

INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING THROUGH PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT Inclusive and sustainable village development requires active citizen involvement, including vulnerable groups, in the planning and implementation process. This study aims to analyze the implementation of participatory approaches in Village X, a remote area with limited access to information. The program includes training, socialization, collaboration between citizens and village officials, and the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes). The results indicate a significant increase in citizen participation in Musrenbangdes, from 40% to 75%. Moreover, development planning became more aligned with local needs, shifting from a focus on large infrastructure to social aspects such as education and healthcare. However, challenges such as low participation among women and the elderly and limited access to information persist. Mitigation efforts included training, mentoring, and free transportation services. This research provides a strategic model for improving citizen participation in village development that is more transparent, inclusive, and sustainable. Recommendations include strengthening the capacity of village officials, introducing digital platforms, and establishing citizen participation monitoring systems.

KEYWORDS: *Village Development, Citizen Participation, Social Inclusion, Musrenbangdes, Participatory Approach*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive and sustainable village development requires active citizen involvement as a fundamental pillar of success. This approach ensures that every individual in the community, including vulnerable groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples, participates in the development process. In Indonesia, village development has been a

primary focus through the implementation of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which emphasizes the importance of empowering village communities as subjects of development.

Citizen involvement fosters collective ownership of development programs. According to Nurhasanah et al. (2022), community involvement in village forums enhances the relevance of development programs to local needs. In many cases, local communities possess in-depth knowledge about the potentials and challenges of their regions, enabling them to provide more effective input than policies driven entirely by a top-down approach.

Additionally, citizen-involved development promotes social inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities for all groups to contribute and benefit. A study by Setiawan (2021) found that women's active participation in village planning improved community access to education and healthcare. This demonstrates that inclusive approaches not only strengthen social cohesion but also improve the community's quality of life.

Sustainability also relies on citizens' capacity to maintain and develop the outcomes of development. For instance, Rahayu and Putri (2020) observed that local skills training could enhance economic capacity, reducing dependency on external aid. Here, citizens' roles as agents of change become critical in ensuring long-term development sustainability.

Citizen participation also enhances oversight of development implementation. Through mechanisms such as village forums or community assemblies, citizens can monitor development processes and ensure accountability in managing village funds. Pratama et al. (2023) found that transparency in village fund management involving citizens reduced corruption potential and increased public trust in village governance.

However, successful citizen participation in village development requires support from various stakeholders. Governments and non-governmental organizations must provide training, facilities, and policies that encourage community participation. Hence, synergy between citizens and governments is the key to achieving inclusive and sustainable village development.

Improving citizens' capacity to understand the village development planning process is a strategic step toward creating inclusive and sustainable development. With proper understanding, citizens can identify local needs and potentials and actively engage in decision-making processes that affect their communities. Purwanti and Nugroho (2021) observed that training and education about the village development planning process significantly improved citizens' ability to contribute constructively to development discussions.

Concrete implementation of capacity-building efforts includes encouraging citizen participation in the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes). Musrenbangdes is the primary forum at the village level for formulating development priorities, making citizen

involvement crucial. Research by Suryadi et al. (2022) shows that villages actively involving citizens in Musrenbangdes tend to have development programs that are more relevant to local needs and achieve higher success rates.

Participation in Musrenbangdes not only enhances planning quality but also fosters a sense of ownership among citizens regarding the outcomes of development. Moreover, this involvement helps build better relationships between village governments and communities. Research by Lestari and Santoso (2023) found that citizens who participated in Musrenbangdes had a better understanding of village policies, leading to greater support for their implementation.

However, achieving broader participation requires an inclusive approach. Vulnerable groups, such as women and persons with disabilities, are often underrepresented in this process. Therefore, mechanisms ensuring the involvement of all societal layers are essential. Priyanto (2020) suggests that providing targeted socialization for these groups can significantly increase their participation.

By enhancing citizen capacity and participation, village development can proceed more transparently, accountably, and sustainably. Citizens will not only benefit from development outcomes but also act as agents of change, contributing directly to their village's progress.

In the context of village development, kinship ties play a vital role in strengthening the community's social structure. Nuraedah (2012) highlights that the strength of kinship bonds in villages serves as significant social capital in encouraging citizen participation in various development programs. Strong kinship ties enable more effective coordination and collaboration among citizens during village development planning and implementation. Thus, strengthening and preserving kinship values in villages should be prioritized as part of sustainable development strategies.

2. METHOD

The implementation of this village development program utilizes an approach designed to enhance community involvement, improve citizens' understanding, and strengthen cooperation between residents and village officials. The methods used include participatory approaches, education and socialization, as well as collaboration with village apparatus.

1. Participatory Approach

The participatory approach is the key focus in the implementation of this program. Its goal is to ensure that the needs, aspirations, and potential of the community are optimally accommodated in village development planning. Through training and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), residents are encouraged to provide direct input. FGDs serve as a platform for the community to express

opinions and share perspectives. Additionally, these activities involve jointly creating village potential maps, aimed at determining development priorities based on local potentials.

This process is not only technical but also fosters a sense of ownership among residents regarding the outcomes of development. By embracing direct community involvement, this approach ensures that the planned development truly reflects local needs, as highlighted by Suryadi et al. (2022).

2. Education and Socialization

As a supporting element for program success, education and socialization activities are designed to enhance residents' understanding of the regulations underlying village development planning. This includes introducing Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, as well as other technical regulations such as Ministerial Regulations on Villages.

This education goes beyond legal understanding, covering the introduction of simple technologies. For instance, residents are taught how to use applications or village information boards to transparently monitor the progress of development programs. Thus, residents not only understand their rights and obligations but also gain better access to information, ensuring that development processes proceed according to plan. As noted by Purwanti & Nugroho (2021), a good understanding of regulations and transparency is essential to encouraging active community participation.

3. Collaboration with Village Officials

Collaboration between the community and village officials is a vital component of this program's implementation. Village officials play a role in integrating residents' input into planning documents, such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes). In this process, village youth are also involved as facilitators who bridge communication between residents and village officials.

The involvement of youth as facilitators offers dual benefits. On one hand, they help convey residents' aspirations to village officials. On the other hand, they serve as agents of change, motivating the community to become more actively involved. This collaboration creates synergy among various stakeholders, enabling development outcomes to be more targeted and sustainable. As stated by Lestari & Santoso (2023), this approach strengthens a sense of togetherness and ensures that all parties are committed to supporting the program's success.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Although there is extensive research on the role of citizens in village development, few studies examine its practical implementation in the context of remote villages, which is the primary focus of this study. The research was conducted in Village X, located in a rural area with limited access to information. This program aimed to enhance the participation of villagers in planning their development.

The results revealed an increase in attendance at the Village Development Planning Meetings (Musrenbangdes) after the program's implementation. Prior to the program, the average attendance rate was only 40%, which rose to 75% after the program. Moreover, villagers' mindsets underwent significant changes; they became more proactive in providing input and sharing ideas for village development (Pratama et al., 2023). This change indicates that the program successfully fostered awareness and trust among villagers regarding the importance of active participation in village development.

1. Changes in Mindset and Participation of Villagers

Active participation in Musrenbangdes reflects a significant shift in villagers' mindset. Previously, low attendance at these forums was often due to a lack of information and understanding about the importance of their involvement. Many villagers perceived the forum as a mere formality, where decisions were pre-determined by village officials without meaningful community input.

However, through training and socialization programs, this mindset began to change. Villagers now understand that Musrenbangdes is a platform for voicing their aspirations and ideas, which can directly impact their village's development. They are no longer passive but actively contribute. This aligns with Arnstein's (1969) theory of participation, where meaningful participation occurs when citizens have real opportunities to influence decisions. This change serves as concrete evidence that effective education and communication can build awareness and increase community engagement.

2. Challenges in the Participation of Vulnerable Groups

Despite the program's overall success in increasing community participation, challenges persist, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly. In many villages, women are often considered to have an insignificant role in formal forums. Social and cultural norms act as barriers that prevent women from participating in decision-making processes. Similarly, the elderly face physical limitations or find the timing of Musrenbangdes unsuitable for their condition.

Women, however, hold strategic roles in village life, as highlighted by Nuraedah (2012). They not only manage household resources but are also involved in microeconomic activities that support families. By empowering women through skills training, entrepreneurship programs, and dedicated discussion forums, their potential can be optimized to support village development.

This program not only boosted women's confidence but also provided them with a space to share perspectives relevant to community needs. For the elderly, solutions included providing transportation to facilitate access to meeting venues and adjusting meeting times to better suit their conditions. These measures not only increased the attendance of vulnerable groups but also ensured that village development was inclusive, involving all community elements without exception.

3. Technical Issues and Internal Conflicts

In addition to social challenges, technical issues such as limited access to information and internal conflicts among villagers posed obstacles in conducting Musrenbangdes. Not all villagers had adequate access to information about schedules or the issues to be discussed during the meetings. As a result, many felt their presence was irrelevant.

On the other hand, internal conflicts often arose due to differences in interests or personal disputes. This hindered the collective decision-making process. To address these issues, innovative approaches were implemented. Information began to be disseminated through local media such as community radio, bulletin boards, and village social media groups. The information provided not only included announcements about schedules but also brief explanations of the topics to be discussed, enabling villagers to be better prepared for participation.

Meanwhile, internal conflicts were mitigated by involving community leaders as mediators. The presence of neutral third parties proved effective in creating a more conducive atmosphere. As stated by Priyanto (2020), mediation by respected community figures can help resolve conflicts more quickly and effectively. This approach allowed villagers to refocus on the primary goal of the meetings: planning the best development for all.

4. The Role of Women in Village Development

Women play a crucial role in village development. They are not merely complements but also key actors in various aspects of life, such as subsistence agriculture, micro-enterprises, and natural resource management. Unfortunately, this potential is often overlooked due to limited access to training and opportunities to participate in decision-making.

To maximize women's roles, entrepreneurship training based on local resources was implemented in several villages. For instance, in Village X, the training led to the establishment of new micro-enterprises, such as handicraft production using local materials and traditional food

production. This program not only improved family economies but also created new job opportunities in the village.

Additionally, women have begun to take active roles in formal forums like Musrenbangdes. Their presence introduces new perspectives often unrepresented by other groups, such as the need for early childhood education facilities, access to clean water, and improved maternal and child health services. By providing women with greater opportunities and space, village development becomes not only more inclusive but also more responsive to community needs. Women are no longer mere spectators in the development process but are now driving forces for real change.

The program's outcomes show that village development plans have become more aligned with the community's needs. For example, development priorities that were previously focused on large infrastructure now include social aspects such as education and health. A tangible example of this shift is the allocation of funds for the construction of a village library and the implementation of community health training programs. Additionally, villagers feel that the planning process has become more transparent and inclusive, with the majority stating that they were fairly involved in decision-making.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings contribute new insights into the importance of participatory approaches in remote village contexts and offer a model adaptable for other villages to improve their development planning quality. The program successfully increased citizen participation in village development in terms of both quantity and quality. Citizens became more aware of their role in development and gained a better understanding of the village planning process.

Recommendations

1. Village governments are advised to strengthen the capacity of village officials to facilitate citizen participation and introduce digital platforms to ease information access for vulnerable groups. A periodic monitoring system should also be implemented to evaluate citizen participation levels and program effectiveness.
2. In the long term, the program aims to establish a more self-reliant and sustainable village development model, where citizens participate not only in planning but also in evaluating and maintaining development outcomes. For groups like women and the elderly, who often face mobility and information access limitations, free transportation services to Musrenbangdes locations and targeted mentoring for socialization materials are recommended.

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