

Implementation of Village Law as A Tool for Poverty Alleviation in Lerep Tourism Village

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Abstract	In the effort to realise a legal framework for combating poverty through village-level development, Indonesia has prioritised rural advancement to address longstanding inequalities. Within this context, Lerep Tourism Village in Central Java stands out as a model of successful poverty alleviation, and this paper aims to examine how the Village Law has been specifically applied there as a strategic tool, primarily based on an in-depth interview with the Head of Lerep Village, Mr Sumariyadi. Using a sociolegal research method, the study explores the interaction between legal norms and village-level practices. The findings reveal that the Village Law has harmonised the role of the village head, shifting it from a symbolic leadership position to an accountable agent for welfare and development. It has also strengthened local empowerment by institutionalising participatory planning, economic inclusivity, and responsive governance. Moreover, the Village Law enabled tailored, village-specific implementation in Lerep through the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), integrating economic innovation with social protection. Finally, a comprehensive roadmap derived from Lerep's experience provides practical insights for replicating poverty reduction strategies in other villages across Indonesia.	
Keywords	: Indonesia; Lerep; Poverty Alleviation; Village Law	

INTRODUCTION

In the realization of a legal framework to combat poverty, all countries worldwide aim to achieve success in their national development (Ayoo, 2022). This success starts with progress at the most basic level of society, which is village development (Park & Wang, 2010). Particularly, Indonesia's focus on rural development is significant due to the existing disparities that have led to inequalities between urban and rural areas (Andari, 2020). That is why Indonesian Government has established the concept of village autonomy to permit the equal expansion of prosperity from the highest instance which is central government to the lowest instance which is village government (Pamungkas, 2019).

The village government stands as the most immediate level of governance to the local population, representing the lowest tier within the constitutional framework of the Republic of Indonesia. Despite its small size, the village government plays a crucial role and holds a significant position in delivering public services and fostering community empowerment (Sri Nugroho, 2018). Thus, in order to effectively empower the community and fulfill its service obligations, villages must receive comprehensive empowerment across all sectors. The village-level government constitutes the foundational structure of a nation (Sari, 2020). The effectiveness of both positive and

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negative aspects of the central government is rooted in the performance of village-level governance which is strengthened by the mechanism of village autonomy.

The examination of village autonomy in legal studies primarily concerns how the state interacts with villages. By delving into the definition provided in Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution and its corresponding explanation, we can infer that this article embodies the state's acknowledgment of what we now refer to as "village autonomy." Moreover, the 1945 Constitution explicitly identifies villages as "original entities with inherent rights," making them the sole entities entitled to autonomy as per the Constitution (Barniat, 2019). As a result, villages in Indonesia possess genuine autonomy, which has been a significant and evolving aspect of Indonesian society for centuries. This autonomy has led to immense diversity among Indonesian villages, which, consciously or otherwise, has become a valuable source of cultural richness for the nation (Kushandajani, 2017).

The Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (Village Law), holds the potential to play a crucial role in decreasing poverty in the villages of Indonesia. This can be achieved through various mechanisms and provisions inherent in the law that promote village autonomy and empower local communities (Ra'is, 2017). According to the Village Law, Article 1 emphasizes the importance of village community empowerment. This involves enhancing community independence and welfare by promoting knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, abilities, and awareness (Irawati, 2021). It also involves utilizing available resources through policy determination, programs, activities, and assistance tailored to address the core issues and priority needs of the village community (Suharto, 2018).

The recognition and acknowledgment of "village autonomy" in the law highlight the importance of empowering villages to govern themselves and make decisions that directly impact their development and welfare. With genuine autonomy, villages have the authority to design and implement programs and initiatives tailored to their specific needs and challenges (Pamungkas, 2019). This enables them to focus on poverty alleviation strategies that are contextually relevant and effective. By addressing the root causes of poverty unique to each village, the chances of successful poverty reduction increase significantly (Syukri et al., 2018).

The Village Law emphasizes the role of local customs and traditions (Adat) in village governance (Rahmawati & Ishmah, 2022). This provision acknowledges the significance of indigenous knowledge and community-based practices, which can be instrumental in identifying sustainable and culturally appropriate ways to lift communities out of poverty (Zain & Siddiq, 2015). Leveraging traditional practices,

such as community-based resource management or local economic systems, can lead to better livelihood opportunities and improved well-being for the villagers (Yasin et al., 2015).

The law's emphasis on the active involvement of villagers in decision-making and administration fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local population (Rizal, Zuriah, & Tinus, 2019). When communities have a say in the allocation of resources and development priorities, they are more likely to invest in projects that directly benefit their socio-economic conditions. This participatory approach can result in targeted poverty reduction initiatives and the efficient utilization of resources (Esariti et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Village Law can also lead to enhanced access to government resources and services for the villages (Lengkong & Tasik, 2018). As the law delineates the responsibilities and functions of village administrations, there is a clearer path for local authorities to access government funding and support for development projects (Khoiriah & Meylina, 2018). This enhanced access to resources can help villages invest in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services that contribute to poverty reduction (Ahadya, Herawati, & Gading, 2017).

As the focus of this study, the Village Law has the potential to be a pivotal instrument in the fight against poverty in Lerep Tourism Village, as it empowers local communities and fosters economic development through tourism. By recognizing the potential of tourism as a catalyst for growth, the law opens doors for Lerep to utilise their unique cultural heritage and natural resources to create sustainable income-generating opportunities (Agustini, Landrawan, & Hadisaputra, 2023). For instance, the Lerep Tourism Village possesses several tourism packets including Edu-Ecotour tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, culinary tourism, and Embung Semblogo tourism (Esariti et al., 2023) (see Figure 1). Inevitably, the monitoring and coordination of the Lerep community in the realization of those tourism packets cannot be separated from the legal framework of Village Law.

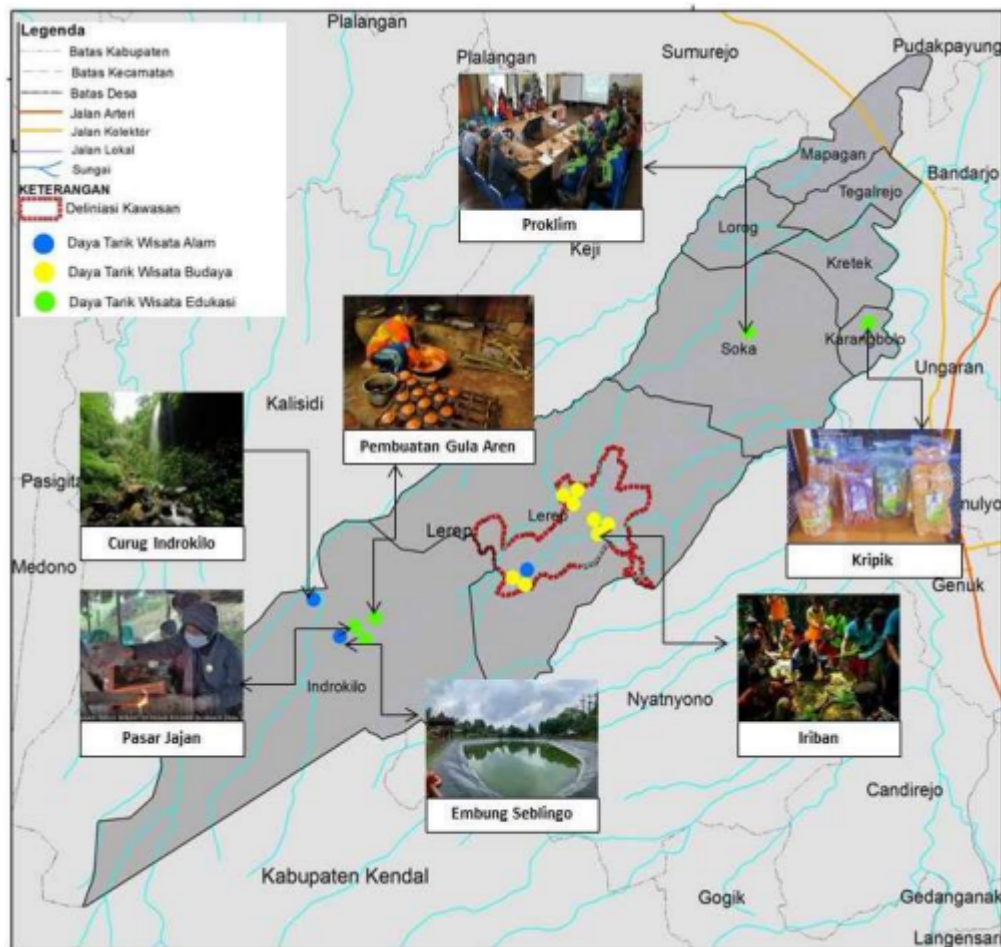


Figure 1. Map of Activities and Space Utilisation of Lerep Tourism Village

Source: Yuliani (2022)

Indeed, tourism has become the main source of income for Lerep villagers. Research conducted by Syaiful (2019) showed that with the development of tourism villages, the income of business actors and tourism services increased around Rp. 2,501,000 - Rp. 3,500,000 per month. Income from village tourism activities ranges up to IDR 450,000 per month. The peak of tourist arrivals at Lerep Tourism Village occurs more than 4 times a year. The income of business owners and tourism services when it is busy can increase up to 3 times. The existence of the Lerep Tourism Village can open up job opportunities and increase the income of its people. Apart from that, the existence of the Lerep Tourism Village is quite capable of helping meet daily needs and secondary needs (Syaiful & Fafurida, 2019).

Previous studies have explored various dimensions of the Village Law's implementation in Lerep. Ahadya et al. (2017) analysed the duties of the Village Head in Lerep under the Village Law, identifying challenges such as budget constraints, poverty, and underutilised technology in implementing village development stages. Alfirdaus et al. (2021) explored gender dynamics in Lerep Village by reflecting on

community engagement activities, showing that despite the Village Law's guarantee of women's representation in village decision-making, its implementation has not yet significantly improved gender equity due to the dominance of infrastructure priorities and limited awareness of women's legal rights. Ristiana and Yusuf (2020) focused on the establishment and operation of Village-Owned Enterprise BUMDes Gerbang Lentera, which was founded based on Village Law as an economic development unit, and assessed its role in Lerep's transformation into a tourism village—emphasising how tourism, grounded in the Village Law, has improved rural income and enhanced community capacity. However, none of these studies has comprehensively analysed how the Village Law has been specifically utilised as a tool to alleviate poverty in Lerep Village through harmonised leadership, community empowerment, and strategic economic innovation. This paper fills that gap by offering an in-depth, interview-based sociolegal analysis of poverty reduction in Lerep through the integrated use of the Village Law.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine how the Village Law has been specifically implemented to alleviate poverty in Lerep Tourism Village through the strategic leadership of the village head and participatory community governance. The analysis begins with an exploration of how the Village Law has harmonised the role of the village head in poverty reduction efforts. It then discusses the strengthening of local empowerment as a key mechanism in transforming village-level socio-economic structures. The paper also highlights the special implementation of the Village Law in Lerep through the innovative use of BUMDes to address service provision and promote economic self-sufficiency. Finally, it presents a comprehensive roadmap based on Lerep's experience to serve as a model for other villages aiming to optimise the Village Law for poverty alleviation.

RESEARCH METHOD

Legal research is a scientific activity based on certain methods, systematics, and ideas that aim to study one or several specific legal phenomena by analyzing them (Solikin, 2021). The method used in this research is sociolegal research legal research is research conducted by analyzing the implementation of laws and regulations on problems that occur in society, completed with normative and conceptual approaches (Bachtiar, 2019). The primary data used in this research is the result of observations and interviews at the research location during the author's community service (KKN) in Lerep Village from 4th July – 18th August 2023; while secondary data is data obtained from scientific journals, legal literature, laws and regulations. Data collection

techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and literature studies. The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Harmonisation of Village Head Role in the Combat against Poverty through the Village Law

The implementation of the Village Law has significantly transformed the role of village heads in poverty alleviation efforts. This transformation is clearly demonstrated in Lerep Tourism Village, where the village head has aligned his duties not only with administrative governance but also with social and economic empowerment, following the mandates provided by Law Number 6 of 2014. According to the Head of Lerep Village, the enactment of the Village Law gave structure and authority to a role that previously operated more on aspiration than certainty. He stated:

“Now the role is significant. Before the Village Law existed, we had dreams and plans, but they couldn’t always be realised. The main task of a village head now is to improve the welfare of the people—just like the President is tasked with the welfare of all Indonesia, or the Regent for the regency, or the Governor for the province. So I, as the Village Head, am responsible for the welfare of the people in this village.”

Before the Village Law came into effect, the planning process in villages like Lerep lacked legal and financial certainty. As the village head recalled humorously:

“Previously, our medium-term plans were just dreams. I used to joke that our development documents were like Japanese yen. In Javanese, yen means ‘if’—if we’re lucky, if it’s approved. That’s how uncertain everything was.”

This lack of enforceable planning capability and stable financial backing limited the village administration’s ability to address poverty in any structured manner. However, with the introduction of the Village Law, the situation changed dramatically. The legal framework now enables village heads to develop and implement strategies that are tailored to their community’s needs. Mr Sumariyadi explained the improvements as follows:

“Now we have a clear budget platform. For example, each year we receive about 1.3 billion IDR from the central government. The regency gives around 500 million, and the provincial government—although not obliged to—also contributes. In Central Java, our Governor understands the soul of the Village Law because he was once Deputy Chair of Commission II, which helped create it.”

In Lerep's case, village funds were strategically used not only to build infrastructure but to develop sustainable tourism-based economic programmes, including thematic villages like Kampung Durian and Kampung Sapi, in direct partnership with the BUMDes (Febrinastri & Fadilah, 2024). This was a community-led solution to both unemployment and agricultural waste management.

Prior to its transformation, Lerep was classified as a poor village, with 752 out of 3,899 households living in poverty. By 2023, this number had significantly dropped to 253 households, as a result of village-level innovations supported through the Village Law and coordinated assistance from provincial and central governments (Sudjiman, 2023).

Financial independence was further strengthened by innovative local markets such as the Pasar Kuliner Jajanan Ndeso, which directly connected farmers and home-based producers to tourism consumers, creating recurring income and reducing price volatility for local produce (Waseso & Gozal, 2023).

This combination of legal empowerment and consistent fiscal allocation has enabled village heads to take a more strategic and long-term approach to development. Most notably, the division of responsibilities—particularly in infrastructure development—between the provincial government and the village administration allows village funds to be allocated primarily for economic empowerment rather than being consumed by basic infrastructure needs. As the village head highlighted:

"The Governor's policy is that infrastructure should be handled by the provincial government, so village funds can be focused entirely on economic strengthening. That's a real help. Otherwise, village funds would be used up just on roads, clean water systems, and so on. Now, since infrastructure is covered by the province, I can focus the village funds on the economic awakening of the community."

This interview excerpt strongly affirms the argument that the Village Law has not only institutionalised the village head's mandate but also provided a workable structure for planning and executing poverty reduction initiatives. Village-level legal instruments such as Village Government Regulation Number 5 of 2016 concerning the Organisational Structure and Work Procedures of the Village Government and Village Government Regulation Number 3 of 2014 concerning the 2014–2019 Village Medium-Term Development Plan serve as practical tools for localised development planning (Khaeril Anwar, 2015). These local regulations reflect how national frameworks are translated into applicable governance mechanisms at the village level.

Further strengthening this legal backbone are overarching instruments such as Government Regulation Number 43 of 2014 concerning the implementation of Village Law and the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 114 of 2014 on Village Development Guidelines. These national regulations help ensure that the village head's role in poverty alleviation aligns with broader governmental strategies and development objectives, while allowing space for local innovation and community-specific adaptation (Ahadya et al., 2017).

Another vital point highlighted through this research is the problem of vague or non-existent legal mandates for village heads in other regions, which hampers effective action against poverty. Lerep Village, in contrast, stands as a model case where the Village Law has solidified the duties and authority of the village head. Through these legal frameworks, village heads are now empowered not merely as administrative figures but as central agents of rural development. As seen in Lerep, this leads to strategic and impactful actions tailored directly to the needs of the local population.

Lerep's success story has even gained national recognition, with its village head receiving the Satya Lencana Kepariwisata from the President Joko Widodo for his leadership in grassroots tourism and economic transformation (Desa Wisata Lerep, 2024). This shows how legal harmonisation enables recognition and replication of poverty-alleviation models.

By giving clear authority, structured planning tools, and consistent funding, the Village Law has indeed harmonised the role of village heads with the objectives of poverty reduction—transforming aspirational leadership into legally grounded and operational governance.

Strengthening of Local Empowerment in the Fight against Poverty through Village Law

The Village Law has played a pivotal role in strengthening local empowerment as a mechanism for poverty alleviation in Lerep Village. Under this framework, village governance has shifted towards a model that prioritises community participation, transparent decision-making, and targeted economic support. The Head of Lerep Village affirmed that the implementation of the Village Law has led to a tangible and significant decrease in poverty in the region. He explained:

"Before the Village Law, our poverty level was high. Based on the data—though it varies by institution—before the law, around 900 households were categorised as poor. Now it's around 235 households. That's about 5% of our village population, whereas it used to be close to 17%."

This decline reflects not only the effectiveness of redistributive mechanisms under the Village Law but also the successful integration of village-based social policies with community needs. As he further stated:

“The Village Law is pro-poor. It supports basic needs like housing, access to clean water, and healthcare. For example, if a resident doesn’t have a house or a proper toilet, we help them get one. This also improves sanitation and health access.”

This interview testimony highlights how the village administration, through decentralised authority granted by the law, directly addresses local living conditions. It also aligns with Supriatna’s (2014) observation that the Village Law requires village development planning to be conducted in a participatory manner—ensuring that programs funded by the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDDesa) truly reflect community needs.

The Village Law also allows funds to be reallocated more effectively, particularly when provincial governments take over infrastructure responsibilities. This enables the village government to focus its energy and resources on economic empowerment. The Village Head noted:

“We also provide economic interventions: forming tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), culinary markets, supporting small enterprises (UMKM), offering training and capital access. When we don’t have to worry about infrastructure, we can fully focus on empowering economically vulnerable residents.”

The transformation of Lerep into a thematic tourism village—featuring Kampung Durian, Kampung Sapi, Kampung Kopi, and Kampung Keripik—was facilitated by a community-based approach where each hamlet developed its own economic identity. This strategy was planned and implemented through village consensus meetings and supported by BUMDes Gerbang Lentera (Febrinastri & Fadilah, 2024).

The village also introduced Pasar Kuliner Jajanan Ndeso, a culinary market operating twice a month, which not only became a tourist attraction but allowed farmers and home industries to sell directly to consumers, stabilising local commodity prices and creating new revenue streams for women and informal workers (Waseso & Gozal, 2023).

As of 2023, poverty in the village declined significantly, with only 253 of 4,012 households remaining below the poverty line. This success was attributed by the village head to the empowerment mechanisms enabled through village autonomy and partnerships with government and private sectors (Sudjiman, 2023).

This localised, responsive, and bottom-up approach to economic development reflects the principle of subsidiarity embedded in the Village Law, which allows the

village to regulate and manage its own affairs based on its distinct assets and potential (Hariri, 2019). The principle of recognition further supports this by affirming the village's autonomy as a legal community unit with original rights—strengthening the legitimacy of the village's decisions and actions (Herry, 2015).

Moreover, the governance structure established under the Village Law fosters active community participation, a critical aspect of strengthening local empowerment. The Head of Village described this participatory process clearly:

“Every year we hold what’s called the Musyawarah Desa—a village-level meeting with community representatives. But before that, we conduct what we call Jaring Asmara (Community Aspiration Network) in each hamlet. Each neighbourhood (RT) proposes priorities which are then filtered into village-level priorities. So yes, community participation plays a big role. This is a connected, engaged society.”

This structured deliberation process corresponds to what Khaeril Anwar (2015) has described as an inclusive political forum that enables the community to collectively discuss and decide on strategic village matters. Through these deliberative mechanisms, residents are empowered not only to voice their needs but to shape the direction of village development.

These empowerment strategies were reinforced by government-backed certifications and funding such as the Satya Lencana Kepariwisata award and CSR support from Pertamina, which allowed the village to build tourism facilities and increase exposure to external stakeholders (Desa Wisata Lerep, 2024; Sudjiman, 2023).

Additionally, Lerep's designation as a Sustainable Tourism Village by the Ministry of Tourism further reflects how the Village Law framework aligns with national development goals to institutionalise community-led poverty alleviation (Desa Wisata Lerep, 2020).

The commitment to community empowerment in Lerep Village, facilitated by the Village Law, affirms the law's transformative role in shifting the locus of poverty alleviation to the grassroots. The village head's implementation of participatory development mirrors the principles enshrined in Government Regulation Number 43 of 2014 and the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 114 of 2014, which together serve to operationalise Law Number 6 of 2014.

It is also important to note that before the Village Law, the legal framework under Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government lacked sufficient attention to the distinct needs of village communities. As Herry (2015) notes, the Village Law introduced a significant breakthrough by structuring village administration, assets, rights, obligations, and finances in a way that empowers the local community.

Through this legal and administrative foundation, the Village Law has enabled more transparent, inclusive, and impactful development processes. The emphasis on participation, as evidenced in the Village Head's statements, aligns with the law's goal of ensuring that development is community-driven. By recognising the importance of local voices and empowering communities to act upon them, the Village Law fosters not only economic growth but social cohesion.

Therefore, the case of Lerep Village shows that when legal frameworks empower local governance, and when those entrusted with leadership exercise that power through inclusive and strategic decision-making, the fight against poverty can be deeply rooted in local knowledge and capacities. As Arliman (2019) highlights, the Village Law's impact has been transformational—fostering inclusive growth, strengthening community autonomy, and enabling villages to chart their own course out of poverty.

Strengthening of Local Empowerment in the Fight against Poverty through Village Law

The implementation of the Village Law in Lerep Village has not only created a legal framework for governance and development but also enabled the strategic use of BUMDes to serve as instruments for poverty alleviation. The Head of Lerep Village confirmed that the legal mandate for village economic autonomy was swiftly taken up at the local level. As he stated:

“As soon as the Village Law came into force, I immediately formed a Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). It manages tourism, waste, and other services. Our village is in a hilly area, so connectivity is difficult, but we try to improve services through the BUMDes.”

This statement reflects how the Village Law's provisions—particularly those empowering BUMDes to operate in public service and economic sectors—were translated into actionable plans in Lerep. The flexibility given by the law to establish and manage enterprises allowed the village to respond innovatively to its geographical and economic limitations.

Currently, the BUMDes of Lerep Village is primarily focused on fulfilling public service needs, but it holds the potential to evolve into a platform for local product development and industrial diversification. The Village Head elaborated:

“For now, our BUMDes mainly provides public services, but when that's settled, we want to move into product development. For example, our villagers grow cassava—why not turn it into derivative products like flour or moka? This requires capital.”

This demonstrates the ambition to transition from service provision into value-added production, consistent with the empowerment goals embedded in Law Number 6 of 2014 and explored in the works of Satria and Redhani (2020), which highlight the law's encouragement of entrepreneurship and trade within the village framework.

The linkage between land availability, food supply challenges, and the untapped potential of BUMDes in agriculture and livestock development was also discussed:

"There's a shortage of meat in Indonesia, yet villages like ours still have plenty of idle land. Why not use it for livestock? But again, we need capital. That's where BUMDes should come in, though currently it's still secondary, because we're still focused on reducing poverty and finishing infrastructure."

This aligns with the principle of subsidiarity, allowing villages to manage their own resources in response to specific local challenges (Hariri, 2019). It also highlights the phased approach to development under the Village Law: addressing essential services first, then expanding toward economic sustainability.

The Head of Village indicated a long-term strategy to shift village budget priorities toward BUMDes capitalisation once urgent poverty issues are managed:

"Once we suppress poverty, the next budget should go to strengthening BUMDes capital. That way we can develop local products into derivatives, generate jobs, and share profits."

This strategy demonstrates the Village Law's empowerment of local leaders to design development in accordance with local needs and timing. It also supports Ahadya and Herawati's (2017) assertion that the law equips village heads with a legally defined and actionable development mandate, including community empowerment and poverty alleviation.

The Village Head described BUMDes not only as an economic driver but also as a tool of social responsibility:

"BUMDes is like a corporate entity where 51% of shares belong to the village. It offers job opportunities for poor residents and generates CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funds."

For example, some people can't afford monthly payments for services. We let them pay by collecting and sorting inorganic waste, which they send to the 3R Waste Site under BUMDes. This way they're still protected. That's one of the BUMDes roles in fighting poverty."

This innovative mechanism—allowing residents to substitute monetary payments with community services—reflects the broader principles of solidarity and inclusiveness embedded in the Village Law and reflects the findings of Syukri et al.

(2018), who argue that cultural-based approaches in village tourism and development can serve as effective tools for empowerment and poverty alleviation.

As a designated tourism village, Lerep leverages cultural and environmental assets to drive inclusive development. The Village Law encourages such approaches, enabling the showcasing of local wisdom and traditional practices to attract tourism and stimulate the rural economy. According to Syaiful and Fafurida (2019), such tourism development leads to increased visitor numbers, extended stays, and ultimately rising income levels in the village.

BUMDes Gerbang Lentera also manages integrated tour packages (Paket Eduwisata) that include hands-on learning experiences such as rice planting, cow milking, and waste recycling. These activities generate income and increase community skillsets, directly targeting the economically vulnerable (Febrinastri & Fadilah, 2024).

Additionally, revenue from periodic culinary markets like Pasar Jajanan Ndeso—organised and managed by the BUMDes—has reached up to IDR 100 million in one day during peak tourism visits. This not only creates a revenue stream but serves as a financial cushion for low-income residents through BUMDes-facilitated food supply systems (Sudjiman, 2023).

The development of these BUMDes-led programmes is supported by a sustainability framework, as Lerep was awarded national certification as a Sustainable Tourism Village by the Ministry of Tourism, highlighting the strategic role of village enterprises in long-term poverty reduction (Desa Wisata Lerep, 2020).

Village authorities have also partnered with private and public sectors to channel CSR funds, such as the Rp1.6 billion grant from Pertamina, which was instrumental in improving tourism infrastructure and, by extension, expanding the scope of BUMDes services (Sudjiman, 2023).

Tourism-related activities managed by BUMDes—such as culinary markets, homestay programmes, and craft production—are not only income-generating but also anchor community participation and ownership in the development process. This is in line with the transparency mechanisms required by the Village Law, including the development of a Village Information System, which facilitates accountability and ensures that local stakeholders are kept informed and involved.

Thus, the special implementation of the Village Law in Lerep Village—through the strategic use of BUMDes and participatory governance—exemplifies how legal decentralisation can translate into meaningful economic and social transformation. The village leadership, empowered by law and backed by strong local involvement,

has adopted a stepwise but strategic approach: prioritising essential services and poverty alleviation, then gradually transitioning to enterprise development. This model ensures both immediate relief and long-term sustainability, demonstrating that targeted local implementation of national laws can be instrumental in defeating rural poverty.

Practical Lessons from Lerep Village

Over the past decade, Lerep Village has emerged as a model for how decentralised governance can be harnessed to combat rural poverty. Through strategic leadership, active community engagement, and a responsive adaptation of the Village Law, the village has transformed challenges into opportunities for inclusive development. The success of Lerep lies not in isolated interventions, but in the interconnected systems it has built—from economic initiatives to participatory planning and service innovation. To capture this integrated approach and offer inspiration for other villages, Table 1 consolidates the key lessons and methods that have enabled Lerep to shift from poverty to progress.

Table 1. Strategic Roadmap of Poverty Alleviation through Village Empowerment: The Lerep Model

Strategic Aspect	What Lerep Did	Why It Worked	Key Outcomes	Transferable Lessons
Leadership Vision	Village Head redefined his role as directly responsible for villagers' welfare—on par with regional/national leaders	Shifted mindset from administrative to developmental; embraced poverty alleviation as core mission	Political clarity, community trust, alignment with national development vision	Village heads must internalise welfare leadership, not just governance duties
Budget Optimisation	Leveraged budget from multiple levels (central, regency, provincial) to focus village funds on economic and social programmes	Reduced pressure on village budget for infrastructure; redirected to livelihood and empowerment projects	Infrastructure externally funded; village funds targeted at economic growth	Negotiate role-sharing with regional governments to free up village funds
Community Participation	Built participatory structures: RT-level forums ("Jaring Asmara"), followed by	Captured real community priorities; strengthened democratic	Inclusive planning; widespread support; fewer mismatches	Institutionalise bottom-up planning models rooted in community

	village consensus meetings (Musyawarah Desa)	legitimacy	between needs and programmes	voice
Data-Driven Focus on Poverty	Tracked number of poor households over time and targeted interventions (housing, sanitation, water) accordingly	Enabled focused, measurable progress with real-time poverty data	Poverty rate dropped from ~17% to 5%	Use household-level poverty tracking to direct aid with precision
Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes)	Created BUMDes Gerbang Lentera to manage waste, tourism, services, and revenue-generating activities	Enabled financial independence; responded to unique village needs; diversified economy	BUMDes became key platform for social innovation and enterprise	Prioritise early establishment of BUMDes as a local engine for inclusive development
CSR and Social Protection Innovation	Allowed poor residents to pay service fees with sorted waste sent to BUMDes recycling unit	Created dignity-based, non-cash contribution scheme for vulnerable households	Protected low-income groups while sustaining BUMDes operations	Develop alternative exchange models to include the poorest in village services
Tourism-Based Economic Empowerment	Developed thematic tourism: Kampung Sapi, Kampung Kopi, Durian, Keripik; offered cultural experiences	Transformed local resources into unique tourism attractions; fostered pride and identity	Jobs created, incomes raised, daily market sales reached IDR 100M	Use thematic branding of local resources to build sustainable tourism models
Women's Economic Participation	Enabled women to earn by selling at traditional culinary market twice a month, and during tourist visits	Opened inclusive earning spaces even with limited time; valued traditional skills	Women vendors reported monthly incomes up to IDR 3M; increased household resilience	Provide flexible economic opportunities for women grounded in local traditions
Education and Skills for Locals	Offered eduwisata: rice planting, dairy processing, eco-crafts, farming, homestay	Equipped villagers with soft and hard skills connected to real tourism needs	Enhanced labour value; strengthened tourism offering	Integrate local training into tourism strategy for inclusive growth

	management			
Crisis-Aware Development	Maintained clean, safe, sustainable environments through CHSE standards in post-pandemic tourism	Ensured resilience during crises like COVID-19; adapted development to new norms	Maintained tourism flow; sustained economic activity despite disruptions	Embed resilience principles into village tourism and BUMDes planning
Award-Winning Model	Recognised nationally for poverty reduction, sustainability, and innovation (e.g., Satya Lencana Kepariwisata; BRILian Award)	External validation encouraged continuous innovation; model for other villages	National recognition amplified visibility and access to support	Use awards as external benchmarking tools and inspiration to innovate further

Source: Author's analysis

Taken together, the elements outlined in Table 1 underscore Lerep Village's success in translating the Village Law into a dynamic and inclusive poverty alleviation strategy. The alignment of legal autonomy, community participation, and innovative local governance has enabled Lerep to move from a disadvantaged area to a recognised model of rural development. This structured yet adaptable framework offers valuable lessons for other villages seeking to build sustainable livelihoods, strengthen institutional resilience, and place communities at the centre of their development agenda.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Lerep Village illustrates how the Village Law, when applied with strategic vision and community commitment, can become a powerful engine for rural poverty alleviation. The law's institutional framework has empowered village heads not merely as administrative figures but as development leaders with real authority and responsibility. In the case of Lerep, the leadership role was not only legally structured but also harmonised with a sense of moral obligation to raise community welfare. By embracing this mandate, the village head utilised planning tools, transparent budgeting, and multi-level government collaboration to create a system that prioritised local needs and sustainability. The governance strategy became not just about managing resources but about enabling people—shifting the focus from dependency to empowerment.

This approach was further strengthened by inclusive decision-making, active citizen participation, and the creative use of BUMDes. These mechanisms made it possible for Lerep to channel resources into practical economic empowerment initiatives, such as eduwisata, thematic tourism villages, and community-run

markets—all designed to increase income and self-reliance. The village integrated social services with productive opportunities, allowing even low-income residents to participate through alternative contributions like waste-based payments. By building infrastructure and institutions step-by-step, Lerep moved from basic service provision to value-added local production, strengthening its resilience and expanding its economic base. The village's success stands as a concrete example of how local innovation, grounded in a national legal framework, can create systemic, long-term solutions to rural poverty—making Lerep not only a model of legal compliance, but a model of human-centred development.

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