

Transforming Policy into Action through Strategic Village Fund Optimization for Sustainable Rural Development

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji efektivitas pemanfaatan Dana Desa (program hibah pemerintah untuk desa) berbasis partisipasi masyarakat dalam mencapai Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) di tingkat desa di Kecamatan Kemuning, Kabupaten Indragiri Hilir, Provinsi Riau. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran eksploratif sekuensial, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan analisis korelasi Pearson kuantitatif dengan analisis konten kualitatif Miles dan Huberman (1994) di tiga desa yang dipilih secara sengaja: Batu Ampar (berstatus independen), Kemuning Muda (berkembang), dan Tuk Jimun (maju). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tren peningkatan yang signifikan pada tingkat partisipasi Musrenbangdes (forum perencanaan pembangunan desa tahunan) (36–100%) dan realisasi anggaran penuh (100%) untuk tahun 2022–2024, dengan total penyerapan sebesar Rp 6,75 miliar. Alokasi Dana Desa terutama diarahkan pada pilar ekonomi SDG 8 (45%), diikuti oleh pilar sosial SDG 3 (35%) dan pilar lingkungan SDG 6 dan 15 (20%). Korelasi Pearson menghasilkan $r = 1,000$ (Sig. < 0,01), menunjukkan hubungan linier sempurna antara alokasi anggaran dan realisasi. Model partisipatif Kemuning secara empiris mendukung teori Pembangunan Berbasis Komunitas (Community Driven Development/CDD) Bank Dunia dan tangga partisipasi Arnstein (1969), dengan budaya kerja sama dan sinergi timbal balik antara BPD-Kades (Badan Konsultatif Desa dan Kepala Desa) diidentifikasi sebagai faktor kunci keberhasilan. Studi ini merekomendasikan replikasi model ini di 429 desa terpencil di Provinsi Riau dengan mendigitalisasi Siskeudes (layanan keuangan desa) dan memperkuat mandat BPD.

Kata Kunci: Dana Desa, partisipasi masyarakat, SDG Desa, tata kelola yang baik, Kecamatan Kemuning

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of utilizing the community participation-based Village Fund (Dana Desa, a government grant program for villages) in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the village level in Kemuning Sub-district, Indragiri Hilir Regency, Riau Province. Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative Pearson correlation analysis with qualitative Miles and Huberman (1994) content analysis across three purposively selected villages: Batu Ampar (independent status), Kemuning Muda (developing), and Tuk Jimun (advanced). The findings reveal a significant upward trend in Musrenbangdes (annual village development planning forum) participation rates (36–100%) and complete budget realization (100%) for 2022–2024, with a total absorption of IDR 6.75 billion. Village Fund allocation was primarily directed toward the economic pillar of SDG 8 (45%), followed by the social pillar of SDG 3 (35%) and the environmental pillar of SDGs 6 and 15 (20%). Pearson's correlation yielded $r = 1.000$ (Sig. < 0.01), indicating a perfect linear relationship between budget allocation and realization. Kemuning's participatory model empirically supports the World Bank's Community Driven Development (CDD) theory and Arnstein's (1969) participation ladder, with a culture of mutual cooperation and synergy between BPD-Kades (Village Consultative Body and Village Head) identified as key success factors. The study recommends replicating this model across 429 remote villages in Riau Province by digitalizing Siskeudes (village financial services) and strengthening BPD mandates.

Keywords: Village Fund, community participation, Village SDGs, good governance, Kemuning Sub-district

INTRODUCTION

National development focuses on improving community welfare by providing basic infrastructure like roads, clean water, and electricity, as well as public services such as healthcare and education. It also aims to build local capacity by enhancing skills and resources within communities. Since the passage of Law Number 6 of 2014 on Villages, the government has shifted financial authority from the central to local governments through Village Funds. By 2025, these funds will have totaled more than IDR 500 trillion. The main goal is to reduce extreme poverty and close gaps in rural areas (Kementerian Keuangan RI, 2025). In Riau Province, especially in Indragiri Hilir Regency, Village Funds increased from IDR 175.7 billion in 2021 to IDR 182.3 billion in 2025. Kemuning District received a large portion for its 11 villages.

Village Funds are now used for more than just building infrastructure. They also support the Village Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include 18 national priorities, such as ending poverty, promoting clean energy, and encouraging economic growth (Tampubolon & Mardiana, 2022). In the Kemuning District, the amount of Village Funds allocated to each village in 2024–2025 varies. For example, Keritang Village received Rp1.91 billion in 2025, followed by Batu Ampar Village with Rp1.57 billion, with Kemuning Muda and Tuk Jimun following. However, Kemuning's Village Development Index (IDM) was 0.7601 in 2024, below the provincial average of 0.8102. Most villages are still classified as "developing" (BPS Indragiri Hilir Regency, 2024).

Ideally, Village Fund management follows four steps as set out in Permendesa PDTT Number 21 of 2020: (1) participatory planning through Musrenbangdes (Village Development Planning Meeting); (2) self-managed implementation with cash-for-work programs; (3) supervision by the Village Consultative Body (BPD); and (4) open accountability through public reports. These good governance principles ensure transparency, accountability, and participation, as highlighted by UNDP (1997). However, data from Kemuning show that participation in Musrenbang is only about 40–72%, and BPD supervision is not yet optimal. This shows a gap between what the regulations require and what happens in practice.

Even though Village Fund allocations have increased, progress on the SDGs remains uneven across villages, especially in the economic (SDG 8: decent work), social (SDG 3: health), and environmental (SDG 6: clean water) areas. Only Batu Ampar (IDM 0.8244) and Keritang (IDM 0.8319) have reached independent status. Six villages, including Sekayan (0.6384) and Kemuning Muda (0.6656), are still developing. This suggests that simply increasing budgets does not guarantee better sustainable welfare. Real improvements rely more on participatory governance and community-driven priorities (Darmawansyah et al., 2021; Ramadhani et al., 2025).

Earlier studies have found similar problems. Ikrimah and Faralita (2025) reported a lack of transparency and participation in Teluk Himbau Village. Mujalli and Syarif (2024) noted that SDG socialization is limited. Arief et al. (2023) found that while physical infrastructure works well in Sumatra, it does little to promote empowerment. In Indragiri Hilir, low human resource capacity and limited access to technology make things even harder (Hasanuddin et al., 2021).

There is a clear gap in the research. Few studies have examined how community participation (using Arnstein's theory, 1969), good governance, and SDG achievement are connected in remote sub-districts with significant differences in HDI and challenging geography, such as Kemuning. Most national studies focus on Java and West Sumatra. They do not include local Malay-Riau knowledge or measure the link between Village Fund use and specific SDG indicators.

This study develops a mixed-methods sequential explanatory model that integrates. This study uses a mixed-methods sequential explanatory model, combining Pearson's correlation (quantitative) with Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis (qualitative). It applies this approach to three villages with different IDM statuses to create recommendations for a participatory development model that could be used nationally. community participation in the planning and implementation of Village Funds in Kemuning District; (2) to measure the contribution of Village Fund realization to the achievement of Village SDGs indicators in the economic, social, and environmental pillars; and (3) to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in formulating a Community-Based Sustainable Development model applicable to remote villages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development and Village SDGs

The concept of sustainable development was first defined in the Brundtland Report (1987) by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This paradigm integrates three main pillars, economic, social, and environmental, which are interrelated, emphasizing intergenerational responsibility in managing limited resources (Purvis et al., 2019). In the context of Indonesian villages, this concept is implemented through the Village Development Index (IDM), which measures social, economic, and ecological resilience, in line with the Village Fund's priorities for sustainable development (Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration, 2016).

In 2015, the UN adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were subsequently adopted in Indonesia as 18 Village SDGs through Presidential Decree Number 59 of 2017 and Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 21 of 2020. The Village SDGs include villages without poverty (SDG 1), equitable economic growth (SDG 8), healthy villages (SDG 3), and environmental care (SDGs 6 & 15), with measurable indicators for monitoring local progress (Sachs, 2015). The economic pillar focuses on MSMEs and decent work; the social pillar on health and education; and the environmental pillar on sanitation and village ecosystem conservation.

Legal Basis for Village Funds

Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages serves as the legal foundation for Village Funds, which are allocated for governance, development, community development, and empowerment, and are supported by technical regulations in Government Regulation Number 37 of 2023 (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 7 of 2023 prioritizes Village Funds for Village SDGs, including extreme poverty alleviation, basic infrastructure, and environmental resilience, and establishes a participatory planning mechanism through Village Musrenbangdes (Village Development Planning Forums). In Kemuning District, this allocation supports the concrete rebate program and Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu), although budget absorption rates vary between 81–92% across villages.

Community Participation and Community-Driven Development

The community-driven development approach positions residents as the primary subjects, as Chambers (2017) proposed through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), encouraging bottom-up analysis and local empowerment. Arnstein's (1969) theory classifies participation in the Ladder of Citizen Participation, from manipulation to full control, relevant for assessing the involvement of the Kemuning community in Village Fund deliberations. This approach aligns with the World

Bank's Community Driven Development (CDD) (2017) approach, which emphasizes community control over public budgeting for program sustainability.

Good Governance in Village Fund Management

The UNDP (1997) defines good governance as governance based on transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and the rule of law, essential to preventing misuse of Village Funds. The World Bank (2000) warns that without strong governance, village programs are vulnerable to corruption and inefficiency. In Kemuning District, the Village Consultative Body (BPD) acts as an internal supervisor, ensuring that the planning, implementation, and evaluation cycle proceeds in an accountable manner, while transparency of public information is achieved through APBDes billboards installed at strategic points in the village.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach, where quantitative data were analyzed first to identify relationship patterns, followed by qualitative data for in-depth explanations (Sugiyono, 2020). This descriptive-evaluative study aimed to present systematic facts about. This study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory approach, in which quantitative data were analyzed initially to identify relationship patterns, followed by qualitative data for in-depth explanation (Sugiyono, 2020). The descriptive-evaluative design aimed to systematically present facts on Village Fund utilization and to assess its effectiveness in achieving the Village SDGs. This approach facilitated quantitative-qualitative triangulation to enhance the validity of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Based on three criteria: (a) significant allocation for economic empowerment (>20%); (b) dominant environmental programs; and (c) variation in IDM success status. The research was conducted in July–December 2025 with field data collection during the dry season to optimize geographic access.

Data collection technique

Primary data were collected through (1) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants (Village Head, Village Secretary, and BPD members) and (2) participant observation of the Musrenbangdes process and self-management projects. Secondary data comprised APBDes documents, Accountability Letters (SPJ), Musrenbangdes attendance lists, and Village IDM and SDGs reports from BPS and the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. Source triangulation (documents, interviews, observations) and method triangulation (quantitative, qualitative) were implemented to ensure consistency of findings.

Operational Definition of Variables

Independent variable (X): Use of Village Funds, measured through the ratio of budget allocation and absorption per sector (economic, social, environmental). Moderator variable (M): Community participation, measured as the percentage of Musrenbang attendance: high category ($\geq 70\%$), medium (40–69%), low (<40%). Dependent variable (Y): Village SDGs achievement, measured through SDGs indicators 3, 6, 8, and 15 and the IDM score.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative analysis used SPSS 26 for the Pearson correlation test (r) between variables X and Y, to test the hypothesis of a linear relationship ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative analysis followed the procedures of Miles and Huberman (1994): (1) data reduction through theme coding; (2) data presentation in a matrix; and (3) verification and drawing conclusions. Krippendorff's (2004) *content analysis was applied to interview data through transcription, identification of*

participation and governance themes, and verification of interpretations through *member checks* with informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Community Participation in Village Musrenbang

A quantitative analysis of the Village Musrenbangdes' participation rate for the 2022–2024 period shows a significant upward trend across the three sample villages in Kemuning District. Batu Ampar Village increased from 38% (low category, 2023) to 52% (moderate, 2024). Kemuning Muda Village experienced the most consistent increase, from 36% (low in 2022) to 72% (high in 2024). Tuk Jimun Village achieved the highest participation, from 42% (moderate, 2023) to 100% (high, 2024). Participation categories were determined based on Sugiyono (2020): high ($\geq 70\%$), moderate (40–69%), and low ($< 40\%$), calculated from the ratio of attendance to 50 invitations per forum.

Table 1. Level of Community Participation in Village Development Planning Meetings (2022–2024)

Batu Ampar	2023	19	50	38%	Low
	2024	26	50	52%	Currently
Young Kemuning	2022	18	50	36%	Low
	2023	30	50	60%	Currently
	2024	36	50	72%	Tall
For Jimun	2023	21	50	42%	Currently
	2024	50	50	100%	Tall

Source: List of Attendance at Village Musrenbang, processed by researchers (2025)

This upward trend demonstrates the attainment of *the partnership level* in Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation, where communities transition from passive recipients of information to active partners in decision-making through the *bottom-up Village Consultative Assembly (Musdus) mechanism*. The involvement of neighborhood associations (RT/RW), youth, and women's groups in Musdus enhances the inclusiveness of the planning process. This result surpasses the stagnant participation observed by Hasanuddin et al. (2021) in the Selayar Islands, indicating that gradual socialization and a local culture of mutual cooperation are critical to successful community mobilization.

2. Realization of Village Fund Budget

The three sample villages achieved 100% Village Fund budget realization during the 2022–2024 period, totaling IDR 6.75 billion, fully absorbed with no remaining budget. A Pearson correlation test in SPSS version 26 yielded a coefficient of $r = 1.000$ (Sig. 2-tailed < 0.01), confirming a perfect linear relationship between the budget ceiling and expenditure realization. Tuk Jimun Village recorded the largest fluctuation (IDR 762.8 million to IDR 989.2 million), while Batu Ampar showed a consistent upward trend, rising from IDR 1.03 billion to IDR 1.30 billion.

Table 2. Village Fund Budget and Realization (2022–2024)

Batu Ampar	2023	1,031,856,000	1,031,856,000	100%
	2024	1,302,083,000	1,302,083,000	100%
Young Kemuning	2023	811,449,000	811,449,000	100%
	2024	819,696,000	819,696,000	100%
For Jimun	2022	762,856,000	762,856,000	100%
	2023	989,184,000	989,184,000	100%
	2024	735,379,000	735,379,000	100%
Total	-	6,752,503,000	6,752,503,000	100%

Source: Village Budget Realization Report, processed by SPSS 26 (2025)

This complete budget realization affirms the application of UNDP's (1997) good governance principles. According to the Village Secretary of Kemuning Muda, the transparency provided by Village Budget billboards at the village office, mosque, and other strategic public locations has "opened up space for social oversight and significantly increased public trust." This practice stands in contrast to the low levels of accountability reported by Ikrimah and Faralita (2025) in other areas of Indragiri Hilir.

3. Village Fund Allocation Based on SDGs Pillars

The 2024 Village Fund allocation is dominated by the Economic pillar of SDG 8 (45%; Rp717.8 million), followed by the Social pillar of SDG 3 (35%; Rp552.9 million), and the Environmental pillars of SDGs 6 and 15 (20%; Rp326.5 million). Key economic programs include the construction of farm roads, rehabilitation of fish cages, and training for Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). The social pillar focuses on Posyandu (Integrated Service Posts for PMT) to combat stunting, non-formal early childhood education (PAUD), and scholarships for underprivileged students, while the environmental pillar addresses peatland river normalization and the construction of drilled wells.

Table 3. Village Fund Allocation Based on Village SDGs Pillars (2024)

Economy (SDGs 8)	Farming roads, fish cage rehabilitation, BUMDes training	717,808,000	45%
Social (SDGs 3)	Posyandu PMT anti-stunting, non-formal PAUD, scholarships for poor students	552,880,000	35%
Environment (SDGs 6/15)	Normalization of peat rivers, drilled wells, drainage	326,482,842	20%
Total	-	1,597,170,842	100%

Source: 2024 Village Budget Document, processed by researchers

The allocation of economic infrastructure directly advances SDG 8 through the construction of farm roads and *box culverts* that improve market access, consistent with the findings of Syapsan et al. (2020), Novrianti et al. (2022), and Arief et al. (2023), which demonstrate that infrastructure significantly reduces rural poverty in Sumatra. The fish cage rehabilitation program, adapted to the peatland geography of Kemuning District, enhances local food security. This contextual adaptation differentiates the Kemuning model from the generic approach used by Hasanuddin et al. (2021) in Lamantu Village, which did not account for geographic specificity.

The PMT Posyandu program strategically prevents chronic stunting in toddlers, consistent with the findings of Afrilia et al. (2024), who confirmed that accountability in Village Fund management improves village health indicator outcomes. Meanwhile, the normalization of the Batu Ampar peat river effectively mitigates seasonal flooding, as recommended by Upe et al. (2024), and the construction of the Tuk Jimun borehole directly improves access to clean water, a key indicator of SDG 6.

4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Qualitative analysis, including in-depth interviews with 15 informants and participant observation, identified the determinants of the Village Fund program's implementation, as presented in the following matrix.

Table 4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of the Village Fund Program

Internal	Strong mutual cooperation culture, BPD-Village Head synergy, transparency of APBDes billboards, effective Musdus participation	Limited human resource capacity, incomplete administrative documents
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External	Strong social capital, tiered bottom-up process, involvement of RT/RW and women's groups	Late disbursement of funds, extreme weather (seasonal peat flooding)
Institutional	Annual evaluation forum, Siskeudes system, cross-village coordination	Sudden changes in central regulations, complex bureaucracy in the disbursement

Source: In-depth interviews with 15 informants and participant observation (2025)

Kemuning successfully overcame the limitations of outreach reported by Mujalli and Syarif (2024) through a tiered Musdus mechanism that effectively reached the general public. The centripetal *governance model*, characterized by inclusive BPD-Kades synergy, empirically validates the World Bank's (2017) CDD paradigm, which holds that community involvement from the planning stage to evaluation is key to program sustainability. BPD Chair Tuk Jimun emphasized that the functions of "accommodating community aspirations and strictly monitoring the alignment between planning and program implementation" are key to successful full budget absorption.

5. Implications and Potential Replication of the Kemuning Model

Interviews with the Head of Planning for Batu Ampar Village confirmed the "active aspiration gathering involving the village social structure (RT/RW)" approach, which resulted in programs highly relevant to the community's real needs, such as the construction of farm roads aligned with community priorities. *The bottom-up practices* in Kemuning align perfectly with *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA), which positions the village government as a facilitator and the community as the primary experts of their local needs (Hermansyah et al., 2025).

The Kemuning model demonstrates strong potential for replication in 429 remote villages in Riau Province, as recommended by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendesa PDTT) (2023). The primary limitation of this research is the lack of comprehensive official village SDG indicator data due to an incomplete reporting system. Consequently, digitizing the Siskeudes system is recommended as a priority solution to address this data gap.

CONCLUSION

The use of Village Funds in Kemuning District was successfully implemented through an effective, multi-level community participation mechanism, from the bottom-up Hamlet Deliberation (Musyawarah Hamlet) to the village-level Musrenbangdes (Development Planning and Development Planning). The trend of increasing participation consistently confirms the achievement of the authentic partnership level as classified by Arnstein (1969), with 100% budget realization indicating optimal management efficiency. This practice fully reflects the UNDP (1997) principles of good governance through transparency of public information and accountability of internal oversight by the Village Consultative Body (BPD).

The Village Fund significantly contributes to the three main pillars of the Village SDGs: economic development through infrastructure supporting productive activities; social development through preventive health programs and basic education; and environmental development through water resource management and local disaster mitigation. This integrated program allocation aligns with the national priorities of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration Regulation No. 7 of 2023, resulting in interventions relevant to the geographic and social characteristics of peatland village communities.

The successful implementation was supported by strong internal factors, a culture of mutual cooperation, synergy among village institutions, and transparent management, which overcame various external obstacles, including central regulatory dynamics and geographic constraints. All

three research hypotheses were proven through comprehensive triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data.

Based on these findings, this study recommends: (1) village governments intensify digital outreach through hamlet communication groups for real-time participation monitoring, especially for women and marginalized groups; (2) mandatory implementation of the Siskeudes digital financial system for transparent documentation of Village SDGs; (3) strengthening the BPD mandate through Village Regulations on quarterly supervision; and (4) sub-district governments establish integrated Village SDGs mentoring teams. Further research using SEM-PLS for structural factor analysis and a five-year longitudinal study is needed to evaluate the impact of replication on the sustainable achievement of IDM and Village SDGs.

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