

Community Participation in the Development of Mekar Sari Village, Kumpeh District, Muaro Jambi Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the extent of community participation in the development of Mekar Sari Village, Kumpeh District, Muaro Jambi Regency. Village development is not solely the responsibility of the government but also requires the active involvement of the local community. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study describes the stages of community participation, from problem identification and formulation, data collection, analysis, to drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations. The results indicate that community participation is still partial and uneven across all development sectors. Inhibiting factors identified include a lack of outreach, limited information, and the dominance of certain actors in decision-making. However, there are positive initiatives undertaken by Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and community groups that serve as a starting point for strengthening public participation. The conclusions of this study emphasize the importance of transparency, two-way communication, and empowerment of villagers to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

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1. Introduction

The enactment of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages was welcomed with joy by the Village Government, making villages more independent and prosperous [1]. Village Funds are the primary resource for villages to accommodate residents' aspirations in development planning and implementation. Citizen participation is expected to be more than symbolic, but active at all stages, from deliberation to program evaluation, to ensure transparent and sustainable results [2].

To accelerate village development and improve community welfare and alleviate poverty, the government established the Village Fund Allocation (ADD) policy [3]. This policy reflects the government's concern for village development. This government policy must be balanced with concrete actions from various political parties and the community. Village officials must not only address residents' administrative issues but also innovate to develop village resources. This charitable partner is the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) Arum Sejahtera [4].

However, many villages still face serious obstacles to community involvement. In Subun Village, NTT, for example, although the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdus) is held regularly, public attendance is very limited, and decisions are dominated by village elites [5]. In Sukabumi (Cikembar Village), although residents are given space to express their aspirations, their proposals are rarely implemented due to the dominance of local decision-makers [6]. Meanwhile, in Cijaku Village, Lebak, based on an analysis based

on Arnstein's ladder, community participation only reached the placation level, meaning their voices are heard symbolically but do not influence the final decision [7].

Reviews in other areas also reveal similar phenomena. In Bulukumba (Kidang Village), community participation in the preparation of the Village Budget (APBDes) has increased, but the quality of ideas and direct contributions remains low. Similarly, in Bandung (several villages), community attendance is merely a formality without having a significant impact on development outcomes [8]. This indicates a gap between the intention of involvement and implementation practices on the ground.

Research in villages in Indragiri Hulu Regency shows that although communities are involved in deliberations, low political awareness and education are major obstacles to fully utilizing participation, including the evaluation and monitoring stages. [9] Meanwhile, in Sidorejo Village, Sawahan District, Nganjuk Regency, although participation levels vary, common obstacles such as apathy, geographical landscape, and socio-economic constraints continue to hamper the effectiveness of participatory processes. [10]

In the relatively under-researched context of Mekar Sari Village, Kumpeh District, Muaro Jambi Regency, East Sumatra, it is important to understand the extent to which local communities participate in village development. The main research questions include: (i) to what extent residents are actively involved in each stage of village development; (ii) factors that hinder and support participation; and (iii) what innovations differentiate local participation patterns from those studied in other regions.

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive method, with data collected through in-depth interviews with village officials and residents, participant observation, and documents on development plans and implementation. The analysis was conducted through field and literature triangulation using Arnstein's ladder framework and social capital theory as the basis for analyzing the quality of participation and the sustainability of impact [11].

This research's contributions include: (i) specific empirical data on community participation in Mekar Sari Village; (ii) comparative analysis with national practices to assess effectiveness and local innovation; and (iii) evidence-based policy recommendations that can strengthen the role of communities in village development to make it more inclusive and transformative.

Other studies also support the importance of sustainable participation quality. A study in Madiun Regency highlighted the crucial role of dialogue and transparency in fostering citizen participation [12]. Furthermore, research in Blora Regency demonstrated the need to redesign engagement models so that they are not limited to the formal level [13]. Rafi'atul Hadawiya [14] emphasized the importance of public accountability so that communities feel their participation has a real impact. Kurniawan [15] emphasized that village autonomy must be accompanied by political awareness and local capacity so that community involvement is not merely symbolic.

2. Method

This research was carried out through the following five stages:



Figure 1. Research Stages

2.1.1. Problem Identification

Problem Identification: This stage aims to identify the problems in the research so that the objectives achieved align with the expected results of the research process [16]. This was conducted by directly observing the conditions of community participation in development in Mekar Sari Village, Kumpeh District, Muaro Jambi Regency. Researchers observed social phenomena, such as the extent of community involvement in village deliberations, the implementation of physical development, and activity supervision. The observations revealed a gap between village development planning and the level of community participation, both in terms of involvement and their perceptions of development. This problem identification provides an important foundation for understanding the context of the problems that actually occur in the field.

2.1.2. Problem Formulation

Once the problem is identified, the next step is to formulate the problem systematically and in a focused manner. Problem formulation is used to formulate research questions that will be answered through data collection and analysis. In this research, the problem formulation focuses on the forms of community participation in village development, the factors that influence this level of participation, and the obstacles encountered in its implementation. By clearly formulating the problem, researchers can determine the direction and scope of the research to ensure it remains relevant to the desired objectives.

2.1.3. Data Collection

Data collection begins after the problem formulation is formulated. At this stage, researchers go directly to the field to obtain primary and secondary data. Data are collected through observations of development activities, interviews with community leaders and village officials, and the collection of documents such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes), the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes), and development implementation reports. This process is carried out systematically to ensure that the data obtained is accurate, relevant, and reflects the actual conditions of community participation.

2.1.4. Data Analysis

The next stage is data analysis, which is conducted after all information has been collected. Data are analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach, namely by interpreting the meaning behind the collected data. Researchers group data based on specific themes or categories relevant to the research problem, such as forms of participation, obstacles, and development impacts. This analysis aims to identify patterns, relationships, or trends that describe community involvement in village development. Through this process, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the social conditions that are the focus of the research.

2.1.5. Drawing Conclusions and Developing Recommendations

The final stage of this research is drawing conclusions and developing recommendations. The conclusions are based on the results of the previous data analysis. The researcher summarizes the main findings regarding community participation in village development and assesses the successes and challenges faced. Based on these conclusions, the researcher also provides practical recommendations for increasing community participation, including through empowerment approaches, information transparency, and capacity building for village communities. This stage concludes the research series and contributes to the development of more inclusive and participatory village development policies.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Community Participation in Planning and Decision-Making

Community participation in the planning and decision-making stages of development in Mekar Sari Village is a crucial foundation for determining the direction and policies of development that are oriented towards the needs of the residents. The Mekar Sari Village community is actively involved in various deliberation forums, such as the Hamlet Deliberation (Musdus) and the Village Deliberation (Musdes), which are regularly held by the Village Government. These forums provide a forum for the community to express their aspirations regarding various development sectors, such as road infrastructure, agriculture, education, and community economic empowerment.

During these deliberations, villagers are given ample opportunity to propose priority activities, consider the scale of needs, and agree on which programs are worthy of funding in the current fiscal year. All aspirations collected are then summarized in the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes), which is a derivative of the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes). The RKPDDes is generally prepared in July and is funded openly by the Village Budget (APBDDes). This activity involved not only Village Officials and the Village Consultative Body (BPD), but also community leaders, village institutions, and youth.

3.2. Community Participation in Development Implementation

In addition to planning, community participation was also evident in the implementation of development activities in Mekar Sari Village. The community contributed both labor through mutual cooperation and community service, as well as materials such as food, building materials, and tools. Collective awareness of the importance of togetherness in village development is a value that continues to be maintained and passed down from generation to generation.

Some concrete examples of community participation are seen in the construction of neighborhood roads, the construction of drainage channels, the construction of small bridges, and the renovation of public buildings such as the village hall and places of worship. During the implementation, residents volunteered as field workers, logistics providers, and members of the implementation monitoring team. This role demonstrates that the community is not merely a beneficiary but also a key actor in development.

Funds used for development implementation come from various sources, including Village Funds, Village Fund Allocations (ADD), Provincial Financial Assistance, and community self-help. This diversity of funding sources demonstrates that development in Mekar Sari Village relies not solely on central government funding but also on the initiative and support of the local community. A spirit of mutual cooperation and a strong sense of ownership are key to the village's success. The details are as follows:

Table 1. Mekar Sari Village Fund Assistance

No	Funding Sources	Budget (Rp)	Description
1	Village Funds (APBN)	Rp 820.685.000,00	The total village funds were fully allocated, with 100% realized to support the development of village infrastructure and services.
2	Village Fund Allocation (ADD)	Rp 600.450.000,00	Local government allocations for village development programs were realized at Rp476,520,200.00, or 79.36%.
3	Provincial Financial Assistance	Rp 100.000.000,00	Additional funds from Jambi Province were realized at Rp30,000,000.00 (~30%).
4	Other Village Original Revenue	Rp 76.607.400,00	Realized village original revenue was Rp21,100,000.00 (27.54% realized).
5	Tax and Levy Revenue Sharing	Rp 34.263.000,00	Realized at Rp18,794,000.00 (~54.85%).

3.3. Participation in the Utilization of Development Results

The participation of the Mekar Sari Village community in utilizing development results demonstrates their active involvement in maintaining, using, and maintaining the facilities that have been built. The quality and quantity of village development results serve as benchmarks for the success of programs implemented by the village government. This success is evident in infrastructure improvements such as neighborhood roads, drainage channels, the construction of religious facilities, and sports facilities, which are now directly utilized by the community.

The community utilizes development results not only for daily activities but also to support social and economic activities. For example, the paved and cemented village road now facilitates access to agricultural product transportation, improves community mobility, and stimulates local economic activity. This demonstrates that the development implemented has had a positive impact and its benefits are directly felt by the village community.

3.4. Participation in Development Evaluation

The Mekar Sari Village community also participates in development evaluation activities through various deliberation forums and evaluative meetings facilitated by the village government and the sub-district. During this activity, residents provided input, assessed the results of the development that had been implemented, and expressed their aspirations and criticisms regarding obstacles encountered in the field.

Evaluation involving the community is crucial because it serves as a means to ensure transparency, accountability, and the sustainability of village development programs. Accountability documents, such as reports, activity documentation, and physical evidence of development results, are also presented to the community as a form of transparency. This fosters a sense of shared responsibility between the village government and residents, while strengthening the community's role in overseeing more targeted development in the future.

3.5. Factors in Village Development in Infrastructure in Mekar Sari Village

1. Supporting Factors

Community participation in Mekar Sari Village is a crucial factor supporting the success of village infrastructure development. The community is actively involved in development activities, both through mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and non-material support such as providing meals for workers. Cooperation between residents and the village government is well-established, creating synergy at every stage of development.

When infrastructure such as roads or bridges is damaged, the community promptly reports to village officials with clear information about the location and condition of the damage. This helps the village government prioritize development and repairs, and facilitates swift action as needed.

2. Inhibiting Factors

Despite high community participation, infrastructure development in Mekar Sari Village still faces several obstacles. One of these is the limited village budget, which is not always sufficient to cover all development needs. When urgent damage occurs and village funds are insufficient, the village government often has to seek alternative solutions, including applying for assistance at the district or provincial level. This process can be time-consuming, ultimately delaying the implementation of needed infrastructure repairs.

4. Conclusion

The research results, it can be concluded that community participation plays a crucial role in the development process in Mekar Sari Village, Kumpoh District, Muaro Jambi Regency. This participation is evident in the involvement of residents in various development activities, including mutual cooperation,

contributions of labor, ideas, and participation in village deliberation forums. The community's presence in the planning and implementation of development programs demonstrates that village development is not solely the responsibility of the village government, but rather a collaborative effort of all elements of society.

Development activities undertaken in Mekar Sari Village, such as the construction of neighborhood roads, improvements to educational facilities, and the construction of other public facilities, have been largely effective due to community support and cooperation. The community also demonstrated a proactive attitude by reporting damaged infrastructure to the village government and assisting with problem-solving on the ground, including providing labor and logistical support during construction.

Furthermore, a harmonious relationship between the village government and the community is key to the success of this participation. The village government provides a space for participation through deliberations, provides transparent information, and manages the village budget openly. The community's high level of trust in the village government has also encouraged increased participation in the proposed development programs.

Overall, the successful development in Mekar Sari Village is the result of synergy between village government policies and community engagement. Community participation has significantly contributed to accelerating sustainable village development and strengthening a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the village's progress.

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