

The CRP's Draft Report was issued to both the requesters and ADB Management for comments, before CRP issued its Final Report. The STDP was found by CRP to have lapses of compliance with the following ADB operational policies and procedures: environmental considerations in ADB operations, gender and development in ADB operations, benefit monitoring and evaluation, formulation and implementation of loan covenants, incorporation of social dimensions in ADB operations, in-

voluntary resettlement, and project administration instructions on change in project scope or implementation arrangements.

The Board approved the project-specific and general recommendations in the CRP's Final Report in July 2005, and the CRP is presently monitoring ADB Management's course of action on the implementation of the remedial actions. ■

Information on the CRP, including its outreach and reports, are on its website at [www.compliance.adb.org](http://www.compliance.adb.org).

# FINDING

ADB helps empower stakeholders in a remote area of Indonesia to work together to seek solutions to concerns about project implementation

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On 21 February 2005, the Office of the Special Project Facilitator (OSPF) of the Asian Development Bank received a complaint about ADB's Community Empowerment for Rural Development Project (CERDP) in South Kalimantan, Indonesia.

The \$170.2 million project, approved in October 2000, had been the subject of complaints from villagers from five communities and three nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Since 2003, however, the complainants have felt their voices were not being heard by those to which their concerns were directed: local, district, provincial, and central government levels, and ADB's Indonesia Resident Mission in Jakarta.

Among the villagers' concerns were that they believed CERDP had been implemented "upside down" in their communities. Infrastructure had been provided without adequate consultation with villagers. They also complained about the project's lack of provision for capacity building.

After all, the project concept and design had placed community empowerment and capacity building ahead of infrastructure. Villagers complained, however, that there had been a lack of information on the project's design.

## Huge Step for Villagers

After NGOs explained how ADB's Accountability Mechanism worked, the villagers took what was for them a huge step: they

# IG A VOICE

decided to complain to ADB headquarters in Manila. "We understood OSPF was our last resort. We are only farmers, after all," they said.

OSPF's role is to facilitate solutions to issues described by different stakeholders in complaints, and to initiate and guide the consultation process. OSPF offered to help the parties involved in CERDP to resolve their issues by, first, supporting the complainants in setting the stage for their decision making, providing opportunities for them to meet and discuss strategies, and acquiring much needed information. Second, OSPF set the stage for all parties involved to come up with solutions. OSPF's role was not to "take decisions on right or wrong, solve problems, detect the truth, or arbitrate in favor of one of the parties involved," according to its CERDP report. It is tasked, however, in treating all parties with respect, and with assuring procedural fairness.

The CERDP complaint having been made, the villagers embarked on the eight steps of the consultation process. OSPF's Review and Assessment Report of the Special Facilitator on CERDP, released in April 2005, acknowledged that each of the five villages bringing the complaint had differing priorities and expectations.

The villagers suggested at first a preparatory meeting that would include a cross-section of the village population: trusted and accepted members; informal leaders and elected members such as village heads; and representatives of the district and sub-district local government.

## Frustrating Process

The process of consultation and conciliation was sometimes tedious and often frustrating for those involved. By the time complaints reach OSPF, the complainants, and those about whom they complain, are often upset, having already gone through many frustrations.

In the case of the CERDP complaint, and many others, one of the first steps—and greatest challenges—is to call a halt to the "blame game." It takes time to re-

establish basic trust among the parties concerned, and to assure them that all involved participate in good faith. There are no shortcuts in achieving this. Communication is both key to helping solve problems between parties and a challenge—how does one assure efficient two-way communication if it takes three weeks for a letter to reach complainants' villages?

Some may ask how a complaint contributes to empowerment. In the case of the CERDP complaint—the consultation phase is in itself a strictly participatory process. Good communication with all parties is part and parcel of this. Professional interpreters and translators are essential, as are the open and transparent procedures required.

Each step of the complaints process is thoroughly explained, and each communication translated. In the case of the CERDP complaint, complainants' comments were sought and published. Complainants were given the opportunity to make informed decisions at every stage of the complaints process.

A local facilitator prepared, facilitated, and documented meetings, mindful of the need for setting ground rules that would encourage respect for the participants and their opinions.

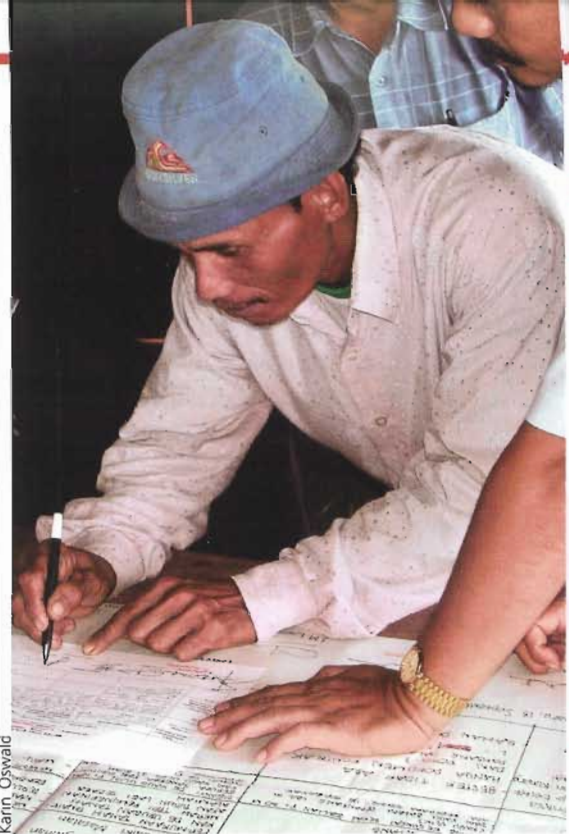
## Bridging Cultural Gaps

The three NGOs, who acted as intermediaries, were crucial in bridging cultural gaps, overcoming language barriers, providing additional support, and helping the villagers understand a sometimes highly specialized technical language.

As one NGO representative reported, "Still clear in our minds are the marathon meetings we had in each of the villages, attended by all the stakeholders in the village. They (the meetings) were so tiring, both physically and mentally."

The former complainants said: "It was a time-consuming process. We have other work to do and to think about other things, too. If the whole process takes too long, our memories will not always be fresh."

Finally, in September 2005, village



**PARTICIPATION** A villager signs on results for Joint Fact-Finding

agreements were signed by the local government, ADB's Indonesia Resident Mission, and the former complainants. It had taken a total of 220 days to achieve a solution—including extensions and interruptions. But more than that, it had required all the stakeholders to participate in finding a solution that was suitable for all.

Was it worth the effort? The whole process was not as some may say "only about some small-scale rural infrastructure." It was another example of stakeholders in dispute working together to seek a resolution. It was about empowering local communities and accountability. It was about rightly pursuing the help of OSPF in seeking a solution, and about learning how to resolve disputes through what the NGOs described as a "remarkable learning experience."

Empowerment is about speaking out. It is about enabling: providing opportunities, resources, and support to those who, as the villagers described themselves, may be "simply farmers" but are also key stakeholders in development. ■

**“ We understood OSPF as our last resort. We are only farmers, after all ”**

Village representatives