

Community Empowerment in Gorontalo Regency: Adopting the Perspective of Sustainable Livelihoods in Village Fund Allocation

Robin Pakudu

Public Administration, Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, Indonesia

Correspondence Email: robinpakudu@umgo.ac.id

Received: 5 March 2024; Revised: 11 November 2024; Accepted: 19 November 2024

Abstract: *This study aims to determine the Community empowerment government Gorontalo adopts the perspective of sustainable livelihoods in the use of village funds. The research method uses a qualitative type. The results of the study show that of the four indicators measured, there is one indicator that is considered optimal, namely sustainability, in which all development programs whose funding sources come from village funds lead to long-term life. Meanwhile, the other three indicators, namely community-centered, poverty-focused, and participatory indicators, are considered not optimal. This can be seen from the development process that pays little attention to people's aspirations, poverty alleviation that is not successful, and development that does not involve the local community in every implementation process, from planning, implementation, and monitoring.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Livelihood, Empowerment, Village Funds.*

How to Cite:

Pakudu, R. (2024). Community Empowerment in Gorontalo Regency: Adopting the Perspective of Sustainable Livelihoods in Village Fund Allocation. *Journal of Gove*, 9(4), 680–698.
<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.31506/jog.v9i4.24522>



[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Introduction

The Village Fund serves as a source of income for each village and can enhance the village's revenue, which the government provides to improve community service facilities (Arham & Hatu, 2020; Dwiningwarni & Amrulloh, 2020). The 2014 Law No. 6 on Villages marks a pivotal shift in the paradigm of village governance. Villages are no longer regarded as mere objects of development but positioned as subjects and the vanguard of development and community welfare improvement. The law empowers villages to manage and govern their affairs, catering to the local community's interests based on community initiatives, ancestral rights, customs, and the socio-cultural values of the village community.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation, Article 1, Paragraph 6, the management of village assets encompasses a series of activities ranging from planning, procurement, utilization, exploitation, security, maintenance, disposal, transfer, administration, reporting, assessment, development, supervision, and control of village assets (Permendagri, 2016). This management is supported by the Village Fund program, which is the national budget allocated for villages and transferred through the regional budget (APBD) of regencies/cities. It is prioritized for the implementation of development and empowerment of rural communities.

Village Fund was established to foster prosperity among communities by optimizing the management of village assets (RI, 2017). Based on data from the Ministry of Finance regarding the total output of the Village Fund from 2018 to 2019, the allocation of the Village Fund includes the construction of 95.2 thousand kilometers of Village Roads, 914 thousand meters of Bridges, 22,616 units of Clean

Water Connections, 1,338 units of Village Reservoirs, 4,004 units of Village Maternity Post (Polindes), 3,106 units of Village Markets, 14,957 units of Village Early Childhood Education Centers, 19,485 units of Wells, and 103,405 units of Drainage and Irrigation (Kemenkeu, 2020). However, based on the evaluation results from 2018 to 2019, it is evident that the Village Fund has successfully generated beneficial facilities and infrastructure for the community, although the fund allocation has been predominantly focused on infrastructure assets.

The majority of the village fund allocation is utilized for the development and administration of the village government (Mutmainna et al., 2023). Over time, villages have evolved into various forms of empowerment, aiming to become self-sufficient, advanced, and resilient in achieving a fair, affluent, and prosperous society. Villages have the authority to independently regulate their areas based on the capabilities and potential of their residents to achieve well-being and economic capacity distribution (Annahar et al., 2023). The development progress is equally crucial; it necessitates planning, implementation, and accountability.

The management of the Village Fund must be carried out transparently through village deliberations, and its outcomes should be documented in the Village Regulation (Perdes). These provisions demonstrate the commitment of decision-makers that the management of the Village Fund should adhere to the principles of good governance, which must be implemented by stakeholders and the village community. The administration of the allocated village funds provided by the government should ideally involve the application of management functions in

every stage of the management process to ensure alignment with its intended objectives.

Thus, the Village Fund policy represents a new development resulting from previous policies aimed at improving the welfare of village communities, the quality of human life, and poverty alleviation. Village communities thrive when they have the freedom to interact, compete, and collaborate in a harmonious and peaceful environment, fostering a sense of unity and brotherhood among residents. The communities need an improvement in high-quality and equitable welfare, reflected in a social justice structure that eliminates disparities between the wealthy elite and the majority of the population.

In the study of sustainable development, development is not solely focused on one area, such as infrastructure development. Sustainable livelihood is an approach that delineates community activities encompassing capabilities, assets, and necessary means of living (Quandt, 2018). Livelihood can be deemed sustainable when it enables communities to cope with and recover from various vulnerabilities, including shocks, trends, or seasonal fluctuations (Fauziyanti & Hizbaron, 2020).

As defined by Scoones (2015), sustainable livelihood encompasses capabilities or skills, assets (resources), and activities necessary for one's means of living. Capabilities refer to the ability to perform specific basic functions and what an individual can accomplish, such as the ability to handle stress and shocks, identify and exploit livelihood opportunities, including accessing and utilizing services and information, envisioning the future, experimenting and innovating, competing and collaborating

with others, and leveraging new conditions and resources.

The empirical phenomenon indicates that poverty remains a persistent issue in various countries worldwide (Olsson et al., 2014); hence, 'poverty alleviation and hunger' stand as critical pillars within the objectives of the sustainable development agenda. Poverty, a primary focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), has once again become a priority in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) program. The issue of poverty is framed within a multidimensional context (Ramos-Mejía et al., 2018), examining it from various dimensions and addressing its causes from multiple perspectives. Environmental degradation due to exploitation, the absence of regulatory frameworks ensuring access and control of impoverished communities over means of production, access to healthcare, access to education, adequate living standards, and others are considered tools for understanding poverty.

It is expected that poverty alleviation, as in the context of sustainable livelihood, can be realized with village funds. The village fund policy is a new policy resulting from the development of previous policies aimed at improving the welfare of rural communities, human quality of life, and poverty alleviation. The existence of the village community necessitates freedom of mobility and the ability to compete and collaborate in an atmosphere of order and calm, fostering peace and fraternity among fellow inhabitants. Rural areas require an increase in welfare that is more qualified and equal, as expressed in a social justice framework that does not create a gap between the affluent elite and the ordinary people.

Therefore, the Village Fund policy represents a new initiative resulting from the evolution of previous policies aimed at enhancing the welfare of rural communities, the quality of human life, and poverty alleviation. The welfare of the village community hinges on the necessity for unrestricted movement, healthy competition, and collaborative efforts within an organized and peaceful environment characterized by tranquility and camaraderie among community members. These communities seek a progressively enhanced and fair improvement in their quality of life, manifesting in a social justice framework that eliminates disparities between affluent elites and the broader populace.

The author's observations indicate that the current utilization of village funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, is suboptimal from the perspective of sustainable livelihood. This notably manifests in the village fund's overemphasis on infrastructure development while neglecting advancements in other crucial sectors. Specifically, the community has not experienced the positive impact of village fund allocation in various sectors, particularly in the economic domain, where there is a lack of empowerment for the population to engage in programs aimed at improving community welfare. Additionally, in the social sector, the utilization of village funds is considered less than ideal, which is evident in the rising unemployment rates and increasing poverty levels in Huntu Village, Batudaa District.

In light of previous studies, this research aims to expand on the understanding of the Village Fund's role by examining its impact on rural community welfare, particularly through the lens of sustainable development.

Unlike prior research that primarily assessed administrative effectiveness and immediate poverty reduction, this study focuses on sustainable livelihood—a multidimensional approach that considers long-term community resilience, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability. By analyzing the implementation of the Village Fund in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, this study highlights the limitations of infrastructure-focused spending and underscores the need for broader allocations toward economic and social empowerment programs.

Rachman et al. (2024) found that accountability in Klari Village faced issues such as lack of transparency, low community involvement, and insufficient external oversight, all of which affected fund effectiveness. Their recommendation for better community engagement and monitoring aligns with this study's findings, particularly in addressing the need for economic empowerment in Huntu Village. Similarly, Shinta's (2024) study on village fund management across multiple locations highlighted challenges like inconsistent planning and low community participation. Shinta suggested that management success relies on capacity building and transparent practices. This study agrees, showing that balanced and diversified fund use—beyond just infrastructure—promotes sustainable rural development.

The comparison of cases, particularly with studies conducted by Sudiharto (2020) and Setia Ningsih (2016), reflects how the Village Fund's influence can vary significantly depending on its application and governance. For instance, in Melawi District, the fund directly contributed to poverty reduction; however, in Huntu Village, there remains a gap in empowering community members

economically and socially, suggesting that infrastructure investment alone may not yield long-term welfare gains. These comparisons underscore the importance of diversified fund allocation strategies to maximize the sustainable livelihood outcomes of rural communities, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on poverty alleviation, economic resilience, and community-based environmental stewardship.

Method

The study employed a descriptive research design with a qualitative approach, following the framework outlined by Hennink et al. (2020). A descriptive research design is suitable for understanding the sustainable livelihood perspective in village fund utilization, as it allows for a detailed description and in-depth analysis of the case in question—in this instance, the utilization of village funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District. The qualitative approach was selected because it provides a nuanced, contextual understanding of complex social dynamics, which is essential for examining how village funds are used to support sustainable livelihoods.

Data collection in this study involved both primary and secondary sources, as described by Ajayi (2017). Primary data was gathered through interviews with key informants directly involved in or affected by the village fund's management and usage. The informants included the Village Head of Huntu, the Village Secretary, one village officer, the Chairperson of the Village Consultative Board (BPD), the Chairperson of the Village Development Institution (LPMD), the Chairperson of the Youth Organization (Karang Taruna), and five community members. These participants provided insights into both the management

processes and community perspectives on how village funds impact local livelihoods.

For the data analysis, the study employed a qualitative descriptive analysis technique as outlined by Watkins (2017), wherein data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. This concurrent approach allowed for ongoing refinement of the data collection process based on emerging themes and insights. The analysis process involved three stages:

1. **Data Reduction:** In this phase, the researcher systematically collected data focusing on the utilization of village funds from a sustainable livelihood perspective. Irrelevant or redundant information was set aside to maintain focus on critical insights related to how the village funds were employed to support or hinder community livelihood initiatives.
2. **Data Display:** Following data reduction, the researcher organized and presented the key findings in a coherent format to clarify the various ways in which village funds were being used to support sustainable livelihoods in Huntu Village. This presentation of data facilitated a better understanding of the patterns and relationships within the data, thereby supporting the process of drawing meaningful conclusions.
3. In the final stage, the researcher drew conclusions by identifying patterns and synthesizing the themes that emerged. Each conclusion was cross-verified by re-examining the collected data, ensuring that the findings accurately represented the sustainable livelihood perspective on village fund usage. This verification process provided a robust basis for the study's final insights and

implications regarding the effective and sustainable use of village funds.

This design and analysis approach allowed for a thorough examination of both administrative and community aspects of village fund utilization, providing a comprehensive view of how these funds contribute to, or detract from, sustainable community development in the context of Huntu Village.

Result and Discussion Community-Centered

The foundational interpretation of community-centered development assumes that humans are the primary target and the most strategic source (Green et al., 2021; Machmud & Thaha, 2023). Consequently, development includes planned efforts to enhance human capabilities and potential, guiding their interests to participate in decision-making processes on various matters impacting them. This development strives to promote human empowerment rather than fostering a dependency relationship between bureaucracy, the state, and the community. It enables rural communities to share, enhance, and analyze knowledge about their living conditions to facilitate planning and actions (Hudayana et al., 2019). With various potentials such as agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, and so forth, promoting the village's potential becomes crucial for development (Daman, 2020).

The community-centered indicators referred to in this study pertain to the utilization of village funds or the use of village funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency. The utilization of these village funds is determined by the community itself, encompassing the entire process from planning and implementation to supervision.

The interview results with the informant (SS), serving as the Village Head of Huntu, Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency, state that,

"pada dasarnya semua kegiatan pembangunan, khususnya yang ada di Desa Huntu, melibatkan semua unsur utamanya masyarakat Desa Huntu melalui Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan Desa (MusranbangDes). Konsep pembangunannya merupakan keputusan bersama dengan masyarakat. Demikian halnya dana desa yang ada, tidak dikelola sendiri oleh Pemerintah Desa tetapi juga melibatkan masyarakat dalam penggunaannya" ["Fundamentally, all development activities, particularly those in Huntu Village, involve all its essential elements, namely the people of Huntu Village through the Village Development Planning Deliberations (MusranbangDes). The development concept is a joint decision with the community. Similarly, the village funds are not managed solely by the Village Government but also involve the community in their utilization"] (interview conducted on November 15, 2022).

Furthermore, the informant (OM), acting as the Government Section Head, stated that, *"penggunaan dana desa ini dilakukan secara transparan. Setiap prosesnya melibatkan masyarakat dan tidak ada yang ditutup-tutupi oleh Pemerintah Desa"* ["The utilization of village funds is carried out transparently. Every process involves the community, and there is nothing concealed by the Village Government"] (interview conducted on November 15, 2022).

In the interview with an informant (YS), the Chairperson of the Village Consultative Board (BPD) of Huntu Village, stated that: Based on the interviews above and the researcher's analysis, it can be concluded that the

community-centered utilization of village funds has not been optimal. This is evident from the utilization of village funds, which have not been able to meet the needs and aspirations of the community. The utilization tends to be a result of decisions made by the Village Government and related parties with vested interests (Wulandari & Yuliandari, 2022).

The lack of community participation in the management of village funds is attributed to a shortage of human resources or a lack of community knowledge regarding fund management (Scheba & Mustalahti, 2015). Based on the perspective of sustainable livelihood, the development indicator (Kumar et al., 2023) centered on the community entails a development approach that (a) focuses on the community rather than solely on their output, (b) comprehends the dynamics within the community and understands variations among communities engaged in different activities, and (c) collaborates with the community in a manner that reflects their current livelihoods, strengths, and adaptability (not merely addressing their problems).

Poverty-Focused

The escalating poverty in rural areas compels the Indonesian government to address the issue promptly (Ariyani et al., 2015; Sparrow et al., 2020). However, in traditional development principles, endeavors emphasizing development thinking may sometimes conflict with those directed toward environmental thinking (Nanlohy, 2021). Therefore, sustainable livelihood, which prioritizes sustainable development concerning both communities and natural resources as life sources, is chosen as a development approach capable of reconciling development thinking with environmental

thinking (Kumar et al., 2014; Rohmah, 2018). The indicator emphasized in this study pertains to poverty alleviation through the utilization of village funds or the use of existing village funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency. The focus is specifically on the poverty alleviation process.

The interview results from the informant (SS), who serves as the Head of Huntu Village in Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency, state that, "*sejalan dengan amanah Undang-Undang Nomor 6 tahun 2014 tentang Desa, kebijakan Dana Desa menjadi salah satu program unggulan Pemerintah dalam rangka membangun perekonomian di tingkat desa maupun mengurangi kesenjangan dan kemiskinan desa. Sehingga perlu saya tekankan bahwa penggunaan dana desa di Desa Huntu tidak lain dan tidak bukan, hanya untuk memberikan kesejahteraan masyarakat yang ada di Desa Huntu*" ["In line with the mandate of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, the Village Fund policy has become one of the government's flagship programs aimed at building the economy at the village level and reducing disparities and village poverty. Therefore, I would like to emphasize that the use of village funds in Huntu Village is solely and exclusively intended to enhance the welfare of the community residing in Huntu Village"] (interview conducted on November 18, 2022).

Furthermore, information from the informant (OM), who serves as the Government Affairs Coordinator, indicates that, "*oh iya tentu saja, pemanfaatan dan penggunaan dana desa untuk mengentaskan kemiskinan baik itu di tingkat desa, daerah ataupun secara nasional. Jadi semua program-program yang Pemerintah lakukan itu bermuara pada peningkatan akses ekonomi*

masyarakat" ["Oh yes, of course, the utilization and use of village funds are aimed at alleviating poverty, whether at the village, regional, or national levels. So, all the government's programs are ultimately geared towards enhancing the economic access of the community"] (interview conducted on November 18, 2022).

In the subsequent interview with the informant (SM), acting as the Village Treasurer, stated that, "*prioritas penggunaan dana desa untuk pemberdayaan masyarakat desa terutama digunakan untuk penanggulangan kemiskinan dan peningkatan akses atas sumberdaya ekonomi masyarakat desa sehingga sudah sangat jelas bahwa tujuan dari penggunaan dana desa adalah untuk mengentaskan kemiskinan*" ["the priority in utilizing village funds is for the empowerment of the village community, particularly focusing on poverty alleviation and enhancing access to the economic resources of the village community. Thus, it is evident that the primary goal of utilizing village funds is to alleviate poverty"] (interview conducted on November 18, 2022).

Based on the comprehensive interviews above and the researcher's analysis, it can be concluded that the utilization of village funds with a focus on poverty has not been optimal. This is evident from the use of village funds, which has not effectively alleviated poverty in Huntu Village despite a decrease, albeit not significantly.

Participatory

In the sustainable livelihood approach, the participatory indicator signifies a development paradigm that prioritizes the perspectives and needs from the standpoint of impoverished individuals (Hatu, 2010), (not the views

and requirements of organizations or decision-makers working on poverty-related issues).

Empowering communities can provide access to individuals, institutions, and community organizations to acquire and utilize communal rights for the enhancement of their quality of life (Hatu, 2010). This is because the root causes of community disempowerment stem from limited access, lack of knowledge and skills, and poverty conditions experienced by a segment of the population (Gedeona, 2008).

The participatory indicator referred to in this study pertains to utilizing village funds or using existing funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency. This involvement includes the targeted community groups in every implementation of development activities.

Results from the interview with informant (SS), the Head of Huntu Village in Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency, indicate that, "*sebelumnya saya sudah menyampaikan bahwa setiap pengalokasian atau penggunaan dana desa selalu melibatkan masyarakat dari semua unsur khususnya masyarakat yang menjadi kelompok sasaran sehingga tidak ada lagi pernyataan bahwa masyarakat tidak dilibatkan dalam pembangunan desa*" ["As I mentioned earlier, every allocation or utilization of village funds always involves the community from all elements, especially those who are the target groups. Therefore, there is no longer any statement that the community is not involved in village development"] (interview conducted on November 22, 2022).

Continuing with the informant (OM), acting as the Government Affairs Coordinator, states that, "*konsep pembangunan yang digunakan oleh*

Pemerintah Desa Huntu adalah pembangunan partisipatif sehingga setiap kegiatan-kegiatan yang akan kita laksanakan didahului dengan musyawarah tingkat desa dengan mengundang semua unsur termasuk masyarakat. Tetapi memang ada fenomena di Desa Huntu ini, dimana masyarakat itu kalau kita undang rapat untuk membahas program, hanya sedikit yang datang” [“The development concept employed by the Huntu Village Government is participatory development, so every activity we undertake is preceded by village-level deliberations involving all elements, including the community. However, there is indeed a phenomenon in Huntu Village where, when we invite the community to discuss programs in meetings, only a few attend”] (interview conducted on November 22, 2022).

Subsequently, in an interview with an informant (YS), the Chairman of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) of Huntu Village states that: Based on the entirety of the interviews above and the researcher's analysis, it can be concluded that the utilization of village funds with a participatory approach has not been optimal. This is evident from the limited involvement of the community in every stage of activities or programs funded by village funds, including decision-making, implementation, and program oversight (Ambat, 2017).

Sustainability

According to Adanma and Ogunbiyi (2024) is a developmental process aimed at enhancing economic growth, preserving environmental sustainability, and fostering social well-being for both current and future generations. In the context of this study, the sustainable indicators refer to the utilization of village funds or the allocation of existing village funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District,

Gorontalo Regency. These indicators align with the principles of sustainable development.

Results from the interview with the informant (SS), who serves as the Village Head of Huntu, Batudaa District, Gorontalo Regency, indicate that, *"harapannya bahwa semua program-program yang kita laksanakan ini berdampak positif bagi pembangunan kedepannya, termasuk misalnya program pemberdayaan masyarakat yang muaranya adalah masyarakat bisa berdaya dan lebih mandiri dimasa yang akan datang"* [“it is hoped that all the programs we implement have a positive impact on future development. This includes, for example, community empowerment programs, the ultimate goal of which is to enable the community to be self-reliant in the future”] (interview on November 24, 2022).

Furthermore, the informant (OM), acting as the Government Affairs Coordinator, states that, *"prinsip keberlanjutan itu memang sudah melekat pada program-program yang kita laksanakan. Jadi tidak ada program yang sifatnya hanya sementara dan habis begitu saja. Tetapi program yang dilaksanakan oleh pemerintah bersama-sama dengan masyarakat adalah program yang bisa dinikmati hingga nanti"* [“the principle of sustainability is inherently embedded in the programs we carry out. There are no programs that are merely temporary and end abruptly. The programs implemented by the government, together with the community, are designed to be enjoyed until the future”] (interview on November 24, 2022).

In the subsequent interview with the informant (SM), who serves as the Village Treasurer, stated that, *"program yang dilaksanakan adalah program-program yang sudah direncanakan secara matang, khususnya terkait dengan*

kemanfaatannya yang harus bisa dinikmati oleh masyarakat dengan jangka waktu yang panjang” [“the implemented programs are carefully planned, particularly concerning their long-term benefits that should be enjoyed by the community”] (interview on November 22, 2022).

Based on the interviews above and the researcher's analysis, it can be concluded that the utilization of village funds with the principle of sustainability is optimal. This is evident in the allocation of village funds across various aspects of village development, where the benefits are not transient but extend over a prolonged period, ensuring enjoyment by future generations.

Community Participation and Sustainable Livelihood Approach

The sustainable livelihood approach emphasizes the importance of community-centered development, which aims not only at delivering tangible outputs but also at empowering communities through active participation and capacity building (Yuniar & Masbullah, 2021). This framework underscores that development should be focused on strengthening the community's capacities, understanding the variations in their livelihoods, and promoting long-term resilience rather than just addressing immediate needs.

In the context of Huntu Village, the challenge lies in ensuring that the use of village funds goes beyond bureaucratic and formal processes, such as the Village Development Planning Deliberations (MusranbangDes), and genuinely incorporates community aspirations. According to Yelvita (2022), a true community-centered approach requires not just procedural engagement but a deep understanding and inclusion of the

community's strengths, challenges, and adaptability in the development process. When decisions on village funds are made without fully considering the community's input, the outcome tends to reflect the interests of local elites or governmental agencies rather than addressing the community's core needs (Widodo & Pratiwi, 2016).

The Role of Community Empowerment in Village Fund Management

Village funds are intended to empower rural communities by giving them control over local development projects. However, in many cases, as observed in Huntu Village, the community lacks the necessary skills or knowledge to manage these funds effectively. This leads to a situation where village government officials dominate the decision-making process, reducing the community's role to mere ceremonial participation (Ta'dung & Lusdani, 2020). This mirrors broader findings in rural development studies, where the absence of capacity-building initiatives undermines community participation, leading to decisions that fail to reflect local priorities.

One key argument here is that without effective community empowerment—through education, training, and the creation of platforms for genuine participation—the management of village funds cannot fully achieve its intended purpose of promoting sustainable development. Empowerment must go beyond participation in village meetings. It should include developing local human resources, improving community knowledge about governance, and creating systems that allow the community to oversee and evaluate how village funds are utilized (Habib, 2021).

Transparency and Accountability in Village Fund Management

Transparency is another critical factor in ensuring the optimal use of village funds. According to Widodo & Pratiwi (2016), transparency in the management and distribution of village funds is crucial for building trust between the community and the village government. Without transparency, the process may be perceived as opaque, further limiting community involvement and trust in development projects. While the government in Huntu Village has made efforts to involve the community in planning, there are still concerns that the actual management of the funds tends to benefit certain stakeholders rather than addressing broader community needs.

Yelvita (2022) argues that for community-centered development to succeed, the decision-making process must be truly participatory and transparent, ensuring that the community can monitor fund allocation and usage. This requires not only regular meetings and deliberations but also clear communication of how funds are spent, including public disclosures and feedback mechanisms to hold decision-makers accountable.

Implementation Challenges: Structural Barriers to Poverty Reduction

One of the key reasons why the village funds in Huntu have not significantly reduced poverty may be that the allocation process focuses too much on short-term economic development projects without adequately considering the broader, more sustainable factors that affect rural poverty. This mirrors the findings of Christianingrum (2020), who argues that poverty alleviation initiatives in rural Indonesia often lack a holistic approach, focusing too narrowly on

immediate income generation rather than addressing structural issues such as education, infrastructure, and resource management.

The lack of significant poverty reduction despite village fund utilization can be attributed to several structural barriers. First, as Triani & Handayani (2018) point out, rural poverty in Indonesia is deeply entrenched, with roots in systemic issues such as lack of access to education, healthcare, and productive resources. These issues cannot be solved solely through financial interventions, such as the allocation of village funds for development projects, but require a multi-faceted approach that includes human capital development, capacity-building, and social infrastructure.

Another key issue is the inefficiency in fund utilization. In many rural areas, including Huntu Village, the management and distribution of village funds are often hampered by weak local governance, poor financial oversight, and a lack of community involvement (Christianingrum, 2020). This aligns with the researcher's observation that, despite the procedural mechanisms in place, such as village development planning meetings, the actual implementation of poverty-focused projects does not effectively reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. As a result, the impact of these funds is diluted, and their potential to significantly reduce poverty is undermined.

Role of Governance and Community Participation

Governance plays a crucial role in ensuring that village funds are used effectively for poverty alleviation. Poor governance, lack of transparency, and limited accountability can severely restrict the impact of such initiatives. According to

Kurnianingsih & Wahyu (2014), effective governance is vital in ensuring that village funds are allocated according to community priorities and that these projects are implemented efficiently. Without strong governance mechanisms, the risk of funds being misallocated or used inefficiently is high, which is one possible reason why poverty reduction in Huntu Village has been minimal despite the availability of substantial village funds.

Community participation is another critical element in poverty-focused development. As Christianingrum (2020) emphasizes, sustainable poverty alleviation requires active involvement from the community in decision-making processes, particularly in identifying their needs and priorities. However, in Huntu Village, the community's participation in managing village funds appears to be limited, resulting in a top-down approach where decisions are made by local elites or government officials without adequate input from the most affected groups. This lack of participatory decision-making not only diminishes the effectiveness of village fund utilization but also reduces the community's ownership of the development process, which is crucial for long-term success.

Limited Participation in Village Fund Utilization

The researcher's observations in Huntu Village show a clear gap between policy and practice regarding community participation. Although village fund policies are designed to include community participation, in reality, the involvement of local community members in the management of these funds remains limited. For example, in construction projects such as road building, the workers are not primarily drawn from the indigenous community or residents of the

village, as one would expect in a participatory model. This indicates a missed opportunity for engaging local labor and ensuring that the economic benefits of development projects directly benefit the village's population.

This lack of community involvement can lead to several negative consequences. First, it undermines the sense of ownership that is critical for the long-term sustainability of development projects. Without a sense of ownership, the community may not feel responsible for maintaining or protecting the infrastructure and services provided through village funds. Second, the exclusion of local residents from employment opportunities in village projects means that the economic benefits of these initiatives are not fully realized within the community. As noted by Syamsi et al. (2014), community participation in development is not only about decision-making but also about ensuring that the economic benefits of development are equitably distributed among the population.

Barriers to Participation: Power Dynamics and Governance Issues

Several structural and social barriers can explain the lack of participation in village fund utilization in Huntu Village. One major barrier is the power dynamics within the village. Local elites or government officials may dominate decision-making processes, leaving little room for marginalized groups to voice their concerns or contribute to the planning and implementation of village projects. This concentration of power can lead to decisions that do not fully reflect the needs of the broader community but instead serve the interests of a few.

Additionally, governance issues may also play a role. Weak governance structures and a lack of transparency can limit opportunities for community members to participate in meaningful ways. As Ridwan et al. (2019) argue, the success of empowerment programs depends heavily on the extent to which governance structures support participatory processes. If village leadership does not prioritize or facilitate community involvement, the potential for village funds to foster genuine development will remain limited.

The lack of community participation in village fund utilization in Huntu Village has significant implications for sustainable development. Development that does not include the voices of the community is unlikely to address the real needs of the population and may fail to create lasting change. According to Putri et al. (2022), participatory approaches ensure that development is not only relevant to the community but also more resilient and adaptable to future challenges.

Participation enhances the sustainability of development projects by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. When the community is actively involved in every stage of a project, they are more likely to support and maintain the outcomes over the long term. Moreover, participatory development can help build local capacity, empowering community members with the skills and knowledge needed to manage future development initiatives independently.

The Sustainability Indicator: Village Funds in Huntu Village

The sustainability indicator in this study focuses on whether village fund utilization in Huntu Village, Batudaa

District, Gorontalo Regency, aligns with the principles of sustainable development. Observations from Huntu Village suggest that the use of village funds already adheres to sustainability principles, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, community empowerment, health, education, and tourism. These sectors reflect a holistic approach to development, one that addresses immediate community needs while also considering long-term impacts on the environment and society.

For instance, investments in infrastructure, such as the construction of roads, should not only improve immediate access and transportation but also use materials and methods that minimize environmental degradation and ensure longevity. Similarly, community empowerment programs that focus on capacity-building can provide local residents with the skills and knowledge they need to sustain themselves economically in the future, thus contributing to the overall resilience of the village. By integrating sustainability into these various sectors, Huntu Village is taking steps toward realizing sustainable development goals, as outlined in international frameworks like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Primasti, 2017).

The Importance of Sustainability in Village Development

Sustainable development is critical for rural areas like Huntu Village, where reliance on natural resources is high, and the potential for environmental degradation poses a significant risk to long-term well-being. By adhering to sustainability principles, village

development can avoid the pitfalls of short-term gains that come at the cost of long-term viability. For example, unsustainable agricultural practices may boost crop yields temporarily but lead to soil degradation and reduced productivity in the future. Similarly, infrastructure projects that disregard environmental impacts can lead to deforestation, erosion, and biodiversity loss, ultimately harming the village's natural environment and limiting future opportunities for tourism or agriculture.

In the context of Huntu Village, the focus on sustainability ensures that village funds are not just spent on immediate needs but are invested in ways that generate long-term benefits. Infrastructure projects are designed to last, community empowerment initiatives build human capital, and tourism programs are developed with an eye toward protecting the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the region. This approach reflects a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental factors, as emphasized by Cahyani (2020), and represents a significant shift from development paradigms that prioritize short-term economic growth over long-term sustainability.

Successes in Sustainable Village Fund Utilization

Based on the available data and interviews, the research suggests that the use of village funds in Huntu Village has been largely successful in adhering to sustainability principles. The programs funded by these resources have demonstrated long-term benefits for the community, from improved infrastructure to enhanced community well-being through empowerment and education initiatives. This reflects an optimal

alignment with sustainability goals, as the benefits of these programs are expected to be enjoyed by both current and future generations.

For example, in the field of education, village funds have been used to enhance local schools and provide educational programs that build the capacities of young people. These investments in human capital not only improve the current quality of life but also equip future generations with the skills they need to contribute to the community's economic and social resilience. Similarly, in the area of tourism, village funds have supported initiatives that promote local cultural and environmental assets, creating opportunities for sustainable income generation without degrading the natural environment.

The alignment with sustainability is particularly evident in the way village funds are used to ensure that development is both inclusive and environmentally responsible. Infrastructure projects are designed to last, reducing the need for constant repairs or replacements, which would consume more resources in the long run. Health initiatives, funded through village allocations, improve the well-being of the population, ensuring that future generations are healthier and more productive. These examples underscore the holistic nature of sustainable development in Huntu Village, where the focus is not only on economic growth but also on long-term environmental and social benefits.

Conclusion

Based on the comprehensive analysis and discussions presented earlier, it is evident that the utilization of Village Funds in Huntu Village, Batudaa District, within the framework of Sustainable

Livelihood, falls short of optimization. This study adopts a rigorous examination through the lens of the Sustainable Livelihood approach to elucidate key insights. The findings underscore a mixed landscape of outcomes across the four discerned indicators.

Notably, sustainability emerges as a commendable facet, with all development endeavors underpinned by Village Funds demonstrating a propensity towards fostering enduring livelihoods. However, the assessment reveals notable shortcomings in the realms of community-centeredness, poverty alleviation, and participatory engagement. Suboptimal outcomes are discerned, characterized by a lack of robust consideration for community aspirations in developmental processes, limited efficacy in poverty alleviation endeavors, and inadequate incorporation of local community voices and participation throughout the developmental continuum, spanning from inception to oversight.

This synthesis underscores the imperative for recalibration and targeted interventions to address identified deficiencies. A more nuanced and participatory approach is warranted, one that prioritizes community aspirations, intensifies poverty alleviation efforts and fosters genuine community engagement at every juncture of program implementation. These insights not only enrich academic discourse but also catalyze informed policy formulation and pragmatic interventions aimed at fostering sustainable livelihoods and holistic community development in Huntu Village and beyond.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the invaluable support and resources provided by Universitas

Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, which facilitated the execution of this research endeavor. We extend our sincere appreciation to the academic community at the university for their scholarly guidance and collaborative spirit throughout this study. Their commitment to fostering a conducive research environment has significantly contributed to the realization of this research initiative.

References

- Ambat, A. (2017). Partisipasi masyarakat dalam pengawasan dana desa di desa karatung kecamatan nanusa kabupaten kepulauan talaud [Community Participation in Monitoring Village Funds in Karatung Village, Nanusa District, Kepulauan Talaud Regency]. *E-Journal Unsrat*, 1(2), 1–14.
- Adanma, U. M., & Ogunbiyi, E. O. (2024). A comparative review of global environmental policies for promoting sustainable development and economic growth. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, 6(5), 954-977.
- Ajayi, V. O. (2017). Primary sources of data and secondary sources of data. *Benue State University*, 1(1), 1-6.
- Annahar, N., Widianingsih, I., Muhtar, E. A., & Paskarina, C. (2023). The road to inclusive decentralized village governance in Indonesia. *Sustainability*, 15(11), 8616.
- Arham, M. A., & Hatu, R. (2020). Does village fund transfer address the issue of inequality and poverty? A lesson from Indonesia. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 7(10), 433-442.

- Ariyani, N., Fauzi, A., Juanda, B., & Beik, I. S. (2015). Evaluasi Pogram Pengentasan Kemiskinan Menggunakan Metode Rappoverty [Evaluation Of Poverty Alleviation Program Using Rappoverty Method]. *Jurnal Ekonomi & Kebijakan Publik*, 6(2), 181–197.
- Broomfield, K., Craig, C., Smith, S., Jones, G., Judge, S., & Sage, K. (2021). Creativity in public involvement: supporting authentic collaboration and inclusive research with seldom heard voices. *Research Involvement and Engagement*, 7, 1-14.
- Cahyani, F. A. (2020). Upaya Peningkatan Daya Dukung Lingkungan Melalui Penerapan Prinsip Sustainable Development Berdasarkan Undang-Undang Nomor 32 Tahun 2009 tentang Perlindungan dan Pengelolaan Lingkungan Hidup [Efforts to Improve Environmental Sustainability Through the Application of Sustainable Development Principles Based on Law Number 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management]. *Indonesian State Law Review*, 2(2), 168–179.
- Christianingrum, R. (2020). Evaluasi dana desa dilihat dari hubungan antara pagu dana desa dan indeks desa membangun [Evaluation of Village Funds from the Relationship between Village Fund Allocation and Village Development Index]. *Jurnal Budget*, 5(1), 100–113.
- Daman. (2020). Metode Reflect Dalam Community Development (CD). *Unnes Journal*, 13(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15294/edukasi.v13i2.959>
- Dwiningwarni, S. S., & Amrulloh, A. Z. (2020). Peranan Pengelolaan Dana Desa Untuk Meningkatkan Pendapatan Masyarakat Di Jombang Jawa Timur [The Role of Village Fund Management in Increasing Community Income in Jombang, East Java]. *EKUITAS (Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Keuangan)*, 4(1), 1–20.
- Fauziyanti, N. U., & Hizbaron, D. R. (2020). Sustainable Livelihood strategies: how urban community resilient towards disaster. *Indones. J. Geogr*, 52, 246-259.
- Gedeona, H. T. W. (2008). Kemiskinan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat [Poverty and Community Empowerment]. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik*, 5(1), 1–17.
- Green, P. M., Bergen, D. J., Stewart, C. P., & Nayve, C. (2021). An Engagement of Hope: A Framework and Equity-Centered Theory of Action for Community Engagement. *Metropolitan Universities*, 32(2), 129-157.
- Habib, M. A. F. (2021). Kajian Teoritis Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Dan Ekonomi Kreatif [Theoretical Study Of Community Empowerment And Creative Economy]. *Ar Rehla: Journal of Islamic Tourism, Halal Food, Islamic Traveling, and Creative Economy*, 1(2), 82–110.
- Hatu, R. A. (2010). *Pemberdayaan Dan Pendampingan Sosial Dalam Masyarakat* [Empowerment And Social Assistance In The Community]. (Vol. 7).
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage.
- Hudayana, B., Kutanegara, P. M., Setiadi, Indiyanto, A., Fauzanafi, Z., F.N., M. D., Sushartami, W., & Yusuf, M. (2019). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) untuk Pengembangan Desa Wisata di

- Pedukuhan [Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) for the Development of Tourism Villages in the Hamlet]. *Jurnal Universitas Gadjah Mada*, 2(2), 99–112.
- Kumar, S., Raizada, A., & Biswas, H. (2014). Prioritising development planning in the Indian semi-arid Deccan using sustainable livelihood security index approach. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 21(4), 332–345.
- Kumar, A., Kumar, A., Kumari, S., Kumari, N., Kumari, S., & Mishra, P. (2023). Sustainable Livelihoods a foundation for rural development leads to sustainability. *Problemy Ekorozwoju*, 18(2), 128–140.
- Kurnianingsih, N. A., & Wahyu, D. (2014). Sustainable livelihood : penanganan rural poor di india [Sustainable Livelihood: Addressing Rural Poverty in India]. *Journal Planologi*, 1, 75–82.
- Machmud, M., & Thaha, S. (2023). Keberlanjutan Usaha Desa Melalui Pemberdayaan Potensi Desa di Wilayah Kelurahan Canrego , Kecamatan Polombangkeng Selatan Kabupaten Takalar [Sustainability of Village Enterprises through Empowering Village Potentials in the Canrego Subdistrict, South Polombangkeng District, Takalar Regency]. *Journal Of Training And Community Service Adpertisi*, 3(1), 65–75.
- Mutmainna, M., Mar'ah, K., & Sadli, L. E. (2023). Strategy for utilizing village fund budget to alleviate poverty towards village SDGs in Taeng Village Gowa Regency. *International Journal of Social Service and Research*, 3(4), 975–982.
- Nanlohy, D. F. (2021). Pembangunan Dan Lingkungan Hidup : Dilema Etis Manusia [Development And The Environment: Ethical Dilemmas Of Humanity] Dian F. Nanlohy Insitut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon. *Tangkoleh Putai*, 18(2), 202–217.
- Primasti, S. G. (2017). Implementasi program education for sustainable development di SMA tumbuh [Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development Program at Tumbuh Senior High School] *Jurnal Spektrum Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan*, 10(3), 80–100.
- Quandt, A. (2018). Measuring livelihood resilience: The household livelihood resilience approach (HLRA). *World Development*, 107, 253–263.
- Rachman, D. A., Purnamasari, H., & Gumilar, G. G. (2024). Accountability for Management of Village Fund Allocations in Klari Village, Karawang Regency for 2020–2021. *JISIP (Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan)*, 8(1), 136–145.
- Ramos-Mejía, M., Franco-Garcia, M. L., & Jauregui-Becker, J. M. (2018). Sustainability transitions in the developing world: Challenges of socio-technical transformations unfolding in contexts of poverty. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 84, 217–223.
- Ridwan, I., Dollo, A., & Andriyani, A. (2019). Implementasi Pendekatan Participatory Rural Appraisal pada Program Pelatihan [Implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal Approach in Training Programs]. *Journal of Nonformal Education and Community Empowerment*, 3(2), 88–94.

- <https://doi.org/10.15294/pls.v3i2.34913>
- Rohmah, B. A. (2018). *Strategi Penghidupan Berkelanjutan (Sustainable Livelihood) Masyarakat Di Kawasan Lahan Kering Desa Karangpatihan Kecamatan Balong Kabupaten Ponorogo* [Sustainable Livelihood Strategies of Communities in the Dryland Area of Karangpatihan Village, Balong District, Ponorogo Regency]. *Swahara Bumi*, 1(2), 1-10.
- Scoones, I. (2015). *Sustainable livelihoods and rural development* (p. xv). Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.
- Scheba, A., & Mustalahti, I. (2015). Rethinking 'expert' knowledge in community forest management in Tanzania. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 60, 7-18.
- Shinta, L. D. (2024). Analysis of Village Fund Management: Challenges, Diversity, and Recommendations Towards Sustainable Village Development. *Global Management: International Journal of Management Science and Entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 25-36.
- Sparrow, R., Dartanto, T., & Hartwig, R. (2020). Indonesia under the new normal: Challenges and the way ahead. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 56(3), 269-299.
- Sudiharto, S. (2020). Implementasi Kebijakan Budaya Tertib Dan Disiplin Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Di SMA Negeri 1 Gebog Kudus [The Implementation of Cultural Order and Discipline Policies to Enhance the Quality of Education at Senior State High School of 1 Gebog Kudus]. *Al Hikmah: Journal of Education*, 1(1), 11-24.
- Syamsi, S., Studi, P., Administrasi, I., & Tunggadewi, U. T. (2014). Partisipasi masyarakat dalam mengontrol penggunaan anggaran dana desa [Community Participation in Controlling the Use of Village Budget Funds]. *JISIP: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 3(1), 21-28.
- Triani, N. N. A., & Handayani, S. (2018). Praktik pengelolaan keuangan dana desa [Practices of Village Fund Financial Management]. *Jurnal Akuntansi Multiparadigma*, 9(1), 136-155.
- Watkins, D. C. (2017). Rapid and rigorous qualitative data analysis: The "RADaR" technique for applied research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917712131.
- Widodo, S., & Pratiwi, D. R. (2016). Participatory Budgeting Implementation at the Level of Village Government. *Jurnal Budget* 125, 1(1), 125-151.
- Wulandari, S. M., & Yuliandari, E. (2022). Partisipasi Masyarakat Dalam Pengelolaan Dana Desa [Community Participation In The Management Of Village Funds]. *Sovereignty: Jurnal Demokrasi Dan Ketahanan Nasional*, 1(4), 745-757.
- Yelvita, F. S. (2022). Analisis Pelaksanaan Pemanfaatan Dana Desa Untuk Pembangunan Desa Tanjung Berulak Kecamatan Kampar Kabupaten Kampar [Analysis of the Implementation of Village Fund Utilization for the Development of Tanjung Berulak Village, Kampar District, Kampar Regency]. (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau).

Village Fund Allocation to Support Rural Development by the Government of South Sakra Village]. *Jurnal Mentari Publika*, 01(02), 104–118.