It provides the preferred form of communication within a certain community, and uses the most widely available communications infrastructure in that particular social setting, namely SMS and radio.

If all other communication efforts fail, citizens' last resort will be going back to the streets. This would represent the failure of the government to communicate with its citizens. Without any chance to communicate, opportunities for citizens to take part in any process that affects their public life will rarely arise – leaving them with few alternatives.

## Institutional responses to complaints

While the number of complaints received is increasing (see Table 2), the response rate[14] is not improving at the same speed. According to our survey, just over half of all complaints to LAPOR! are resolved (see Figures 7a and 7b). However, this means that nearly half of all complaints are not resolved. In Bojonegoro, for example, our survey showed that while 44% of citizens receive feedback within seven days, the same number of respondents never receive any notification from the relevant unit (see Figure 7).

This indicates that the efficacy of the complaint-handling system is limited by the government system for responding, and its ability to deal with problems of varying complexity. These data reaffirm the need for strong political will and a decent institutional capacity to ensure the responsiveness of the complaint-handling system: i.e. the complaints received can and will be dealt with.

As well as delays, there are further limitations to the responses that such complaint-handling systems can provide. If an administrator receives complex complaints on LAPOR!, she or he usually does not have the power to resolve them, often due to their limited capacity and authority. In a public dialogue, by contrast, government officials could answer directly and follow up on complaints and requests from citizens; if concerns are not difficult to answer, then the government official can follow up on the spot. This reduces the gap between government leaders and citizens. However, bigger concerns are still likely to need further consideration or consultation with other stakeholders. Nonetheless, some citizens will still be satisfied by meeting the regent and conveying their concerns directly.

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13 In all seven focus group discussions, we posed a question on desired channels for communicating with public officials.
14 The response rate refers to how many days the government needs to respond to complaints.

Figure 7a. Response times to complaints
registered with LAPOR! in Bojonegoro, 2015
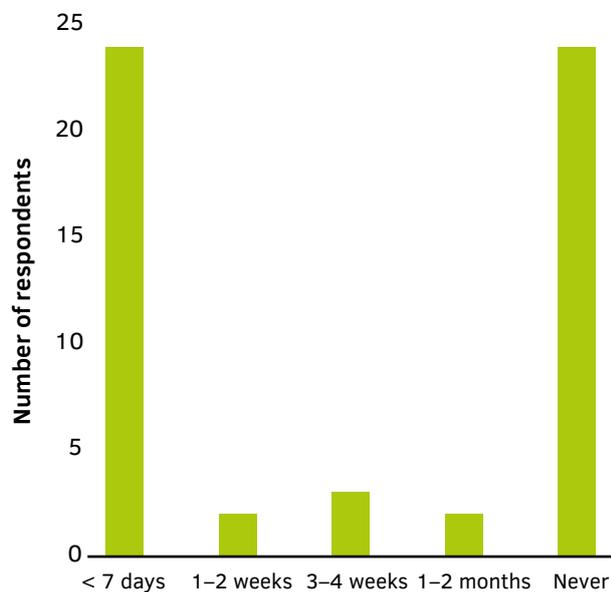
Figure 7b. Response times to complaints
registered with LAPOR! in Indragiri Hulu, 2015
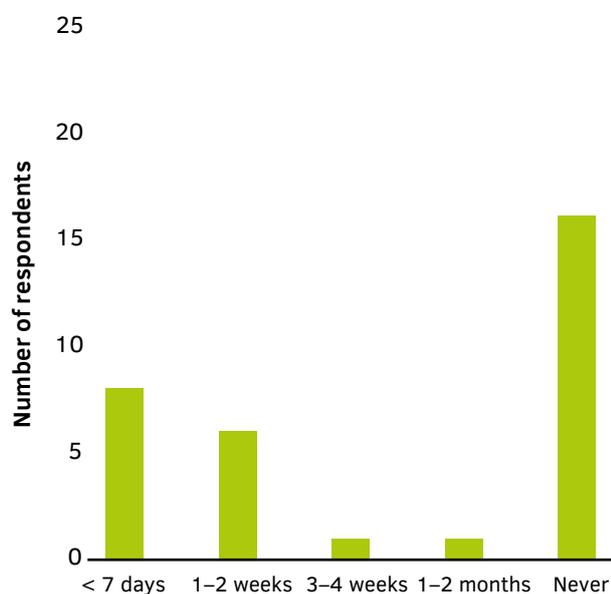
The impacts of complaint-handling systems

Transcripts from focus group discussions in each of
the case study regions (Bojonegoro, Indragiri Hulu and
Indramayu) were analysed to understand the impacts
of establishing complaint-handling systems in these
regions. These revealed that prior to the introduction
of complaint-handling systems (LAPOR! and others),
communication between the state and its citizens was
largely a one-way channel, namely top-down,[15] and
communication channels were only used to provide
updates on government's activities or programmes.[16]
Citizens were rarely involved in policy-making
process,[17] while public hearings were mostly held for
known stakeholders only.

Citizens had to be inventive and creative to convey their
concerns or wishes; for example, if these were deemed
important, related stakeholders would join forces
to compel the government to take action.[18] In the
absence of formal communication channels, citizens
needed to visit a particular government agency with
their concerns.[19] Yet this approach only worked if prior
relations had been established between the citizen
and the responsible public official or agency; not every
citizen had reliable ties with government units.

Furthermore, having the necessary ties did not
guarantee that citizens could successfully convey
their concerns. For instance, when forest farmers in
Indramayu needed a dialogue with the Agriculture
Agency, they were told that their concerns were not
within its jurisdiction and were redirected to the
Forestry Agency. Yet when they went to the Forestry
Agency, they received the same negative response,
indicating a lack of coordination between government
agencies.[20]

Another issue is bureaucracy. Participants of the focus
group discussions in Bojonegoro and Indramayu
stated that communicating with local government
is sometimes perceived by citizens as a convoluted
procedure and a waste of time. They felt that
they needed to bribe officials or make use of their
connections to receive better public services. Box 2
provides an example of how a complaint-handling
system managed to resolve this problem.

Summary

The main factor excluding people from using the
LAPOR! platform is not being informed about it, as
there is only limited knowledge of its presence. This
lack of information is more problematic than the lack of
access to technology, but people without any access to
ICTs – in particular mobile phones – are also excluded.
Bureaucracy is another barrier to implementing
complaint-handling systems.

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15 Focus group discussions held in Bojonegoro, 12 November 2015, and Indragiri Hulu, 14 January 2016.
16 Focus group discussions held in Indramayu, 29 September 2015, and Indragiri Hulu, 14 January 2016.
17 Focus group discussion held in Bojonegoro, 12 November 2015.
18 Focus group discussion held in Indramayu, 29 September 2015.
19 Focus group discussion about LAPOR!, 15 May 2015.
20 Focus group discussion held in Indramayu, 29 September 2015.

Box 2. The Regional General Hospital in Indrasari Rengat

The Regional General Hospital (RSUD) in Indrasari Rengat was established in 1993, but in 2011 the management of the hospital changed entirely. Previously, patients were forced to pay large bribes. To combat these illegal activities and unfair treatment, RSUD Indrasari needed to gather information directly from patients, as they were the ones who received the services.

In 2012, the SMS Complaint Centre was established. During the launch period, RSUD Indrasari promoted this system throughout the hospital using stickers with the phone number to file complaints (these were placed, for example, on the doors of patients' rooms) and a huge banner in front of the hospital.

The system operates using just one handheld phone and works through three steps:

1. The incoming complaint (SMS) from a patient (user) is replied to directly using a template message such as "Thank you for your information. We will follow up on your complaint."

2. The complaint is forwarded to the relevant head of department, who is responsible for following up, and copied to the RSUD director's phone; complaints are discussed in the director's internal meetings once a month.

3. The head of the department to which the complaint is related then monitors the follow-up directly.

Besides gathering complaints from patients, this also works as a self-monitoring system for employees. As illegal bribes are mostly asked for by hospital employees, RSUD Indrasari installed a noticeboard with photos of all employees. If a patient receives bad service from an employee, but has no information about them (i.e. their name), they can figure it out from the photos. This has helped to improve service delivery to patients.

On the other side, the main driver for implementing complaint-handling systems is the presence of political leaders who are willing to communicate. This includes the very act of listening (as shown in Bojonegoro) and transmitting the value of this within government systems. The absence of such political will often undermines any technology-driven innovation.

It is important to understand citizens' preferred means of communication. At the subnational level, direct dialogues are still preferred, especially when they involve pressing matters such as land grabbing, environmental issues and political–economic issues. ICT-based complaint-handling systems are more suitable for administrative and public facility-related issues, which can be dealt with when government institutions have the capacity to respond. This supports the argument that to implement technologies, one has to understand which one to use in each place.

Governance in Indonesia: a social accountability perspective

As Joshi (2014) explains, there are two broad aspects to social accountability initiatives: macro and micro. The macro approach largely focuses on the particular socio-economic and political realities in a country or a region. For example, local laws directly constitute the landscape of how a government handles complaints. As a result, non-responsiveness is no longer incentivised as the costs are already accounted for. The micro approach explains local factors, includng the individual components of accountability processes and the causal chains through which social accountability processes are expected to work (Joshi 2014: 26). Micro approaches ultimately focus on the interactions and reactions of the people within the existing policy structure.

Indonesia has seen varied results from efforts to improve governance since the Suharto era (Datta, Jones, Febriany, Harris, Dewi, Wild and Young 2011). The biggest change was the introduction of decentralisation, which brought fiscal and political autonomy to the district and city levels. The interesting question in the context of our study is the degree to which this decentralisation has enabled citizens to raise their voice.

McGee and Gaventa (2011: 21) identified the key factors that shaped the impacts of transparency and accountability initiatives. From the 'supply side' the relevant factors are: (1) the level of democratisation; (2) the level of political will; and (3) enabling legal frameworks, political incentives and sanctions.

Having considered the main issues of transforming governance in Indonesia, we focused on two dominant factors related to social accountability initiatives: political will and institutional capacity. These are discussed in relation to our findings in the four case studies, with LAPOR! examined for the national context, and the three districts of Bojonegoro, Indragiri Hulu and Indramayu at the subnational level.

Political will is a major factor that enables or hinders the success of social accountability initiatives, as proven across many countries and contexts (Bukenya *et al.* 2012; Gaventa and McGee 2010); several stories in Indonesia resonate with these findings, as shown in the rest of this section.

The term *institutional capacity* is interchangeable with 'state capacity', 'organisational capacity' and 'institutional response' (O'Meally 2013). Complaint-handling systems are a means of improving public service delivery. They enable the public, as well as government officials, to monitor and evaluate ongoing programmes and, eventually, to demand a greater effort from the state to make things work better. But herein lies the challenging paradox of increasing state capacity: it is both an outcome of social accountability initiatives, and an important prerequisite in making them work.

Other terms, such as 'teeth', have also been used to refer to institutional capacity for accountability, including both positive incentives and negative sanctions (Fox 2014: 28). Overall, these concepts all refer to the ability of government authorities or institutions to better respond to citizens' demands to improve the delivery of public services. In our case, institutional capacity applies to the capacity of delivery units to reach out and respond to citizens through existing complaint-handling systems. We believe that, combined with the right amount of political will, institutional capacity explains precisely how governance can transform social accountability through the use of ICT tools.

National context

Political will

There was considerable political will behind the development of LAPOR!. It was established in 2011 by the President's Delivery Unit for Monitoring and Oversight (UKP4). This fulfilled UKP4's legal mandate to provide a public complaints channel. LAPOR! was also implemented to meet the accountability principle of Open Government Indonesia. Its development demonstrates UKP4's strong political will and engagement strategy. The unit uses LAPOR! as part of its monitoring process towards ministries and agencies.

Currently, LAPOR! is managed by the Executive Office of the President, together with the Ministry for Bureaucracy Reform. The system has been incorporated into 87 ministries and government agencies, 44 state-owned enterprises including the Corruption Eradication Commission and Ombudsman Indonesia (Open Government Indonesia 2014), and five subnational governments.

Institutional capacity

LAPOR! requires every ministry and government agency to have one dedicated liaison officer who is connected to its system. This person is responsible for receiving and distributing complaints, as well as sending official responses on behalf of their institutions. Implementing the system required a change to the workflow for how public complaints were handled in ministries and agencies. Before, complaints were received through letters or phone calls. Officials recorded the complaints manually and then processed them using a document-based system. With LAPOR!, complaints are meant to be processed electronically within a five-day time limit. The officials need to comply with this time limit, and therefore need to increase their response rate.

Subnational context: political will

The problem of political leadership and willingness to enforce transparent policies, as well as changing bureaucratic practices in Indonesia, emerged as key themes in our study. We found different levels of political will to use complaint-handling systems to communicate with the public in the three subnational districts.

Bojonegoro

Soon after Suyoto was selected as a regent of Bojonegoro in 2010, he started some strong initiatives for communicating with citizens. He shared his mobile phone number, initiated Dialog Jumat (see Box 3) as an offline complaint-handling system, developed a local radio station called Radio Malowopati (see Box 1), and introduced SMS Halo Bupati. All of the complaints submitted via these three systems were also integrated within the LAPOR! system by early 2014.

In addition, several local regulations were introduced to promote transparency and accountability. For instance, in 2013 Regulation of Regent No. 30 on Innovation of Development Based on Public Participation was issued to legalise the complaint-handling systems. The following year, Regulation of Regent No. 40 on Guidelines on Managing Information and Documentation in Bojonegoro's District was introduced.

These changes ultimately occurred because of an apparently high degree of political will, among other factors. This political will is boosting the performance of Bojonegoro's government, and has remained consistent under Suyoto's administration. Indeed, he is creating an enabling environment for both citizens and

Box 3. Dialog Jumat

Soon after Suyoto was elected as Bojonegoro's regent in 2008, he initiated an offline complaint-handling forum called Dialog Jumat (Friday Dialogue). Held every Friday in the city hall, it has continued during Suyoto's second incumbency. In its early implementation, the Department of Communication and Information invited representatives of various communities in Bojonegoro to attend. Now, all of Bojonegoro's officials, including village and sub-district officials, are obliged to attend to hear people's complaints directly.

Dialog Jumat has proven to be an effective way to engage the people of Bojonegoro and to reinforce the demands for a transparent government. The number of people attending Dialog Jumat has grown significantly, reaching around 200 attendees by 2016. The head of the Department of Communication and Information, Kusnandaka, reports that communities have encouraged people to join Dialog Jumat to keep track of the Bojonegoro Government.

Through this forum, citizen voice in Bojonegoro has been heard. People are free to express their views or make complaints towards officials. These can be directed to individuals in the bureaucratic system or a specific public service. To some extent, people are allowed to express their anger. For example, one person brought a sample of a broken paving block and slammed it in front of the regent and audience to demonstrate that he was tired of having to use a damaged road. Soon after, both Suyoto and the relevant SKPD took up his complaint and now continuously repair damaged roads, even in the most remote areas.

Dialog Jumat has also been integrated with LAPOR!'s system. All the people who complain at the forums have to give their names and phone numbers in order to be recorded in the system. In addition, the complaints filed can be seen online, and are documented by the Department of Communication and Information. These systems have created a political cost for non-responsiveness while strengthening citizens' demands in terms of social accountability; it creates both 'rewards' and 'punishments' for officials, those who do their job well and those who do not.

People complaining through Dialog Jumat not only feel they are 'heard'; there are other advantages, such as the affordability of this opportunity to communicate with the government. In addition, there is a degree of willingness on all sides to continuously develop this citizen-led process. This has increased trust between government and citizens that ultimately leads to accountability, where service providers are held accountable by citizens.

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government, which is comparable to the supply and demand – or 'both sides of the equation' – concept that transparency and accountability requires (McGee and Gaventa 2011: 21; Gaventa 2004).

Indragiri Hulu

Indragiri Hulu introduced LAPOR! during Yopi Arianto's first period of administration, from 2010 to 2015. Early during this period, he distributed his personal phone number to citizens, aiming to collect public feedback directly in the form of text messages; many citizens had his personal phone number.[21] He received countless messages from the public, ranging from requests for information to personal demands. Eventually, the incoming messages were overloading his phone, forcing him to stop using this system. Instead, Arianto decided to integrate LAPOR! with existing complaint-handling systems in his administration.

Several further initiatives to increase transparency were developed. One was the establishment in 2011 of information and documentation management officers (Pejabat Pengelola Informasi dan Dokumentasi, or PPID) to run community information service centres (Pusat Pelayanan Informasi Masyarakat, or PPIM), units that provide information-desk services for citizens to access public information. These are managed under the supervision of the Transportation, Communication and Information Agency (Dishubkominfo). In 2011, Indragiri Hulu became the first district to introduce PPID. Two years later, Indragiri Hulu was proposed as the site for one of the Open Government Initiative's pilot projects, conducted by the President's Delivery Unit for Development Monitoring and Oversight (UKP4). This was the moment when Arianto's initiatives started to achieve greater transparency.

Indramayu

A different level of political will can be seen in Indramayu. Anna Sophana has been leading Indramayu Regency since 2010. She took the baton from her husband, Irianto MS Syafiuddin, the district's previous regent who served from 2000 to 2010. She has mainly continued her husband's programme in terms of initiatives to communicate with the public. Notable systems that existed in the region include

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SIDURA and Citizens Meet Regent (Rakyat Ketemu Bupati, or RKB).

SIDURA was an SMS-based public reporting system that aimed to monitor government development programmes and capture citizens' voices. The system was initiated, designed and operated by the regent's assistant in 2014. All messages were reported to the regent, so she could follow up on them. Citizens' enthusiasm did not last very long, however; at its peak, SIDURA received 40–50 messages per day but this decreased during the period it operated. The regent's assistant had to move to another city, forcing the system to stop after just four months in operation.

RKB was established by the Sophana administration as a way of capturing people's protests or criticisms. The programme was stopped in early 2015 to avoid it being perceived as a means of campaigning in an election year. To date, neither RKB nor SIDURA have been resumed and, at present, there is no clear system for open, two-way communication between government and citizens.

The general means of communication between government and citizens is one way. The Regent and Citizens Forum (BKR) was highlighted by public officials as an effective way to communicate with the regent, but citizens perceived this to be ineffective for several reasons. The number of participants was limited, and the head of the sub-district would choose or appoint citizens to attend the forum. Normally, people with 'accommodating' voices were preferred over critical ones, and people who were considered to be 'noisy' or without any ties with the government were unlikely to be invited.[22]

Some government officials might have assumed that the lack of complaints indicates public satisfaction with public services.[23] In reality, it might be the other way around: if there were no complaints, there must be something wrong, either with the expression of citizen voice – the demand side – or the enabling environment for speaking out – the supply side.

Comparison of the three regencies

There have been many strong efforts to improve transparency and accountability through complaint-handling systems in Bojonegoro, which are exemplified by the cooperation between the local government and communities to create the Society Information Group (Kelompok Informasi Masyarakat, or KIM). Furthermore, the many legal frameworks mentioned support the operation of complaint-handling systems. By contrast, the short lifespan of SIDURA in Indramayu was partly due to the lack of legal frameworks and human resources to support the

system. Hence, when the assistant driving the project moved on, the project stopped. In Indragiri Hulu, the issue of transparency was little mentioned during Arianto's first period as regent, but he has continued his personal efforts to push transparency, such as his initiative to form PPID.

Another concern arises from our analysis: the need to ensure a shared sense of urgency regarding improved accountability, and a common goal within state actors, instead of only with the political leader. Consequently, political incentives and sanctions that are closely related to institutional capacity must be further highlighted and examined. A leader may be willing to adopt various accountability initiatives, but the commitment to broader political accountability must also be thoroughly examined.

Subnational context: institutional capacity

Bojonegoro

Bojonegoro has shown some incremental progress in social accountability, especially in terms of transparency and accountability, due in part to the numerous complaint-handling systems that have been created in recent years, and also the introduction of by-laws that institutionalise the use of complaint-handling systems (these are outlined in the previous sub-section). Furthermore, progress can be observed in the responses of relevant government units towards the complaints they receive. For example, every government unit is evaluated at a weekly evaluation meeting, normally on Fridays, and often open to the public or external visitors. Each unit must outline the progress made in response to complaints received. Further, the Communication and Informatics Agency manages all government–citizen communication tools, both offline and online. These are all integrated, publicised and evaluated periodically, and the findings used by the regent to monitor government performance.[24]

By looking at the context of the policy and prevailing laws in Bojonegoro, it is clear that policy-making is highly dependent on a leader's vision – which is what we associate with political will. The existing regulations are the context that shaped the *structure* of this region's efforts to strengthen institutional capacity. However, the *process* of strengthening institutional capacity is another issue. It does not mean that Bojonegoro's local government can always easily comprehend Suyoto's ideas, nor are they always immediately responsive in terms of handling complaints. They have – like many others – been struggling to get

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22 Focus group discussion, Indramayu, 2015.
23 Secretary of Indramayu Regent, interview, 30 September 2015.
24 Interview with Kusnandaka, 2015.

*By looking at … Bojonegoro, it is clear that policy-making is highly dependent on a
leader's vision — which is what we associate with political will.*

used to receiving so many complaints, all of which must be handled within a certain period of time.

It is important to further analyse the situation in Bojonegoro by thinking in terms of the micro, or local, approach. At one evaluation meeting, Suyoto acknowledged, "we trust the direct mechanism, we believe in direct and open dialogue, then we believe that participation and [the] distribution [of information] among us will happen, changes occur … we were then able to learn together".

This statement resonates with how he believed direct mechanisms could encourage a two-way dialogue and eventually create a discourse on the importance of institutional capacity. He added that information must be shared not only with the people, but with government units as well.

Suyoto acted on his words by creating and using an instant messaging group on WhatsApp, consisting of the head of each unit or department, to speed up two-way communication with government units. With time, this accelerated the handling of online and offline complaints. The Head of the Department of Communication and Information, Kusnandaka, also played a role, providing information on complaints which were not being handled properly via instant-messaging groups. Through this, he indirectly created a process to strengthen institutional capacity to respond to public complaints. This is not a one-time process, though; to maintain consistency it is necessary to keep the discourse about institutional capacity in people's minds.

Indragiri Hulu

Indragiri Hulu has seen many improvements in terms of transparency; for example, establishing information and documentation management officers, becoming the pilot project for the Open Government Initiative, and being integrated with LAPOR!. To sustain these achievements, the regency has introduced a legal basis and several other actions to increase its institutional capacity.

The newly created community information service centres (outlined in Section 4.2) are a manifestation of Law No.14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure. As the legal foundation, the regent in Indragiri Hulu issued two decrees[25] requiring a list of public information from each agency and its status to be announced daily, immediately or on request. In the following years, a Standard Operational Procedure regarding public

information was launched under Regent Decree No.1 of 2014 on Public Information Service Management.

In 2013, Indragiri Hulu officially became an Open Government Initiative district-level pilot project. As stated in a Memorandum of Understanding between UKP4 and Indragiri Hulu, both agreed to allocate the implementation budget for this to three agencies for leading sectors: the Transportation, Communication and Information Agency, the Health Agency (Dinas Kesehatan) and the Education Agency (Dinas Pendidikan). This pilot project aims to strengthen the functioning of information and documentation management officers (Antara Riau 2014). The regional government budget is being published online as part of efforts for open budgets.

Another system that is in the spirit of the Open Government Initiative was integrated during the same year. Regent Decree No. 65/I was issued in 2015 to appoint an administrator for LAPOR!, which is being coordinated under the Public Relation Agency (Dinas Humas). A total of 55 individuals are chosen from each government agency to become administrators. It is an additional duty for civil servants, with additional stipends being allocated from the regional government budget.

Unlike Bojonegoro, Indragiri Hulu has not established an evaluation system for the implementation of LAPOR!. After two years, there is no clear sign of how governance performance is being evaluated using LAPOR!. The system's ultimate objective is to contribute significantly to public service delivery through open government, and to create greater transparency and government accountability, but it has not really been used by the administration for these purposes. Complaints from citizens are merely stored in LAPOR!'s system and the data are not used for further policy-making or decision-making. As a result, the number of LAPOR! users has decreased significantly in the last two years, and most village leaders have still not been informed about LAPOR!. Alas, the presence of LAPOR! has had no significant impact on enhancing institutional response or capacity.

Indramayu

SIDURA was not supported by a legal framework and adequate human resources. When it was in operation, the regent's assistant had to read and reply to messages at night, after working hours. As mentioned, in August 2014, the assistant moved to another city. At

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25 Regent Decree No. 279 of 2011 and Regent Decree No. 391 of 2013 on Public Information.

At both national and subnational levels, political will determines the uptake and outcome of social accountability initiatives.

that time, the system had not been taken up by other units or agencies of the local government, as they already had other assignments. This lack of institutional capacity limited SIDURA's sustainability. The system was short-lived, running for just four months.

Summary

This section highlights findings on how governance relates to complaint-handling systems. It illustrates how, at both national and subnational levels, political will determines the uptake and outcome of social accountability initiatives (O'Meally 2013). Without this, few interventions or innovations to increase social accountability will succeed, due to insufficient support to implement or maintain them.

At the national level, LAPOR! has performed well, establishing a system that handles citizens' complaints while helping other government agencies to increase their capacity to process these complaints. It should be highlighted that this process would not have taken place without the full commitment and political support of the ruling administration. LAPOR! has achieved its goals through a combination of committed leaders and their support to build the necessary institutional capacity.

It is interesting to note that in Bojonegoro, the process of strengthening institutional capacity eventually required an iterative interaction of macro and micro factors. It is also critical to note that the use of local

media is an effective means of enhancing citizen voice, and could address the typical fears faced by the public about making complaints.

Yet, while there have been clear signs of transformation in the case studies, a question on sustainability remains, as shown in the case of SIDURA. These findings resonate with a study on Jakarta Smart City, where strong leadership and political will enabled the establishment of the city's complaint-handling system, along with the city's committed partnership with non-government actors to support this platform (Putri, Karlina and Tanaya 2016).

On the other hand, our subnational case studies revealed that the implementation and use of complaint-handling systems are only effective when used as part of a system to enhance governance initiatives. Only if a system is used as an integral part of monitoring government performance can it result in a more responsive public service delivery. Institutional capacityincreases incrementally along with the uptake of a complaint-handling system. As shown by our four case studies, the more reports that are responded to and pursued, the likelier it is that capacity will increase. This varies from one region (or regency) to another, however; Bojonegoro is the best example of successful leadership, while Indragiri Hulu has not lived up to its early promise and Indramayu is yet to show its commitment to openness.

Citizen participation in governance

The introduction of complaint-handling systems is a vital enabler and amplifier of citizen participation, opening up unprecedented communications possibilities (Tembo and Chapman 2014). Even though they are no guarantee of better institutional responses, complaint-handling systems enable citizens to channel their requests and complaints, thereby becoming a first step towards trust-building. This section highlights how citizen participation plays a role in the success of complaint-handling systems.

Citizen voice and empowerment

Bojonegoro

In Bojonegoro, citizens use multiple channels to monitor public services and express their desires and requests, both offline and online. Offline interaction takes place through initiatives such as Dialog Publik, and through cultural gatherings such as the unique Wayang Pejabat,[26] through which the local government uses a combination of culture and comedy for political interaction. Puppet shows are used to criticise either the leader or a government unit, so that people from various backgrounds can understand the message. To reach a wide audience, it is held in the city plaza.

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26 *Wayang* is a traditional form of theatre performance that uses puppetry.

Online interaction between citizens and government comes through the presence of Suyoto and Bojonegoro's official government on social media platforms, mostly Twitter and Facebook. Other than these, the local government has allowed Dialog Jumat to be aired live every Friday on its official website (and via Radio Malowopati).

As a result of these initiatives, the interactions between citizens and government have been redefined in Bojonegoro. Government units, particularly the Department of Communication and Information, have tried to reduce the communication gap between citizens and government, and political leaders have encouraged people to feel free to express themselves and deliver their complaints. As a result, citizens now participate in local development processes. This is evidence that these initiatives have attempted to take into account the need to engender mutual trust and build citizens' capacity to defend themselves from threats (Fox 2014).

Indragiri Hulu

Indragiri Hulu, as a small region surrounded by oil palm plantations, has very limited interactions between state and society. There are few open public spaces (e.g. plazas or parks) or a dedicated city hall. Therefore, the only space for open and direct communications is online. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that voices are shifting to new online portals and social media, such as Kabarinhu, a news portal that has provided a feature, Citizen Update[27] (Kabar Warga), since 2014 to open public interaction up to 'netizens'.[28]

However, interactions and the exchanging of information have been very limited. Much of the local media is close to the government, and largely provides information about local authorities, mostly regarding their ceremonial activities.[29] There is an absence of opposition media to criticise the government. This has led to a narrow range of information being accessible to citizens, and also constructs a certain mindset among citizens. Citizens and the media also face difficulties in accessing data from information and documentation management officers, particularly regarding forestry, which is a controversial issue.[30]

LAPOR! is not widely known by the public. With a slow rate of incoming complaints (i.e. 250 complaints in a year, with a response rate of less than 70%[31]), the real willingness to accommodate citizen voice through this channel in a consistent way is questionable.

At the grass-roots level, most citizens are limited in their capacity to produce information. There are several probable causes of this. First, there is no critical mass. Public opinion is rarely incisive towards local authorities, due to a lack of knowledge about people's rights and a lack of political education. Second, there is not yet an information community of any significance.[32] Even though an information community has been established, its role is not yet clear and communication between local authorities and communities is still at a non-technical level. A forum for heads of villages has been arranged by local authoritites, but this is not yet being used as an alternative channel to express citizens' voice from the village level.[33]

Since there are no publicly available channels for citizen voice, there is no way for citizens to express themselves. Occasionally, citizen demonstrations occur in front of the regent's office, often involving students, but there is a concern that demonstrations might result in negative impacts for their families.[34] In general, people prefer communicating with the authorities through online media, instead of communicating directly.

The key to citizen participation is critical engagement between citizens and the government, instead of mutual cynicism. Generally, the increasing number of users of both online and offline complaint-handling systems in Indonesia relates to the idea of public spheres as an overarching space for citizenship (Cornwall et al. 2011). But, based on the situation described here, citizen voice has not been fully empowered in Indragiri Hulu, and citizens interact with the state in a very limited way. There is no strong willingness from either side to exchange information.

This reflects a common problem in Indonesia, namely the limited awareness of rights. It is unfortunate that the existing perception of marginalised citizens is often that 'people are asking for help' rather than 'people are exercising for their rights'. Some villagers that we came across during the surveys were unaware of their rights, and therefore deprived of basic rights, for example to an identification card, a family certificate or a national health insurance card. With regards to complaint-handling systems, unfortunately many citizens are not yet aware that they have the right to file a complaint to local authorities. Instead, they perceive the state as 'Santa Claus': it is appropriate for them to ask for something, and as a result the government may grant

27 See: http://kabarinhu.com/category/kabar-warga/
28 The term 'netizen' broadly means a 'citizen of the net', i.e. anyone with access to the Internet.
29 Focus group discussion with media and women's representatives, Indragiri Hulu and Pekanbaru, January 2016.
30 Focus group discussion with media and women's representatives, Indragiri Hulu and Pekanbaru, January 2016.
31 Statistics of approval rating, LAPOR!, December 2015.
32 Focus group discussion, academic representatives, Pekanbaru, 16 January 2016.
33 Focus group discussion, student representatives, Pekanbaru, 16 January 2016.
34 Focus group discussion, student representatives, Pekanbaru, 16 January 2016.

One possible channel to improve communication between citizens and government is social media … a Facebook group founded by an activist in Indramayu has … more than 11,000 members, and … has successfully created a space for people to channel their discontent.

their wish; they are not aware that it is already the responsibility of government to act.

Indramayu

A similar picture is seen in Indramayu, where there is a limited number of communication channels for both government and citizens, and data and information are not easily accessible. The lack of information producers causes people to depend on limited information sources, such as updates from government or local media.

Updates from government often come via *blusukan* – which means the regent periodically visiting citizens in neglected or remote areas to gather their feedback – as well as regent and citizens forums and head of district and citizens forums. These forums, initiated by the regency and moderated by the government, were created to provide spaces for people to express themselves, and are enjoyed by certain groups of citizens. But such public hearings are set up for 'government-friendly' organisations only, and any public updates shared by the administration mostly revolve around the regent's ceremonial activities. The regent's residency (*pendopo*) used to be open, but for the last five years, it has been guarded by large fences. Several demonstrations against this occurred, but they were mostly ineffectual.

Another issue is local media. For some topics, local media are deprived of the freedom to report the news fairly and cover both sides. For instance, reports on corruption by a member of a prominent political party will be heavily examined. As a result, local media outlets do not have the courage to offend the authorities. Therefore, for cases related to political conditions in Indramayu, local activists and organisations sometimes work with the national media and most citizens in Indramayu depend on these traditional media outlets to stay updated. In several cases, this has proven to be effective in pushing the government to respond ('teeth').

Generally, however, access to information in Indramayu is very limited. There is currently no viable, open and safe place for citizens to communicate with the government, and citizen participation remains very limited. Consequently, critical citizens have had to find other ways of expressing themselves, and communities and civil society organisations have largely become self-reliant.

One possible channel to improve communication between citizens and government is social media. Suara Demokrasi Indramayu, a Facebook group founded by an activist in Indramayu, has proved to be an effective medium in raising voices. It has more than 11,000 members, and even though many of these use pseudonyms, it has successfully created a space for people to channel their discontent. In terms of other social media platforms, Twitter is frequently used by the youth. The Government of Indramayu also uses Twitter to update citizens about the regent's activities.

Another channel for communication is local organisations and communities, which are a safe haven for voiceless citizens. Instead of being on their own, they can turn to associations and organisations – for example, women and children organisations, fisherfolk communities and farmers' organisations – to amplify their voice. Indeed, many smallholder farmers and fisherfolk often prefer to ask for help from related organisations rather than from the government.

The last option for channelling citizen voice is making use of personal contacts within the bureaucracy (e.g. head of agencies), thereby perpetuating existing patron–client relationships. A lack of alternatives, or perhaps frustration with the ineffectiveness of other means, has made people use this option. But, as indicated, well-connected people are more likely to be heard than isolated ones.

Summary

Citizen participation plays an enormous role in the success of complaint-handling systems. More specifically, the existence of a civil society that is pushing for openness is a big factor in ensuring the uptake and use of these systems. Hence, a significant barrier in utilising complaint-handling systems is the lack of civil society organisations and leaders pushing for openness and transparency in government. Also, the presence of information producers (e.g. bloggers, communities such as KIM, Facebook groups) is always vital in creating and enhancing democratic spaces.

An open and communicative relationship between citizens and government can engender mutual trust that increases social capital between state and citizens. The different use of complaint-handling systems across our case studies supports this argument.

Democratic spaces need to be created in order to enhance citizen voice. Our research reveals that in the absence of complaint-handling systems, citizens will always try to find and create spaces for interaction. For example, in closed administrations that lack any real opportunity for state–citizen interaction, citizens will find ways to create online or offline public spheres. The quest to find and create democratic spaces is a form of exercising citizenship. This has been evident in all our cases: in the absence of complaint-handling systems, in Indramayu for example, citizens have found ways to channel complaints and requests through social media. Citizen-led initiatives are mostly bottom-up, and only require acknowledgement by the government.

Efforts to improve public service delivery through increasing citizen participation may also result in greater democracy. The case of Bojonegoro needs a special mention, due to its success in transforming governance and becoming a 'listening government'. It also defies assumptions that ICTs are the ultimate factor in opening up a government, as citizens in the district still prefer direct dialogue to communicate with their public officials. However, a strategic combination of political will and the proportional use of ICTs has enabled citizens to participate while holding their public officials accountable.

Implications and recommendations for policy-makers and citizens

A complaint-handling system can only be deemed effective when it has enabled 'voice' to become 'teeth' (Loureiro *et al*. 2016; Peixoto and Fox 2016). And it can only be effective to the extent that the technological innovations behind the platform are adequately supported by a strong political will that enhances the capacity of state institutions. This study has examined how this can be achieved in Indonesia.

At the national level, LAPOR! has established a system that handles citizens' complaints while supporting government agencies to increase their capacity. But this process would not have taken place without the full commitment and political backing of the reigning administration. LAPOR! has therefore achieved its goals through a mix of committed leaders and the availability of their support to build the necessary capacity.

The right technology is not enough, however. A strategic mix of political will along with the proportional use of ICTs is needed to enable citizens to participate in governance while holding their public officials accountable. And citizens can only be empowered when information is spread and accessible. Without the right distribution of knowledge, the presence of technology rarely results in a more open, transparent and responsive government.

Our subnational cases reveal that the implementation and utilisation of complaint-handling systems are only effective when used as part of efforts to enhance

governance initiatives. This can only materialise when there are committed political leaders who support transparency and accountability. A major driver in implementing complaint-handling systems is, therefore, the presence of political leaders who are willing to communicate. This includes the very act of listening (as evident in Bojonegoro) and transmitting the value of this within the bureaucratic machinery.

By contrast, a significant barrier in using complaint-handling systems is the lack of civil society organisations and leaders pushing for greater openness and transparency in government. However, in closed societies without any real chance of state–citizen interaction, citizens will always find ways to create a public sphere, be it online or offline. Indeed, the quest to find and create democratic spaces is a form of exercising citizen participation, and this has been evident in all cases.

The presence of information producers is also vital in creating and enhancing democratic spaces. Indeed, the main barrier to any complaint-handling system is the lack of information about its existence. This is more problematic than a lack of access to technology, although this is also a barrier.

Recommendations
There are several areas for progress for policy-makers to consider, summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Recommendations for governments

To improve the effectiveness of complaint-handling and reporting systems, the government needs to:	To increase the outreach of complaint-handling and reporting systems, the government needs to:	To improve the impact of complaint-handling and reporting systems, the government needs to:
• **change perceptions of complaint-handling processes from informing to campaigning.** Most people in Indonesia are not aware that there are systems in place to make complaints regarding public services, so not many use them. Increasing people's awareness about the existence of public complaint-handling systems such as LAPOR! will help these and other systems to function optimally.	• **learn which technology and media are most used by citizens.** The introduction of sophisticated ICTs is not a guarantee that they will be used by the public. In many cases in Indonesia, people still prefer direct dialogue as a communication channel.	• **eliminate fear and build public trust.** There are many ways to achieve this, depending on the political will of the leadership. The first is to eliminate the intimidating image of the government by becoming one that listens. Prove this by consistently opening direct dialogue with the public, without discriminating. ICT-based complaint-handling tools should be seen as an extension of the dialogue in real space. Both will serve to build trust between the people and the government and strengthen social cohesion among communities.
• **integrate complaint-handling tools into systems to monitor government performance.** Complaint-handling systems can only improve the performance of government agencies if the response is used as a performance metric. This will improve the government's institutional capacity.	• **recognise and use existing local complaint-handling systems, and integrate new approaches into these.** Governments should involve local leaders down to the village level to optimise the uptake of public complaint-handling systems.	• **appreciate and guarantee the safety of democratic spaces created by the public in order to improve the government's performance.**
• **ensure that complaint-handling systems are integrated down to the bottom level, such as village and neighbourhood levels.** Governments should incorporate existing complaint-handling channels, such as civil society or community networks, into the complaint-handling system, if these are available.	• **optimise the SMS system in LAPOR! to enable the public to monitor the progress of their complaints until resolution.** The majority of Indonesians have mobile phones, more than have access to the Internet, so SMS is the best way to optimise access.	• **provide opportunities and space for a strong civil society to grow.** The presence of a strong civil society and communities will encourage the use of complaint-handling systems, enabling these to convey public voice and monitor the performance of the government to improve public services.

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Annex 1. List of informants

	Informant	Affiliation	Gender	Type of interview	Interview duration
LAPOR!					
1	Ferdy	LAPOR!	Male	In-depth	40 minutes
2	Agung Hardjono	LAPOR!	Male	In-depth	60 minutes
3	Gibran and Miranti	LAPOR!	Male and female	In-depth	60 minutes
4	Gunawan	Ministry of Bureaucratic Reform	Male	In-depth	15 minutes
6	Prawito	Ministry of Health	Male	In-depth	30 minutes
7	Dwiyoha	Kemenpan RB	Male	In-depth	60 minutes
8	Aditya Hanggara	BPJS	Male	In-depth	50 minutes
Indramayu					
9	Deni Sumirat	Initiator of SIDURA	Male	Semi-structured	60 minutes
10	Ahmad Bahtiar	Secretary to the Regent	Male	In-depth	45 minutes
11	Anonymous		Male	Phone interview	8 minutes
Bojonegoro					
12	Joko Suharmanto	Communications Agency	Male	Semi-structured	50 minutes
13	Kusnandaka	Head of Communications Agency	Male	In-depth	80 minutes
14	Roy	Radio Malawapati	Male	Semi-structured	35 minutes
15	Erlanda Hiranaka	Youth activitist	Male	Semi-structured	30 minutes
Indragiri Hulu					
16	Roma Doris	Communications Agency	Male	Semi-structured	60 minutes
17	Rahmadi	Communications Agency	Male	In-depth	60 minutes
18	Feni	Communications Agency	Female	Semi-structured	25 minutes
19	Jawalter	Head of Public Relations	Male	In-depth	50 minutes
20	Ibrahim	Public Hospital	Male	Semi-structured	60 minutes
21	Teuku Ahmad	KejariRengat	Male	n/a	45 minutes

About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's Research, Evidence and Learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

About CIPG

Centre for Innovation Policy and Governance (CIPG) is a research-based advisory group that aspires to excel in the area of science, technology, innovation and governance. The Centre works on a variety of topics but currently focuses on science, technology and innovation, inclusive development, and information and social change. CIPG is also involved in programmes related to open government in the Indonesian context.

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