

# RESEARCH-BASED DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

## Learning from an Indonesian Pilot Programme with *Demos*, in co-operation with UGM and UiO

### Executive Summary

The pilot-programme with *Demos* in co-operation with UGM and UiO is to develop and implement a framework for research-based promotion of human rights and democracy. This special report is a critical analysis and self-evaluation of the work from early-2003 till late 2007. The report has been disciplined by the application of relevant academic standards and the usual methods of evaluation within Sida and NORAD.

The *Demos* programme is not donor driven. Rather, it was proposed by leading actors in the Indonesian democracy movement and associated scholars with the University of Oslo, and later also the University of Gadjah Mada, who also take full responsibility for *Demos*' programme of activities.

The programme grew out of frustration among pro-democrats and their constituencies with the fact that the largest of the world's new democracies – which they had implanted – was not doing well and that they themselves had been marginalised. Worse, there was no generally accepted source of information and comprehensive analysis which could serve as a basis for fruitful discussion and agreement on how to move ahead.

In order to address this, human rights and democracy leaders formed a pro-democratic but otherwise impartial research organisation with the name of *Demos*. *Demos* would call on widely respected academic guidance in order to identify and understand this 'missing knowledge' concerning the problems and options of democracy. The work was to be carried out from a bottom-up perspective and throughout the country at large since it was vital to assess the situation on the ground and because the dismantling of the dictatorship meant that the political dynamics and space for improvements had been localised far beyond Jakarta. Once the results were available, *Demos* would also facilitate discussion around the country within a public space in order to make improvements to the conclusions and recommendations. Additionally, this process would make an invaluable contribution towards improving the standard of public academic education and research and possibly generate a popular education movement among the local informants and associates. Most importantly: it would facilitate implementation of the recommendations to thus promote more meaningful human rights based democracy. The donors, finally, would not run the show but rather benefit from the conclusions and contacts made, enabling them to improve their efforts to the same end.

The aim of this report has been to study the pros and cons of the *Demos* model, with a special focus on the approach and methodology, but also the related efforts to thus broaden studies and research and improve human rights based democracy. When the pilot programme was first suggested, it was deemed an innovative but high risk project that had to be tried out not least in order to identify whether its vision was at all feasible. Five years later it is appropriate to seek to identify what have proved to be the pros and cons of the *Demos* model. Have all the fine ideas been implemented? Should the work be phased out or improved and sustained? Can the model also be useful in other contexts?

The simple answer is that the model has proved remarkably successful. As illustrated by the figure on the front page, only two and a half of the ten steps in the model have proved problematic – the dissemination of the results among experts, the writing up of the comprehensive reports, and the broadening of the activities towards a popular education movement. In addition, donors have yet to make use of and benefit from the results and contacts that have been generated through the programme. But even the most problematic steps have been implemented – and viable measures have been identified and are being implemented in order to improve them. Moreover, for the most part all the other steps may be described as success stories – from the development of an analytical framework that does not only consider the state of democracy but also its dynamics; via the implementation of the framework, the collection of relevant and unique data and the production of general analyses and recommendations; to the institutionalisation of public spaces within which to implement the recommendations, the improvement of post-graduate education and research and most importantly: advocacy and networking in favour of implementing the recommendation.

Remarkably, *Demos* has been less successful at the ‘easy parts’ of the job that research driven development projects are used to mastering: the writing up of good concluding reports and subsequent dissemination to experts and scholars. Rather, *Demos* has been very good at developing and applying analytical tools, assembling the facts, critical analysis, dissemination to a wide audience around the country, engaging people in non-party politicised discussion and improvements – as well as assisting democracy actors to apply the recommendations and generate some impact.

So what are the indicators of the relevance and impact of the programme? In the first instance, the analytical framework has generated widely acknowledged results. By now, the main problems facing democracy in Indonesia and the options open to it are clear (and those who do not accept this merely repeat previously held convictions without producing better data). Almost two thousand senior (and busy) local experts around the country have found the exercise relevant enough to spend at least a day and a half without compensation in order to answer *Demos*’ complicated and sensitive questions, and then in many cases engage in follow up activities. Several actors in the very fragmented democracy movement have come together to discuss the conclusions and even begin to implement the recommendations. The disaggregation of the many dimensions of democracy has promoted a more nuanced debate on the pros and cons and what should be prioritised, far beyond previously sweeping statements that democracy is either doing well or is useless. Similarly, *Demos*’ results point very clearly to the most crucial problem of elitist dominance within politics at the expense of popular representation and participation of civic and interest based organisations. This has helped to constrain the tendency to deem politics and political

representation as being so hopeless and ‘rotten’ that all efforts should be vested in civil society, the market, communal organisations, ‘direct’ participation and anti-corruption measures from the top-down – measures that, for example, have paved the way for the authoritarian ‘déjà vu’ in Thailand. Rather, the results have generated new interest among democrats to break the monopolisation of politics and try to engage in organised nominal democracy.

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There are three main lessons for those who may like to draw on the model for use in other contexts. The first is simple: since Indonesia is similar to most developing countries in matters relating to the model – just study and apply it! with the caveat, of course, that there are sufficient freedoms and trust between the team and the informants.

The second lesson is more painful: one should not overestimate the capacity of activist-researchers to structure the research, analyse data and write up reports, especially from a theoretical and comparative perspective. Admittedly, the author of this report was one of those who made this mistake. It has proved insufficient to engage an academic co-director to focus on the general issues only. In reality he had to work intensively with a variety of different issues – and which nevertheless proved to be insufficient. And given the limited resources and requested qualities, it has been impossible to find supplementary Indonesian supervisors in Jakarta. Yet this is not to argue that it is necessary to hand research over to senior academics so that they can produce fine books that stand on the shoulders of hundreds of assistants and thousands of informants. That would have been the easiest way out. But if senior academics are in a position to direct research and related activities, they will be able to facilitate the access to and collection of unique and sensitive knowledge from informants around the country, develop feasible recommendations, and disseminate and implement them. Moreover, even if scholars only took over the writing up of the reports (which was very tempting), the educational efforts to enable the local team to handle most of the process and share the control of the results would have been lost. Rather, there must be a balanced and fair combination of scholarly supervision and activist-research work, in co-operation with the pro-democrats and their organisations. Hence the lesson is that a committed team of ‘local’ supervisors must be engaged and embedded in the team from the very start, in addition to a co-director.

Third and most painful to the expectations of the local initiators: as in most part of the South, the world of NGOs in Jakarta and most other big cities is not geared towards popular participation and voluntary work but rather alternative professionalism. There was not enough spontaneous commitment among leading academicians, journalists and others. Rather, there must also be structures and resources from the outset to facilitate the inclusion and contributions by various resource persons such as journalists, editors, translators, students and lecturers on a voluntary and semi-voluntary basis. Moreover, enthusiastic informants and assistants in the provinces need similar help to apply and spread *Demos*’ framework, methodology, and results in local contexts towards a popular democracy education movement. If this is not done as soon as the political situation allows, the team will suffer from the relative isolation and shortage of human capacity that is so common among small institutes and advocacy groups in the metropolis. Finally, the donors must also be included from the beginning to share their contacts, experiences and benefit from the

results as well as the unique new knowledge on where and how to best support human rights and democracy.

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As indicated on the front page, the over-all recommendations are:

- to sustain *and* spread the thriving model;
- to improve the dissemination of results to experts and academia;
- to improve comprehensive research in collaboration with academic partners;
- to facilitate better inclusion of resource persons and include and organise the many democrats that want to apply the rudiments of *Demos'* model to the local model – which in turn will serve as a back up for the implementation of the recommendations towards more meaningful and human rights based democracy;
- to follow up the conclusions by attracting donor interest in the processes and the actors that have been identified as particularly crucial in the promotion of human rights and democracy.

Priority should be given to the following six steps:

1. *Demos'* research team needs further education (especially regarding relevant theories, analytical tools, and the writing up of reports), continuous supervision, regular contacts with students and scholars and a better milieu within which to carry out focused work.
  - (a) Hence, the core parts of the research team needs to be shifted as soon as possible to Yogyakarta and work in close co-operation with the post-graduate studies and research programme at UGM, supported by UiO on the basis of funds from NOMA and NUFU. A contract similar to that between *Demos* and the academic co-director at UiO should be entered into with a team of supervisors. Co-operation has already been initiated through an agreement to carry out joint analysis of the data from the resurvey.
  - (b) The research team should focus on national resurveys, analysis of the data and thematic follow up studies to facilitate recommendations. Additional tasks include 'internal' education for activist-researchers in local chapters of *Demos* and work with the publishing unit 'PCD Press' (already set up jointly with the academic partners).
  - (c) Donors must continue to finance the costs of the research and engage in securing and expanding Norwegian support through the NOMA and NUFU foundations, which is fundamental to the synergy between *Demos* research and the post-graduate education and research in co-operation between UGM and UiO.
  - (d) If *Demos'* board and team do not wish to shift the research department so that its work is carried out in as close as possible *regular and daily* co-operation with the democracy-consortium at UGM and within the framework of the NOMA and NUFU sponsored post-graduate and research programme on 'Power, Conflict and Democracy' as outlined above, but rather wish to retain the research department in Jakarta and only add further education of individual members and supplementary supervision, the recommendations need to be altered. If so the recommendation is rather that the major responsibility for the research (including the responsibility for the funds) should be transferred to the steering committee of the 'Power Conflict

and Democracy' programme, that *Demos* should be represented in the steering group, and that parts of the research may be commissioned to *Demos*, under the direction and supervision of the steering group.

2. *Demos* suffers from insufficient contribution by supporters who can help by supervising, reporting, editing, translating, disseminating and much more. Further, the many hundreds of informants and activists, having taken part in the survey and in following up the results around the country, must be enabled to broaden *Demos*' work by forming local chapters engaging in local democracy-watch surveys, monitoring and popular education. This would also support those democrats who wish to implement *Demos*' recommendations by trying to enter into organised politics.
  - (a) Hence, *Demos* needs urgently to establish a third department under a new deputy director in order to initiate and support these efforts in conjunction with the nationwide launch and dissemination of the resurvey results. This is not a cost but an investment!
  - (b) In addition, *Demos*' web-site may be a vital means of organising, providing information, analysis, data, relevant articles and other resources as well as for internal discussion.
3. *Demos*' efforts to make recommendations and promote implementation by bringing together researchers and a facilitated network of practitioners have been innovative and successful. Policy-oriented workshops and study groups are also promising. These efforts need to be even more focused and organised.
  - (a) Hence, the current deputy director for follow-up work should concentrate on making a concerted effort to (a) advocate *Demos*' recommendations (with the popularisation in *TEMPO* as a good example), and (b) negotiate and facilitate the implementation of the recommendations by pro-democracy actors. The core recommendation would be the building of democratic political blocks of civic and popular organisations, with a separate network of related politicians to confront the monopolisation of organised politics and facilitate better popular representation.
  - (b) However, policy proposals are also needed. This calls for a number of consultative study groups of scholars and practitioners who are able to draw on *Demos*' and other relevant research. One group is already focussing on social pacts in favour of welfare policies and environmental sustainability in return for growth oriented development. Additional study groups may focus on the defence and advance of human rights and popular representation, participatory local governance, and women and politics.
4. *Demos*' well thought out special project to strengthen the capacity of a third pro-democratic force in Aceh has great potential and needs to be reinvigorated by improving the research fundamentals, related supervision and the inclusion of local partners.
  - (a) Hence, the summary report from the special survey on problems and options of democracy in Aceh needs to be completed urgently by supplementary information from key-informants and related research to thus (together with *Demos*' concept of

- democracy) improve the basis for the project's main focus on democratic capacity building through a series of courses and follow-up activities.
- (b) The new 'Consultative Study Group on Post-conflict Democracy and Development' should also be asked to contribute, while given full support in its efforts to find out if and how democracy can contain corruption and clientelism in the process of reintegration and transfer of responsibilities for reconstruction to organised politics.
5. *Demos'* executive director and academic co-director have had to engage too much and too frequently in many tasks and problems pertaining to 'regular' and day to day activities. The implementation of recommendations and ensuring improvements means that they now should be able to focus on co-ordination of the activities, supervision and quality control, fundraising and as well as facilitation of the implementation of the most recent set of recommendations. Further, the workload of the academic co-director needs to be reduced and the division of labour with the supervising team at UGM need to be specified.
- (a) Thus board of *Demos* needs to meet and decide how to go about implementing the recommendations made in this report and entrust the directors and a task force within the board to supervise implementation as well as to identify the directors and the board's main tasks and priorities.
6. The donors must continue to respect the integrity of the research-based work and the priorities of the democracy movement, but also become more engaged by sharing experiences, providing contacts, introducing potentially interested new donors and most importantly by taking advantage of *Demos'* results and identification of processes and actors of in the donors' promotion of human rights and democracy.
- (a) thus, a bi-monthly donor-scholar-activist collegium on human rights-based democracy promotion should be established in Jakarta and Oslo-Stockholm respectively with the lead agency as the first convener. Other research related programmes, potentially interested donors and (in Scandinavia) students supported by the programme may also be invited.
- (b) The Norwegian donors should (i) consider using the co-operation agreement between UGM and UiO to promote training for Norwegians in Indonesian; (ii) help sustain the critical new post-graduate studies and research programme by ensuring that the costs at UiO/StV are covered.
- (c) If the donors' mid-term review is positive, the donors should set up a task force with *Demos* as soon as possible, in consultation with the academic director, in order to discuss the plans and funding for the coming three years;
- (d) If the donors' mid-term review is positive, NORAD, Sida and the academic co-director need to plan how to best disseminate the positive experiences from the *Demos*-model in Indonesia to colleagues at home and in other contexts.

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