

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF VILLAGES THROUGH PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL METHOD TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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ABSTRACT

Abstract: This community service aims to strengthen the village in achieving SDGs. The strengthening focuses on two aspects: empowering the rural community's economy and increasing the community's understanding of the importance of education. This activity takes place in Desa Balangtanaya, Kecamatan Polombangkeng Utara, Kabupaten Takalar, Sulawesi Selatan. PRA approach is utilized as the method for this activity, which is a participatory approach used in community-based development in rural areas. The PRA method involves three stages: (a) direct observation; (b) FGD; and (c) guidance and mentoring for one month. The benefits of this community service include strengthening the village's economy and improving the community's knowledge of education. The partners in this activity are the Balangtanaya Village community, consisting of 30 participants including Bumdes managers, PKK women, and community members. Evaluation is conducted through direct monitoring, interviews, and analysis of activity outcomes. The achieved results include a 20% increase in education knowledge (softskill) and a 15% increase in the village's economic value (hardskill).

Keywords: PRA; SDGs; Strengthening; Villages; Development.



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A. INTRODUCTION

The milestones of the SDGs at the global level towards sustainable development began before the 1970s (Labadi, 2022). The first steps towards a different growth agenda were made in the 1970s when the "limits to growth" highlighted the disparities with the increasing needs of a growing population, limited resources that the planet can provide, and escalating pollution. In the 1980s, the Brundtland Report defined sustainable development as a three-dimensional approach: economic, social, and environmental, emphasizing not only the interaction between goals but also global interdependence and the need for collective action to achieve them (Bocean *et al.*, 2022). Several ambitious strategies were prepared, notably the Kyoto Protocol, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which currently shape global policies. The European Union has always been at the forefront of sustainability efforts with its ambitious goals, which not only encompass the achievement of the SDGs but also go further, such as moving towards a circular development approach (Redek *et al.*, 2020)(Moses *et al.*, 2022).

The PBB has launched sustainability development programs through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to support local governments and regions in their 2030 agenda at the local level. In the context of cities, sustainable development has also been approached through regulations, such as ISO 37120:2017 "Sustainable development of communities: Indicators for city services and quality of life." These instruments share similarities in providing parameters for public services to citizens and promoting uniform social and economic growth in urban environments (Moschen *et al.*, 2019)(Moses *et al.*, 2022). The context of Indonesia, sustainable development is "approached" through additional points within the SDGs, known as Village SDGs or SDGs Desa.

A village is the smallest administrative unit within the governmental structure of Indonesia. Villages, with their unique characteristics, have been a focus of attention by the government since ancient times (Rayyani *et al.*, 2022)(Taupiqurrahman *et al.*, 2023). During the Old Order era, villages already had special autonomy, but the naming of villages varied across regions. For example, in West Sumatra, they are called Nagari, in Aceh they are called Gampong, in Papua and East Kalimantan they are called Kampung, in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, they are called Lembang, and so on (Zainal, 2016). The different names were later standardized during the New Order era with the enactment of the Village Government Law, namely Law Number 5 of 1979 on Village Governance. This law standardized the naming of villages while respecting the diversity and customary regulations applicable in each village.

In 2014, the government issued Law Number 6 of 2014 on Villages. One of the objectives of formulating this law was to strengthen villages as subjects of development. This means that development is transformed, shifting the

focus from urban areas to villages. This point requires special attention, including from academics, to oversee the good intentions of the law (Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages).

On September 25, 2015, history was made when United Nations member states adopted an agenda called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs build upon the previous global agenda known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The SDGs consist of seventeen comprehensive sustainable development goals that encompass the three dimensions of social, economic, and environmental aspects for the benefit of both humanity and the planet. The SDGs are set to be achieved by the year 2030. Indonesia is one of the 193 member states committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs measure all aspects of development holistically. At this point, Village SDGs play a role in uplifting the well-being of Indonesian society. The objective of this paper is to critically examine the concept of multi-stakeholder partnerships in relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and propose a multi-stakeholder partnership framework that enables the implementation of sustainable development goals (Eweje *et al.*, 2021)(Moses *et al.*, 2022)(Agustono *et al.*, 2022)(Masrikhiyah *et al.*, 2022).

Village SDGs refer to the National SDGs and Global SDGs, which represent integrated efforts to accelerate sustainable development in villages through the realization of poverty-free villages, hunger-free villages, healthy and prosperous villages, quality rural education, women's involvement in village development, access to clean water and sanitation in villages, clean and renewable energy in villages, equitable economic growth in villages, village infrastructure and innovation based on local needs, villages without disparities, safe and comfortable rural settlements, environmentally conscious consumption and production in villages, climate-resilient villages, villages that care for marine environments, villages that care for land environments, peaceful and just villages, partnerships for village development, and dynamic village institutions and adaptive village culture (Brahimi & Bensaid, 2019)(Sertyesilisik, 2023). These are the Village SDGs expected to be achieved by 2030. With focused development based on these eighteen Village SDGs, it is hoped that villages will be able to guide development planning based on the actual conditions of the village for the benefit and well-being of rural communities.

Based on the eighteen points of Village SDGs mentioned above, we have chosen to focus this Community Service activity on the seventeenth point, which is partnership for village development. This point has captured our attention because out of the total number of villages in Indonesia, which is 83,381 villages spread across 34 provinces, only around 5,000 villages have implemented partnership programs (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). However, partnership for village development is crucial as it serves as a platform for implementing the other seventeen Village SDGs. Partnerships essentially

provide a means for implementing the remaining seventeen Village SDGs (Rahayu *et al.*, 2023)(Nasution & Karima Wardani, 2023).

The village we have chosen as the partner for this Community Service activity is Balangtanaya Village, in the North Polombangkeng District, Takalar Regency. This village is approximately 27.7 kilometers away from Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, with a travel time of 42 minutes to 1 hour. The village is located right in front of the Takalar Sugar Factory, which is one of the business units owned by PT. Perkebunan Nusantara XIV. As we enter this village, we are greeted by the sight of sugarcane fields managed by the community in collaboration with the company.

We explored the profile of Balangtanaya Village by surfing the internet, but we encountered some difficulty in finding comprehensive information about the village. The village profile available at <http://desabalangtanaya.blogspot.com/2017/08/profil-desa-balangtanaya-takalar.html> does not provide adequate information, and the data presented within it is from 2015. One of the Information provided is regarding the population and highest level of education of Balangtanaya Village residents in 2015. In that year, the population was 2180 people (Blogspot Desa Balangtanaya, 2022).

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There were 748 people whose educational background was not recorded. These findings motivate us to implement SDG 17 which is related to SDG 9 which focuses on partnerships in infrastructure and village innovation according to community needs. The current era demands the application of technology in various fields, including in rural areas. The village website which contains all relevant information about the village, starting from a complete village profile to the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget Implementation report (APBDesa), should be included on the village website as a form of transparency and accountability.

Besides the data from the tables above, we conducted interviews with the Head of Balangtanaya Village, Mr. Sundardi, S.Pd, and one of the villagers regarding the economic situation of the community. From the interviews, we found that the majority of the villagers are involved in farming and gardening, with an average income below one million Indonesian rupiah per month (for farmers and gardeners), and a small portion work as civil servants or in private sector jobs. We do not have precise data on the exact numbers due to limitations in village data collection. Most of the community members also work as seasonal factory laborers, employed in the Takalar Sugar Factory during the sugarcane harvest season. There are no community or

women's business groups in the village. Agricultural products are sold directly to the market without being processed. For example, sweet potatoes from the gardens are sold immediately to the nearest market upon harvest. Currently, there are no villagers who process sweet potatoes into higher-value products. The same applies to ballo, a traditional alcoholic beverage from South Sulawesi, which is sold for consumption without being processed into other products with higher value and benefits for the community.

Based on the analysis of the situation above, the problem statement can be formulated as follows: (1) Low income of the community; and (2) low level of education in the village. We will delve into these two focus areas using the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method. The solutions we can offer to address the issues faced by our partner are as follows:

1. Empowerment of Rural Community Economy

Conducting business skills training for members of Bumdes and other villagers to enhance their capabilities in managing businesses and marketing local products.

2. Increasing Community Understanding of Education

Organizing outreach programs and socialization sessions on the importance of education, particularly targeting PKK mothers and the general community, to raise awareness about the benefits of education for individual and community development.

The objective of this activity is to make a tangible contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level, particularly in Balangtanaya Village. We aim to provide both soft skill and hard skill empowerment to the village community through the participatory approach of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). By empowering the economy and enhancing understanding of education, we hope to improve the welfare and standard of living of the village community and support the realization of inclusive and sustainable development.

B. METHOD

The method used is the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, which involves several steps: (a) direct observation, (b) Focus Group Discussions, and (c) three months of facilitation. The PRA method is considered most suitable for this community engagement activity because it encourages community participation in the process and development of activities (Rietbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998); (Muhsin *et al.*, 2018); (Trisnowati *et al.*, 2021).

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a participatory approach used in community-based development in rural areas. PRA involves active involvement of local residents in the process of information gathering, problem analysis, and action planning to address the challenges faced by rural communities. The aim of PRA is to build a better understanding of the

social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions in rural areas. In this method, the village government, Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDesa), and local community leaders in Balangtanaya Village become partners in the decision-making process, ensuring that their understanding and needs are recognized and considered in the planning and implementation of development programs.

The partner is Balangtanaya village, located specifically in North Polombangkeng District, Takalar Regency, South Sulawesi. As of 2015, Balangtanaya village consisted of five hamlets: Maccini Baji Hamlet, Balangtanaya Hamlet, Je'ne Dinging Hamlet, Balangngasana Hamlet, and Panaikang Lompo Hamlet. The total population of Balangtanaya village was 2,180 people. The stakeholders involved in this community service activity are the Village Officials (Village Head and staff), the Women's Empowerment and Family Welfare Movement (PKK), the Village-Owned Enterprises (Bumdes) managers, and the general community, totaling 40 individuals. The series of participatory PRA techniques we are using in this activity are:

1. Direct Observation

Direct observation is conducted at the outset of the program by directly observing the activities and conditions in the village of Balangtanaya. Observation also continues throughout the program, monitoring the implementation of activities, including how well the activities are carried out, the level of partner participation, and any challenges encountered during the process. Through direct observation, we then gain a deeper understanding of the situations and issues faced by our partners. This allows us to directly observe the dynamics at play and identify the factors that influence the performance and sustainability of their businesses, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Condition of Desa Balangtanaya, 2022. (a) Desa Balangtanaya entrance gate; and (b) One of the community activities in Desa Balangtananya

2. Focus Group Discussions

Focused group discussions are conducted by gathering the Village Head, BUMDES Managers, PKK Women's Movement Leaders, Community Leaders, and community members to discuss various issues and potentials they possess. Through these discussions, we create a space for partners to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas on how to address the challenges they face.

These discussions also allow partners to express their hopes, needs, and aspirations regarding the future development of their businesses. The minutes of the FGD serve as our data to analyze the potential of the village community, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Focus Group Discussion with village officials, BUMDes, Community Leaders and PKK Activists

3. Mentoring for Approximately One Month

Mentoring is provided by offering guidance and support to partners over a specified period, which is one month. Through this mentoring process, we assist partners in implementing previously formulated solutions. The mentoring activities include hands-on practice in making cassava chips, compiling financial reports for BUMDES, strategies for branding BUMDES products, practical guidance on financial reporting for BUMDES, and awareness sessions on the importance of education for the future of children and families, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.



Figure 3. Assistance for the village government and the Desa Balangtanaya community



Figure 4. Discussion and sharing with village communities regarding proper education for village communities

Through these techniques, partners can share their knowledge about the issues and available resources, as well as discuss alternative solutions and actions that can be taken. For more details, see the Table 1.

Table 1. PKM Activities and Achievements

Activity	Implementation Duration	Evaluation	Achievement Targets	Percentage of Achievement
Direct Observation	1 Week	Evaluation through direct observation involves monitoring the implementation of the participatory PRA techniques, including how well the activities are conducted, the level of participation from the partners, and any challenges encountered during the process.	75%%	100%
Focus Group Discussion	2 Times	FGDs provide an opportunity for partners to openly discuss their experiences, insights, and feedback regarding the participatory PRA techniques used in the activity. The evaluation involves analyzing the discussions to identify key themes, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.	30%	83%
Mentoring	1 month	Evaluation during the mentoring period includes assessing the progress made by partners in implementing solutions and actions discussed during participatory PRA techniques. Mentoring is conducted	30	67%

for activities such as: practicing making cassava chips, compiling financial reports for BUMDES, branding BUMDES products, practical guidance on financial reporting for BUMDES, and raising awareness about the importance of education for the future of children and families. Evaluation encompasses the application of knowledge and skills acquired, as well as changes observed in the community as a result of the implemented actions.

The percentage of program achievement can be calculated by comparing the achieved results with the set targets. For direct observation, the target was 75%, and the achieved result was 75%, resulting in a 100% achievement rate. For Focus Group Discussions (FGD), the target achievement was 30%, and it was achieved by 25%, resulting in an achievement rate of 83%. In mentoring, the achievement target was 30%, and it was achieved by 20%, resulting in a program achievement percentage of 67%.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The population and highest level of education of Balangtanaya Village residents in 2015 can be seen in the following Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Total Population of Desa Balangtanaya, 2015

Hamlet Name	Total population
Maccini Baji	449
Balangtanaya	413
Je'ne Dinging	574
Balangngasana	407
Panaikang Lompo	337
Amount	2180

Source: Blogspot Desa Balangtanaya, 2022

Table 3. Desa Balangtanaya Community Education Level in 2015

Level of Education	Total Population
Did not finish elementary school	716
Did not finish junior high school	208
Did not finish high school	298
Bachelor	210
Unregistered	748
Amount	2180

Sumber: Blogspot Desa Balangtanaya, 2022

Besides the data from the tables above, we conducted interviews with the Head of Balangtanaya Village, Mr. Sundardi, S.Pd, and one of the villagers regarding the economic situation of the community. From the interviews, we found that the majority of the villagers are involved in farming and gardening, with an average income below one million Indonesian rupiah per month (for farmers and gardeners), and a small portion work as civil servants or in private sector jobs. We do not have precise data on the exact numbers due to limitations in village data collection. Most of the community members also work as seasonal factory laborers, employed in the Takalar Sugar Factory during the sugarcane harvest season. There are no community or women's business groups in the village. Agricultural products are sold directly to the market without being processed. For example, sweet potatoes from the gardens are sold immediately to the nearest market upon harvest. Currently, there are no villagers who process sweet potatoes into higher-value products. The same applies to ballo, a traditional alcoholic beverage from South Sulawesi, which is sold for consumption without being processed into other products with higher value and benefits for the community. Based on the direct observation, Focus Group Discussions, and mentoring conducted for approximately one month using the PRA method, the following outcomes of the activity can be presented:

1. Direct Observasion

We conducted direct observations at the beginning of the activity. Desa Balangtanaya is located quite close to the sugar factory PG Takalar, which is owned by PT. Perkebunan Nusantara XIV. Based on our observations, we found that the majority of the community in Desa Balangtanaya work as farmers. Rice, corn, sweet potatoes, and sugarcane are the agricultural products generated from this village. During the sugarcane harvesting season, the PG Takalar company involves the local community, including those from Desa Balangtanaya, as seasonal workers at the PG Takalar sugar factory.

During the program implementation, we also conducted ongoing observations, monitoring the program's execution, including the quality of activities, the level of partner participation, and the challenges encountered during the process. Several programs were implemented, including practicing making cassava chips, compiling financial reports for BUMDES, branding

BUMDES products, practical guidance on financial reporting for BUMDES, and raising awareness about the importance of education for the future of children and families. Based on our observations, the cassava chip-making activity was attended by five members of the PKK, including the PKK Chairwoman. The activity lasted for one day, utilizing available resources to the fullest. The outcome was cassava chips; however, improvements are needed, such as taste, thickness, shelf life, and packaging. The branding and packaging were monitored for one month. The practice of compiling financial reports for BUMDES was conducted in a single day, with mentoring provided over one month to observe the development of the BUMDES managers' skills in preparing financial reports. The education awareness session was held in a single session, attended by village officials and the community.

2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The FGD was conducted with the Village Head, the Head of the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDesa), the chairwoman of the local women's organization (PKK), and community leaders. The results of the FGD indicated community participation, with the village agreeing to actively participate in our activities, considering them as part of the village's programs, thus contributing to the success of the village's initiatives. The FGD outcomes serve as a guide in formulating activity plans and service programs to strengthen the village government's efforts in achieving Village SDGs.

3. Accompaniment

Based on the results of the FGD, we decided to focus this activity on two things, namely:

a. Increase People's Income

The majority of the community in Balangtanaya Village work as farmers. Agricultural products such as rice, sweet potatoes, and corn are mostly sold directly to the nearest market, while some are consumed by the farmers themselves. The community lacks knowledge on how to process agricultural products into value-added goods that can reach a wider market. During the FGD, we directed the participants to find solutions that they can implement. They suggested that sweet potatoes could be processed into sweet potato chips. We learned together about the required tools, materials, and the process of making the chips. The next activities will focus on the production process, packaging, and marketing of the sweet potato chips. Another agricultural product that came to mind for further processing by the community is the enau plant. Enau sap can be processed into brown sugar. We learned together about the raw materials and the techniques of making brown sugar from enau sap. The activities related to this will be followed up in the next program.

The natural environment of Balangtanaya Village, with its predominantly paddy fields, is also a potential tourist attraction. Through the FGD and accompanying sessions, we explored alternative options beyond agricultural processing. The village community came up with the idea of developing a village tourism concept, showcasing the captivating natural landscapes. This village tourism concept will be the focus of our next program, which we will further develop together. The diverse ideas from the community, such as village tourism and agricultural product processing, are expected to help improve the economic income of the residents of Desa Balangtanaya.

- b. Increase public understanding of the importance of education.

Table 2 above shows the low level of education among the community in Balangtanaya Village. The importance of providing children with proper and sustainable education is a separate topic of discussion in our training activities. Through this activity, we agree that education is the key to transforming lives and creating a better future. Through education, individuals can acquire the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to develop their personal potential and contribute to the progress of society. Awareness of the importance of education needs to be increased through campaigns, seminars, and discussions like this. The government, educational institutions, NGOs, and the community must work together to educate the public about the benefits of education and the negative consequences of lack of access or participation in education.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The advantages of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach include increasing community participation in the development process, strengthening local understanding, promoting community ownership of development programs, and enhancing the effectiveness of development interventions. By directly involving the local population, PRA enables us to accompany and guide communities in thinking about alternative solutions and problem-solving. This approach has proven to be effective in building community capacity, fostering active participation, and creating a better understanding of local realities to achieve sustainable change. Based on the outcomes and discussions from the activities described above, several recommendations can be made to further enhance the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Balangtanaya Village:

The proposed strategies for sustainable development in Balangtanaya Village encompass economic diversification through value-adding activities and village tourism, community empowerment through skills training and capacity building, promotion of education and lifelong learning, sustainable development planning with stakeholder involvement, establishment of

monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and fostering networking and collaboration with various stakeholders. These initiatives aim to enhance economic opportunities, empower the community, promote education, address social and environmental challenges, and ensure effective implementation and monitoring of sustainable development goals. By implementing these recommendations, Balangtanaya Village can further strengthen its efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, improve the well-being of its residents, and create a more sustainable and resilient community for future generations.

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