

Siri Kertas Kerja IKMAS / *IKMAS Working Paper Series*
No. 18 (March) 2006

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN INDONESIA:
THE CASE OF NUSA TENGGARA
TIMUR**

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Abstract

Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) is the poorest province of Indonesia, with a base in subsistence agriculture and dry climate. Its population of over four million comprises several ethnic groups, each with firm foundations in *adat*. The Protestant and Catholic Churches are strong and have major influence. The recent economic growth of NTT has been substantial with benefits to most of its population.

The paper first examines these aspects, going on to explore development possibilities with their social, economic and environmental impacts. It reviews previous unsatisfactory approaches to poverty alleviation and improvement by the Indonesia government and foreign agencies, and then appraises recent more successful effort by the Indonesia government and NGOs. It considers routes for the future, suggesting how international donors might assist.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN INDONESIA: THE CASE OF NUSA TENGGARA TIMUR

Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) (Map 1) is the poorest province in Indonesia, far from main centres of national activity and with an economy based largely on subsistence agriculture. The Indonesian government, along with civil society organizations and foreign aid agencies, has attempted for years to introduce economic and other improvements, and these efforts have achieved moderate success within restraints from scarce resources. But widespread poverty persists in rural areas where most people live, and it is necessary to focus more intensively on societal improvement.

This paper first reviews the current economic, social and geographical circumstances of NTT, going on to assess previous official and other approaches to rural economic and social development, and to analyse ways in which such approaches have changed. It finally looks to the future, indicating basic elements in effective poverty alleviation, and considering their implications in present-day NTT and Indonesia.

General Background

NTT in 2003 had a population of 4.1 million persons, and a gross domestic product (GDP) per head lower than that of other provinces of eastern Indonesia and less than half the Indonesian average (Table 1). The economy of NTT was heavily dependent on agriculture, in a situation which had changed little over the previous decade (Table 2), with the balance of activity being concentrated around services, trade, transport and construction. Most services were provided by government, which also accounted for much construction and was the main employer of labour after farming, being followed in this respect by trade. But the economy grew steadily at 3.5-4.0 per cent per year in 1993-2003, and this enabled considerable improvements to be made in local infrastructures and services, despite persisting poor levels.

GDP per capita in 2003 varied greatly between provincial jurisdictions, with the capital city Kupang along with several other municipalities having a figure over three times the averages for districts or *kabupaten* elsewhere (Table 3). It was especially low in certain *kabupaten* which had a correspondingly high share of the population 'in poverty', basically defined as entailing an average monthly income per person of less than Rp100.000. These *kabupaten* included Sumba Barat, Kupang, Timor Tengah Selatan and Utara, Lembata and Manggarai (Map 1). Their locations are mostly remote, and all are particularly dependent on subsistence activity.

The agricultural activity of NTT is centered around an area under annual crops in 2003 of almost 600,000 ha (Table 4), primarily devoted to subsistence production. These crops notably include maize, which is cultivated by most farmers and is the chief staple food occupying the largest single area. Next in importance come wetland rice, cassava and dryland *padi*, all of which are also staple foods, where rice has become more significant over recent years and cassava is a backstop during low or erratic rainfall. Other food crops include vegetables, which grow well in much of NTT. All food crops are also sold for cash once domestic needs have been met. Tree crops covering over 600,000 ha are also important, and especially include coconut, cashew nut, candlenut and coffee, with coconut being partly for subsistence including making cooking oil, and with the produce of most other trees being for sale. The average yields per hectare of all crops are low (Table 4), and there is great potential for production increases in every single case. Forestry in NTT again covers a huge area of over 1,800,000 ha, but is mainly a conservation tool and grows sparsely because of the dry climate.

Table 1 Population and Gross Domestic Product, NTT and Selected Parts of Indonesia, 2003

	Population (‘000,000 Persons) ^a	GDP (Rp‘000.000) (1993 prices)	Av. GDP/ Head (Rp‘000)	
			1993 Prices	Current Prices
NTT	4.1	3.480.9	868.6 (3.7) ^d	2.248.3
NTB	4.3	5.104.3	1.208.3 (5.3)	n.a
Maluku	1.2	1.36 1.6	1.167.7 (-0.9)	n.a
West Papua	2.4	9.179.8	3.776.8 (3.7)	n.a.
Bali	3.3	8.314.5	2.542.0 (2.4)	n.a.
Indonesia	217.6	444.454.0	2.065.800 (n.a)	8.304.3

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik Nusa Tenggara Timur (2004); Resosudarmo (2006).

Notes: a. In 2004.

b. At 1993 prices.

c. At current prices.

d. Figures in parentheses are annual compound growth rates, 1993-2003.

Table 2 Composition of Gross Domestic Product by Sector, Nusa Tenggara Timur, 1993 and 2003 (% of total)^a

	Agric- culture	Food Crops ^b	Non-food Crops ^b	Live- stock ^b	Forestry ^b	Fisheries ^b	Mining
1993	40.4	22.3	4.2	9.5	1.0	3.5	1.9
2003	34.8	18.8	3.8	8.6	0.4	3.2	1.1
	Manu- facture	Power & Water	Construct- ion	Trade	Trans- port	Banking & Business	Services
1993	2.4	1.6	8.0	12.4	9.1	4.4	19.8
2003	2.3	1.0	5.8	14.3	10.9	3.8	26.0

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik Nusa Tenggara Timur (2004); Resosudarmo (2006).

Notes: a. At 1993 prices.

b. Subsectors of Agriculture.

Table 3 Populations, Annual GDP per head, and Extent of Poverty by District, Nusa Tenggara Timur, 2003

District/ <i>Kabupaten</i>	Population ('000 persons)	Av. GDP/ Head ^a (Rp'000)	Share of Population in Poverty (%) ^b
Sumba Barat	383.2	1.487.2	44
Sumba Timur	195.3	2.411.1	12
Kupang	430.2	1.785.5	35
Timor Tengah Selatan	395.7	1.682.6	37
Timor Tengah Utara	201.2	1.807.5	30
Belu	334.4	1.883.4	21
Alor	165.6	2.078.8	28
Lembata	96.6	1.485.5	33
Flores Timur	213.6	2.370.9	16
Sikka	274.5	2.150.2	20
Ende	236.6	2.372.3	22
Ngada	237/2	2.237.9	15
Manggarai	653.3	1.571.7	33
Manggarai Barat	- ^c	1.942.9	30
Rote Ndao	- ^d	2.074.7	29
Kota Kupang	255.5	6.373.9	11
Total	4,073.2	2.248.3	29

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik Nusa Tenggara Timur (2004).

Notes: a. At current prices.

b. Persons with incomes below about Rp100.000 per head per month (2003 prices).

c. Included in Manggarai.

d. Included in Kupang.

Table 4 Crop and Livestock Statistics, Nusa Tenggara Timur, 2003

	Wetland Rice	Dryland Rice	Maize	Cassava	Green Peas	Peanuts	Sweet Potatoes
Harv. Area ('000 ha)	118.0	58.4	257.7	80.3	24.6	13.0	10.9
Yield/ha ^a (tonnes)	3.3	2.1	2.3	10.7	0.8	1.0	7.8
	Other Food Crops ^b	Total Food Crops	Coco-nut	Cashew Nut	Candle-nut	Coffee	Fruit Trees
Harv. Area ('000 ha)	9.0	571.9	163.7	153.2	85.0	68.0	44.2
Yield/ha ^a (tonnes)	-	-	0.55	0.39	0.53	0.49	-
	Areca Nut	Cocoa	Kapok	Cloves	Other Tree Crops ^c	Total Tree Crops	Forestry
Harv. Area ('000 ha)	38.2	37.2	31.8	11.4	3.3	636.0 ^d	1,809.0
Yield/ha (tonnes)	0.35	0.71	0.28	0.36	-	-	n.a.
	Cattle	Pigs	Goats	Buffalo	Horses	Sheep	Poultry & Ducks
Number ('000)	513	1.225	435	135	95	56	10.648
Number slaughtered ('000)	26	98	35	4	-	5	n.a.

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik Nusa Tenggara Timur (2004); Resosudarmo (2006).

Notes: a. Of the area in production.

b. Soybeans and Sorghum.

c. Vanilla, Nutmeg, Castor Oil and Pepper.

d. Excluding a large area of Tamarind, of which details are not available.

Livestock are additionally substantial, and cattle, pigs, goats and poultry are widespread in most locations. The cattle are exclusively farmed for cash, with an annual output from the province of 25-30,000 fattened animals, while other livestock are partly kept for domestic purposes. Virtually all agriculture in NTT is based on owner-occupied farms, each covering a few hectares with additional access to common pasture, under

circumstances of plentiful land where big farms and estates cover only a tiny portion of the total. The selling of most crops is based on local periodic markets often hard for farmers to access. Barter is still common where farmers may, for instance, extend corn for chickens or *vice versa*. But key cash crops including rice, copra, cashew, coffee, cocoa, tamarind and cattle each have specialized marketing facilities, and a competitive pricing situation usually obtains.

Adat is strong in NTT society, regulating most human affairs including land use, and varying considerably in its provisions between different ethnic groups and even within the same group. The structure and institutions of government run parallel to *adat* at village level, usually complementing rather than competing with it, and with the same leaders often being involved. The local political entities, and notably provincial and district legislatures, have become far more vocal and significant since the onset of democracy and *otonomi daerah*, increasingly influencing official decisions in situations where the heads of *kabupaten* governments, or *bupati*, now also represent particular political parties. In the religious dimension, the GMIT Calvinist Church in the east of West Timor, and the Roman Catholic Church in the west as well as in Flores and adjacent islands, are strong institutions underpinned by huge local congregations and commanding regular attention from most individuals. All people in NTT speak at least one of ten main local languages, although *Bahasa* Indonesia is widespread. But in certain remote places Indonesian is only spoken fluently by those under 40 years or so of age.

Infrastructure, Services and Geography

Infrastructures outside chief municipalities are usually poorly developed despite improvements, although the big main road from Kupang to Atambua on the border of Timor L'Este (Map 1) is one good feature amongst generally poor vehicular communications. Interior roads are often impassable during the wet season, and indeed most locations off the Kupang-Atambua road and a few other routes can only be accessed with a four-wheel drive, specialist vehicle or motor cycle even in the dry season. Port facilities except in Kupang are barely developed, and even Kupang cannot properly handle

containers. As elsewhere in Indonesia, telecommunications have improved greatly with the access of mobile phones, and new repeater stations are being erected in many places. A major problem flowing from the dry climate is the absence of water facilities, with most households having to rely during the dry season on walking to the nearest stream or river, which may be several kilometres away.

Services are also poor, with those in primary and secondary education remaining at a low level, although local community initiatives with help from government are giving rise to new kindergarten and high school facilities in many places. The health facilities contained in rural medical centres or *puskemas* are very inferior, and indeed neither education or health have improved that much over 1990s levels reported in Barlow and Hardjono (1996). Low educational standards together with sickness and early death are still widespread, and merit huge betterment. The present authors in working with large numbers of small cooperatives or *kelompok* find that especially in upland Timor only two or three of the 15 to 20 members of each group can read and write properly, although a few others can use capital letters. Further background on current situations of infrastructures, education, health, the general economy, social factors and other features in NTT are given by Badan Pusat Statistik Nusa Tenggara Timur (2004) and Gubernur Nusa Tenggara Timur (2005). Official finance for infrastructure and services development is constantly limited, where in 2006 over 90 per cent of provincial government revenue still comes from the centre.

The geography of NTT, with extensive mountain spines in West Timor, Flores and other islands, makes provision of infrastructures and services even harder than usual, and means most areas are classified as 'upland' with irrigation being rarely possible. The dry climate is a further key factor influencing livelihoods, with a pattern in most locations of four months' sporadic rainfall in December to March and a total annual precipitation of some 500 mm, albeit with large variations. The latter means that every few years there are disastrously low crop yields springing from too little (as in 2005) or too much (as in 2003) rainfall, with consequent local food shortages. But soils in cultivated areas are often good, and given periodic fallows with use of organic farming can produce well in the wet season, also supporting excellent dry season crops such as vegetables where water is available.

There are as well regions of particularly favourable microclimates, such as the cocoa growing areas in Sikka and Ngada, Flores, the garlic areas of the Timor coast, certain cattle fattening locations in Kupang and elsewhere, and the vegetable and citrus localities in Timor Tengah Selatan.

Approaches to Development

These have evolved substantially over recent decades, as government and other intervenors have gained more experience of how best to assist poor rural households in raising living standards. In the 1970s, the broad approach taken by government consisted in working through extension officers for agricultural and related improvement, through relevant departmental staff for running schools and health centres, through the Department of Public Works for constructing roads and other infrastructures, and through the Department of Health for providing water facilities. Village governments at the *desa* level attempted to supplement these efforts within scarce resources, mainly by organizing community labour in improving local infrastructures.

This overall system of the 1970s still persists, but has been complemented by 'special thrusts' and far more emphasis on community linkages. The changes occurring have also been accompanied by the entry to the scene of civil society institutions including especially non-government organizations or NGOs, and also of foreign agencies dedicated to sponsoring development. The present paper cannot deal with all development, and concentrates on agricultural and related services and infrastructures. It is here that most advances have been made, and that the most immediate economic impact has been effected. The changes in NTT have naturally been paralleled by alterations elsewhere in Indonesia, to which they are strongly linked, and by similar movements in other international situations.

A manifest difficulty with local agricultural extension officers in the 1970s was their inability to undertake designated roles. They were placed in rural areas without motor cycles or other transport, and since they had to walk everywhere could only contact a tiny

share of the huge numbers of farming households they were supposed to serve. Often, as well, they were poorly trained, poorly paid and had little back-up, making situations worse. They sometimes achieved effective contact with a few progressive farmers who accordingly benefited, but in general made negligible progress in populations with little information outside methods of traditional farming, and with scant ability to absorb new knowledge even if it was provided to them.

Reacting to these circumstances and in a continuing scarcity of funds, the emphasis in the 1980s and early 1990s switched in a first special thrust to a 'project' approach, where comparatively big resources were devoted to prosecuting limited but practicable goals. One example was the introduction to cooperating households in selected villages of hybrid maize seeds, with accompanying fertilizer, other supports and intensive extension. Such activity was undertaken over 2-3 years, involving several extension officers in one location. Funds were provided to pay for these inputs, including subsistence allowances for farmers involved. Such initiatives often commanded early local enthusiasm, but after the project ended were not sustainable owing to the need with introduced technologies for considerable ongoing cash. The households involved usually did not possess such cash, and the few possessing it accorded continuation of the initiative low priority. Those participating in maize projects normally reverted to traditional varieties, which while lower-yielding were more robust and did not entail seed replacement or fertilizer. They were therefore far more manageable in the traditional context.

Yet it is interesting to record that such projects again had a long-term influence on a few progressive and better endowed farmers, who were stimulated by the experience and tried in subsequent years to acquire more technological knowledge for their enterprises. Such people were only minor players in a vast scene, however, and even given demonstration effects had little impact beyond their own farms. They needed further outside help if they were to exercise greater influence, but it was to be a quarter century before the idea of using them as facilitators or volunteers was adopted in the manner described below. It is also pertinent that, in another effect, the experiences of the 1970s encouraged central government to emphasize relevant agricultural research under *Litbang*

Pertanian, an organization set up to sponsor relevant institutions. This led ultimately to the effective present network of small applied agricultural research stations, or *Balai Teknologi*, which have produced many new farming methods. These methods can potentially transform the crude traditional agriculture practiced by most farmers, but still face the gap between their availability in research institutions and their adoption by practicing cultivators.

Other Early Initiatives

While government-sponsored special thrusts in the NTT were minor, those in other provinces judged to have more potential were far larger. They were on occasion considerably more successful and sustainable, as with the thrusts entailing oil palm and rubber smallholdings in Sumatra and Kalimantan (Zen, Barlow and Gondowarsito 2004). Yet even in the NTT, the fashion of launching such thrusts attracted other substantial new intervenors in the form of foreign aid agencies, including AusAID, the Australian government's overseas development body, which in the early 1980s, and with joint financing from the Indonesian government, established the Australian Livestock Project at Besi Pa'e in the highlands of Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS). Then in the 1990s, the Australian and Indonesian governments co-financed the Nusa Tenggara Integrated Agricultural Development Project (NTTIADP) in both TTS and Timor Tengah Utara (TTU).

The Australian Livestock Project endeavoured to improve water supplies through establishing large water dams on the Australian model, and also partly on the basis of dams to set up a ranch for breeding cattle which would later be fattened by individual farmers to whom they were distributed. It complemented these activities by introducing new productive legume and grass forages sourced partly from northern Australia. The dams were intended to both assist cattle development and help villagers with water supplies, but technical problems and high maintenance costs mean that today most have silted up and no longer function. Such dams require maintenance using heavy machinery, which is beyond the capacity of village communities. The ranch was also found impracticable, owing largely

to problems of managing a workforce accustomed to independent operation, and closed in the late 1990s. But distributing cattle to individual farmers along with forage development were fruitful activities that still continue today.

The NTTIADP, which followed the Livestock Project and built on its experiences over five years, also engaged in constructing dams, but incorporated as well building roads and bridges and 'strengthening the capacity' of local administrations (Mercuri Buana University, 1992). The NTTIADP encountered numerous technical difficulties with its much larger numbers of dams, but while most of those in TTS have again not survived, some better constructed works in TTU have been maintained with help from the *kabupaten* government and are still used. The road and bridge constructions of the NTTIADP were further found helpful, but its capacity-strengthening activity appears to have been poorly adjusted to the needs of administrations to which it was directed. Both the Livestock Project and NTTIADP also incorporated as a socio-economic goal the empowerment of local community groups through active participation in sponsored activities, where the NTTIADP did this in conjunction with an NGO, Bina Swadaya. But both projects appear to have had serious difficulties in achieving this goal, finding it hard to establish effective water users' groups for the dams, to secure genuine 'local ownership' of what was going on, and to transfer knowledge about new technologies.

Several important lessons were learned by the outside intervenors from these and other similar projects in NTT and elsewhere, and importantly informed subsequent attempts to develop rural areas of the province. One was that in the circumstances of the province, with its dominant traditional agriculture and low exposure to outside ideas, activities attempting to make large technical improvements through initiatives like dams or even more intensive production of maize were unlikely to be successful in the first instance at least. It would in fact be much better to proceed more slowly through activities initially smaller in size and entailing more minor technical increments on existing situations.

A second lesson was that communities had to be ready for new improvements, and that far more initial consultation and training on involved techniques and processes was needed before they were introduced. A third lesson was that communities had to be encouraged to do most project management and work themselves, and that this was vital in

relation to long-term sustainability. A fourth lesson was that shortage of cash was a major constraint on any new enterprise, and that indigenous saving and loan behaviour had to be instilled if progress was to be made. A fifth lesson, which had probably been learned earlier although it remained highly relevant, was that private business initiatives from both within communities and from outsiders were an essential ingredient in community economic advancement, requiring fostering in all improvement. The lessons were also relevant to attempts at betterment in education, health and other spheres, and intervenors concerned with these had been going through a similar learning process.

The PIDRA Program

That some of these lessons at least had been taken into account by intervening Indonesian government agencies, foreign development bodies and NGOs in NTT is illustrated by the subsequent generation of special thrusts in the late 1990s and the 2000s. The government's revised approach is well demonstrated by the Post-Crisis Programme for Participatory Integrated Development in Rainfed Areas (PIDRA), which is jointly financed by it and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a United Nations development bank based in Rome, and which began in 2001. This programme is firmly based not only on Indonesian lessons, but also on two decades of experience in the Myrada project operated by an NGO in the uplands of central India. PIDRA is managed by staff of the Department of Agriculture, with its headquarters in Jakarta and a decentralized system leaving most initiatives to staff at *kabupaten* level.

PIDRA works in the villages of several *kabupaten* of NTT, including TTS and TTU, as well as in two other Indonesian provinces (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2005), seeking to raise the living standards of over 400,000 rural households. It operates with individual community groups, organized in traditional small cooperatives or *kelompok* of 15 to 20 persons of which there are ten per selected village, and with *desa*-wide bodies together with government and other agencies at *kabupaten* and higher levels. But the initial focus over the first four years of this programme was to inform, enthuse and train *kelompok* members in appropriate ways, where people were encouraged to collaborate in achieving relevant targets, to which they proceeded through a process of self-assessment

and external evaluation. Members were also instructed in related spheres including, for example, basic literacy, financial management, and crop and livestock husbandry.

Then after the initial one or two years, and given the achievement of sufficient standards, participating PIDRA *kelompok* were allocated a series of annual 'matching grants' to trigger the initiation of small savings and loan schemes, starting with grants per *kelompok* of Rp500.000 and proceeding in the third year to Rp5.000.000. These schemes have been able to offer low interest rates of 3-5% per month. In addition to this, *kelompok* judged well prepared were given 'agro-input' grants of 1-2 million rupiah to enable the starting of special enterprises such as pig fattening or vegetable production, albeit on a small initial scale and involving only minor departures from traditional methods. These activities were accompanied by village-level interventions, entailing such aspects as improvements to water supplies and access roads. All enterprises were managed and operated by villagers under their traditional leadership structure, sometimes with special technical help on complex matters. They further involved the participation of selected volunteers or *relawan*, who were usually progressive farmers prepared to devote time to advising *kelompok* members and helping with interventions.

These PIDRA initiatives, which were backed by intensive extension involving one PIDRA officer and one local NGO facilitator, each with a motor cycle, per two villages, and also by visiting PIDRA and other specialists, were remarkably successful. They were, in the words of one experienced outside observer from another Asian country, 'the best government-initiated program of rural development I have yet to see'. The present authors, who spent several months in 2005 involved with PIDRA in TTS and TTU as well as nationally, have observed the unusual enthusiasm of villagers and others with the programme. They have also examined the widespread establishment of savings and loan schemes, which in most cases still only offer small loans but which have sometimes begun lending single amounts of several million rupiah for significant cash-earning activities. In a few cases, outside credit agencies, and especially local NGOs facilitating private savings and loan schemes, have been encouraged by the possibilities opening up to enrol some *kelompok* members in their operations. The authors have likewise viewed the gainful

launching of new ventures using agro-input grants, and the completion of numerous valuable additions to village infrastructures. They have noted the key roles played not only by PIDRA and NGO staff, but also increasingly by *relawan*. These initiatives of PIDRA can be seen to have addressed all the above lessons from early experience.

Naturally, the PIDRA approach has not been entirely successful. The new activities of *kelompok* have exposed many underlying difficulties, including especially those springing from low literacy and poor related ability in managing and arranging relatively complex and unfamiliar initiatives. Some savings and loan schemes have been accompanied by continuing repayment problems, and have not expanded in the manner hoped for. Serious difficulties have emerged as well in effectively applying most new techniques, and almost all farmers have found it hard to progress to the higher technological levels necessary for the regularly good profits which encourage the entry of outside credit institutions. There have too been the normal political concomitants of outside interventions, including the emergence of active opposition by some local leaders, meaning PIDRA has had to move to different more favourable locations. But all these difficulties are being actively addressed by the PIDRA management, which in the second phase of the programme up to 2009 is hoping communities will move to higher social, economic and technological levels where they completely undertake their own activities, with the substitution of *relawan* for PIDRA and NGO staff.

Further Official Thrusts

These activities of PIDRA have been accompanied by further recent official interventions which again incorporate earlier lessons, and are based firmly within participating communities. One such intervention is that by the *Program Pengembangan Kecamatan* (PPK), which exists in most *kabupaten* of NTT and is ultimately co-financed by the World Bank in conjunction with the Indonesian government. The PPK, which commenced its work in the early 2000s, mainly concentrates on developing better infrastructures, and notably local roads and school and health service buildings, although it is involved as well in establishing savings and loans schemes.

But the PPK again does all this through the active involvement of especially formed *kelompok*, whose members organize and undertake much of the work. Indeed, the organization's staff also undertake an extensive process of 'socialization' at village level, including the holding of general community meetings or *musyawarah* where major projects are discussed and *kelompok* are initially formed. In general, this approach of the PPK has been most fruitful, with key impacts in new roads and schools in particular, although its staff which is smaller than that of PIDRA has found it hard to achieve such good results with savings and loans. But it is manifestly an effective way of proceeding with small infrastructures, enhancing local participation and cutting costs of operations.

A further official body which is quite successful and has good penetration in village areas of NTT is the cattle-fattening arm of the *Pusat Koperasi Unit Desa* (PUSKUD). This is linked with the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) in the USA, in an activity supported by the US Agency for International Development. It distributes cattle for fattening to small farmers screened on relevant criteria and given ongoing guidance by locally based PUSKUD staff. It collects beasts when they are finished, and sells them to the NCBA at relatively favourable market prices providing reasonable net returns to participants. Here too, however, there are technical difficulties, in that farmers' husbandry standards are poor. Thus despite the efforts of PUSKUD staff, the progress of tethered cattle from distribution at 1-2 years old to time of sale is unduly long. Hence although the *Balai Penelitian Teknologi* near Kupang has generated fattening regimes enabling cattle to progress to a fat weight of 300 kg in 6 months, most PUSKUD farmers take up to three years for this, using feeding and management techniques which the authors observe are deficient in most respects.

During the period of these developments the conventional official agencies, including the extension services of the Agriculture Department and services to other rural spheres, continued to operate in NTT and elsewhere. But they too learned some of the above lessons, and are now more effective than in earlier years. These days, too, the availability of greater funds further facilitates their efforts. Again, other foreign government

agencies, including especially those from Germany and Switzerland which work actively in rural NTT, appear to be focusing more on community participation. AusAID, which in 2005 re-entered rural development in NTT and Nusa Tenggara Barat outside education where it had remained active, seems likely with its new 'ANTARA' project to additionally follow this community-oriented path (Australian Agency for International Development 2005). ANTARA sets out to assist existing national and international developers in poverty alleviation, and will hopefully extend this beyond strengthening the capacity of government departments to directly uplifting the economic and social potentials of village communities.

Civil Society Groups

Non-government agencies in their present form started becoming significant in development in NTT and Indonesia, and indeed globally, from the 1970s, and from the start incorporated community-oriented approaches in their operations. They are well known for effectiveness in this sphere, and were as indicated employed by PIDRA as key partners in sponsoring village-level activities. The *modus operandi* of NGOs which, even if large organizations in total, usually operate in small decentralized groups of 15-20 staff, helps in establishing local contacts. It also means they generally sponsor a menu of small and simple initiatives operated by communities themselves. In fact, the authors' observations of NGOs in NTT suggests that each tends to specialize in spheres where it can develop specialist expertise and become particularly effective.

Thus some NGOs have devoted themselves to particular branches of livestock or crop operations, primary school education, child sponsorship or local health. Others, in confronting community difficulties with cash access, have concentrated on small-scale credit provision and the establishment of savings and loan groups. NGOs can be extremely effective in poverty alleviation through these routes, but generally suffer from problems of smallness. They cannot sustain economies of scale and scope, which accounts for their specializing and for their susceptibility to 'shocks', including such aspects as problems over funding or changes in leaders. Hence in NTT, many of the hundreds of small local NGOs with few resources find it advantageous to link up with big non-government organizations,

such as the internationally-based World Vision and Plan International and the locally-based Alpha Omega, and to undertake particular tasks within broader programmes. They connect similarly with government or foreign agencies. But sponsors of small NGOs must monitor them carefully, to ensure they continue making desired contributions.

It is helpful in gaining a better understanding of NGO operations to scrutinize a few selected organizations. Thus the Area Development Program (ADP) in NTT of Wahana Visi Indonesia (WVI), the Indonesian branch of World Vision, is a useful example of how a large international NGO has adapted to effective development (Wahani Visi Indonesia 2002). It operates from Kupang, with some 20 staff engaged in extension and living in their villages of operation. It concentrates on some coastal areas of West Timor and the island of Rote (Map 1), pursuing a broad development menu especially entailing improvements to education, small infrastructures and agriculture in selected villages. It too works through small *kelompok*, whose members it trains and otherwise sponsors for 5-6 years before moving to help new groups. It also tends to specialize in certain applications where it has built expertise, notably in water supplies for irrigation which are hard to launch sustainably, and in composting techniques which have boosted vegetable production for the Kupang market. It has too retained the services of other NGOs, notably in providing small-scale credit facilities.

It is interesting to note that the ADP in West Timor is one of over 30 groups under WVI in Indonesia as a whole, each being of similar size and having independence inside broad guidelines from Jakarta and the regional headquarters. It is also pertinent that neither World Vision with Protestant origins, nor another NGO, the Catholic Relief Service, with Roman Catholic sponsorship, appear to promote religious messages in NTT although their staffs are Protestant and Catholic. The same appears to be true of many Islamic-sponsored NGOs in Indonesia, including for example those of Nahdlatul Ulama. This perhaps is a result of a sixth lesson from earlier development, which is that tying development work to a specific religious message is likely to cause dissension within participating communities, as well as being unpopular on the wider political scene.

NGO X, *Koperasi Y*, and the NTA

'NGO X' is an example of a small locally based group, being formed by eight university-trained graduates from neighbouring villages in a certain *kabupaten* of NTT, where each person has specialist expertise and is well positioned to promote appropriate development. The group is quite representative, comprising individuals motivated to assist with advancing their own and nearby communities. Its problem, along with that of similar NGOs, is that it barely possesses any resources, and must seek sponsorship from government, other bigger NGOs, or foreign development agencies. Although some staff of this and other such groups support themselves from regular professional work, most are dependent, outside revenue from farming, on stipends from sponsorship, and live precariously from one sponsored project to another.

Hence NGO X is currently supported by a big international NGO to operate the assessment process in 12 villages for overseas child-sponsorship, and this fully occupies one of its educational specialists. More significantly for its revenue flow, it is contracted by another foreign NGO as its 'counterpart' in operating small village-level projects whose arrangements again reflect the five lessons. This heavily engages its livestock, crop, engineering and marketing staff, together with another educational specialist, in a productive partnership already continuing several years. The activity of NGO X, along with the work of numerous other small groups in similar relationships, denotes how these bodies have become a crucial element in local NTT development, embodying a store of expertise increasingly recognized and harnessed by government and other agencies. But like all development endeavours, the activity is not always as effective as it might be, owing to incompetence and other difficulties.

Again, '*Koperasi Y*' is another minor albeit highly significant local NGO also devoted to development, but in a different class to the more typical NGO X since it concentrates exclusively on microfinance. It is based in a small provincial town of NTT, where it commenced operations a decade ago. It first dealt with building up savings and loan activities amongst urban professionals, including government servants and teachers,

initially encouraging the savings component and then launching into loans of Rp100-500.000. Later the loans grew larger to a range from Rp2 million to Rp5 million, with clients increasingly embracing others in the urban area having regular incomes, such as small traders, *ojek* or hired motor cycle drivers and coffee stall holders. This credit is at a low interest of 3% per month for a one month period, with a component of the charge being used to pay a manager and assistant who organizes *Koperasi Y*'s affairs.

In 2006 *Koperasi Y* in its enhanced experience has the confidence to make the important move into rural areas, and to begin catering, in certain places where it has reliable connections, for fatteners of cattle and farmers of vegetables. It is also adjusting to the longer loan periods required for such activities. *Koperasi Y* and similar private groups are run by a voluntary committee of professional people including government officials, businesspersons and school teachers, who meet regularly to check ongoing affairs. It is, in common with thirty other odd such *koperasi* in NTT, affiliated with province and Indonesia-wide bodies, which ensure they follow government regulations and provide ongoing training. Most such microfinance groups have proved effective in stimulating members to start savings and loans schemes, in situations where credit came previously from moneylenders loaning at almost prohibitive rates of 20% or more per month. These groups, along with PIDRA in its savings and loans activities, contribute vitally to building the market for credit, preparing clients for the next more sophisticated stage of the cycle when formal banking can begin to take over. The credit movement in rural areas of NTT is still at an extremely rudimentary level, however, although it is hoped it will now gather momentum.

Organizations like NGO X and *Koperasi Y*' are what the Indonesian government terms 'development NGOs' or *LSM Pembangunan*, distinguishing them from 'political NGOs' engaging in lobbying and advocacy which often participate in the formal political process and are a breeding ground for new generations of politicians. Such NGOs were highly unpopular with authorities during the New Order, and still are in places like Aceh, West Papua and Maluku. As might be anticipated, the big international NGOs including

WVI are exclusively in the development category, and indeed only allowed to operate in Indonesia on the understanding that they should remain so.

Finally in these examples of how NGOs are attempting to assist in poverty alleviation and rural development, it is pertinent to quote the Nusatenggara Association (NTA), a small Australian NGO with which the authors are closely associated. This has been operating in *kabupaten* Kupang and TTS in West Timor (Map 1) since 1992, and in 2001 extended its operations to *kabupaten* Sikka in Flores. It works in primary school infrastructures and services including teacher training, village water supplies and other social installations and agricultural improvement, operating through 40 *komite sekolah* and 170 small *kelompok*. These groups manage and implement particular activities, using small amounts of credit along with technical advice (Nusatenggara Association 2005). The NTA partly operates through two counterpart local NGOs similar in nature to 'X', having in its own structure a regional director, a financial controller, a field coordinator, eight extension officers and an accounts clerk. The Australian end of the NGO is entirely voluntary, engaging mainly in fund-raising and twice a year 3-week visits by 2-3 members to monitor all sponsored activities.

The NTA and its associated groups again try to heed the five lessons, emphasizing small activities and small technical advances, preliminary consultation and training, self-sufficiency and management, cash provision linked to 'rotating credit', and connections with local business. The consultation in this case entails a *musyawarah* system, comprising initial village-level discussions followed by big central meeting in each region where representatives of schools and *kelompok* submit prioritized proposals for support by the NTA. Thus in early May, 2005, the authors will be attending a 1-day *musyawarah* in Maumere, Flores, where 200 villagers will gather, and staff of the local counterpart NGO together with people from other agencies will be available to provide advice. The holding of *musyawarah* has proved highly advantageous, and in the relatively open society of NTT provides participants with useful training in advocacy and democratic discussion.

It is also pertinent that the cash provision of NTA concentrates at present on rotating credit. This is a system involving lump sums being awarded to *kelompok* members for purchasing, say, a cow or irrigation pump. The disposition of the money is regularly checked by an NTA-paid extension officer, with the original sum being returned without interest after two years and passed to someone else. Rotating credit is a simpler and more straightforward system than savings and loans, and is easier to adopt for villagers entering into their first experience of the credit market. But is hoped that once communities perform well with such credit they can move, in a further stage of progression, to the more sophisticated *simpan pinjam* level.

It is significant as well to report the NTA's chequered experiences with technical innovations, which parallel those of PUSKUD, PIDRA and other agencies. All new innovations have in fact proved hard to introduce, with villagers frequently taking years to master apparently simple technologies. Thus PUSKUD's difficulties with cattle also apply to the NTA, which faces similar problems with improved pigs, composting, and record-keeping. The manifest need is for more intensive preliminary and ongoing training that better matches peoples' abilities and perceptions, but the way to organize this appropriately remains problematic. While PIDRA has performed better than other groups in training, even it has not solved the innovation-mastering problem, and more effective formats remain to be developed.

It is finally important to record that, alongside all these community-directed efforts of government and other agencies, the Public Works Department and other bodies concerned with basic infrastructures have continued to improve facilities in works carried out under central direction by paid staffs and contractors specializing in given spheres. This progress has crucially complemented these other efforts, being a major contributor to improved communications and other public facilities, and an important factor facilitating most developments that have occurred.

Conclusions

The exceedingly poor province of Nusa Tenggara Timur has experienced slow economic improvement, and manifestly possesses substantial potentials for advances in alleviating poverty. These advances must necessarily focus on the dominant activity of agriculture, on which most people depend. Much can be learned about how to stimulate such progress by studying the recent activities in the province of government and foreign agencies and civil society groups.

The analysis of the paper indicates that if programmes of improvement are to be effective, they need as basic requirements to concentrate initially on small manageable changes not entailing dramatic advances in technology or other organization, and fitting well with traditional systems and methods. The changes must also be those which peoples themselves decide to adopt, and for which they take responsibility in terms of management and execution. Initial training must be provided in relevant spheres of improvement, and notably in more effective technology and organization, while credit drawn from local savings and loan schemes is necessary to finance improvements and enable sustainable development in a stage preceding the entry of formal banking. It is important for private business to be increasingly involved, with players from both within and outside the concerned communities. All changes also need to be complemented by betterments in public infrastructures.

A scrutiny of programmes followed by intervening agencies and groups in NTT over recent decades indicates that they have progressively oriented themselves more effectively to poverty alleviation and economic and social development. But huge progress remains to be made, and it is evident that introducing the new technologies and organization underpinning advance is a hard task about which much remains to be learned. The present mix of government departments, special official agencies, foreign development bodies, non-government organizations and private business groups would nevertheless seem to have good capacity for implementing effective rural change, in conjunction with communities themselves. There is in fact every reason to believe that the current process of

adaptation and slow advance will continue, eventually enabling the economic growth rate to be lifted while the benefits of growth are spread more widely through the community.

It is interesting to compare the situation described with that in similar poor circumstances elsewhere, and to see that given political stability, the provision of official development resources, and the promotion of advancement through agencies like those in NTT, there has often been long-run sustained advance leading to an elimination of poverty. In certain instances, indeed, there has been an acceleration of development based on accumulated knowledge and experience, and the consequent capacity of actors to later advance more quickly. But the record is patchy, dependent on appropriate cultural adjustments, and often reliant on special factors such as the presence of outstanding individuals able to orchestrate change in effective directions (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2002).

It is also instructive to check what has happened in NTT against the directions of international thinking about processes of economic and social development, as treated, for example, by Abdul Rahman Embong (2005). Thus the latter traces as one pillar of such thinking the emergence in popularity of a more 'human' approach to securing change, and the developments recounted in this paper have certainly switched to a framework emphasizing communities and consultation. Here human beings, personified in this case by the villagers, are now prime actors with considerable power, and have their real needs taken into account.

Rahman also notes as a further pillar of development thinking the popularity in some quarters of the 'Washington Consensus', with its exclusive promotion of the free market and assessment of the developmentalist state as irrelevant and obsolete. Yet there does not appear to have been any obeisance, in NTT or elsewhere in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, to such neo-liberalism, where past history shows that leaving rural development to private enterprise led to an unbalanced growth in which a few people benefited but most were condemned to very slow progress. The state has hence continued to have a prime role in Indonesia, although its previously centralized authority under the

New Order has disappeared with the onset of democracy and *otonomi daerah*, which themselves enhance pressures for more intensified popular participation. On the other hand, private business concerns are still recognized as key actors in development which strongly complement the efforts of state and civil society groups, and need to be much encouraged.

The experiences of NTT serve to indicate just how difficult it is to secure productive rural economic and social development in a poor upland area constrained by remoteness and an inclement climate. But they also demonstrate pronounced successes in the slow emergence of this province from subsistence to a situation where cash incomes are beginning to materially support higher living standards. Here economic links are being established to a wider Indonesian society likely to become a progressively more remunerative market for its products. The lessons of this emergence are not only important for the development practitioners of NTT, but have wide implications for charting the progress of other similar regions.

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