
Priority Programs Village Community Empowerment in Achievement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Abstract:

Village community empowerment is a strategic priority in reducing poverty in Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province. Bengkalis Regent Regulation Number 74 of 2021 mandates the strengthening of village institutions—such as BUMDes, LPM, PKK, and Posyandu—as key drivers for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Community and Village Empowerment Office implements various training and capacity-building programs to enhance community independence through improved knowledge, skills, behavior, and the effective use of local resources. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore government officials' and community members' perceptions and experiences in implementing sustainable development through priority empowerment programs. The findings show that SDGs achievement in 2022 reached an average of 90% across assessed indicators, supported by active participation of village governments and communities, an increasing number of independent villages, and the growth of Village-Owned Enterprises. PKK and Posyandu activities also show significant improvement. Despite these achievements, challenges persist, including limited human resource capacity in managing local institutions, low productivity of BUMDes, and weak organizational capacity within village governance structures, particularly LPM.

Keywords: Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Institutions Government Village

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1. Introduction

Village Sustainable Development Goals (Village SDGs) represent a comprehensive development framework that ensures no community member is left behind, emphasizing social, economic, and environmental progress as the foundation of rural welfare. Community empowerment within the Village SDGs framework encourages villages to optimize their natural and environmental potentials to strengthen economic resilience and enhance sustainable livelihoods (del Arco et al., 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2023). This emphasis aligns with Indonesia's national development agenda, particularly the 2020–2024 RPJMN, which positions rural areas as the backbone of

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the nation's economy. The government expects sustainable development to begin at the village level, operationalized through the Village SDGs as mandated in Regulation of the Minister of Villages No. 21/2020.

Previous studies demonstrate that community empowerment is a key determinant for achieving sustainable rural development. Empirical research shows that empowerment initiatives—such as Village SDGs socialization, training, participatory planning, and institutional strengthening—significantly contribute to improving social welfare, reducing hunger and poverty, and fostering community resilience (Amruddin et al., 2024; Ashoer et al., 2024; Franco & Tracey, 2019; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Other studies emphasize the critical role of village funds, village institutions, and community participation in accelerating SDGs performance at the local level (Saputra et al., 2021; Manurung et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2023; Meirinawati et al., 2024). Research also highlights challenges such as weak institutional capacity, limited human resources, and inconsistent program implementation, which hinder SDGs outcomes in many rural regions (Sjaf et al., 2021; Sugandi et al., 2023; Triatmanto & Natsir, 2019; Khoiriah & Perbawati, 2023; Yanova et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research, a clear research gap remains: few studies specifically examine how priority empowerment programs implemented by district governments directly contribute to Village SDGs achievements at the sub-district level, particularly in strategic and border areas. Furthermore, little attention has been given to regions with contrasting demographic characteristics—such as Bengkalis Sub-District (the regency capital) and Rupat Utara Sub-District (the smallest population and a national border area)—even though these areas have distinct development challenges and institutional capacities.

Bengkalis Regency itself recorded a population of 573,504 people in 2021, increasing from 565,569 in 2020 (growth rate 1.88%). Community empowerment has become a strategic priority to address poverty and strengthen village independence. According to the 2021–2026 Strategic Plan of the Community and Village Empowerment Office (DPMD), the key indicators of village development include the number of active Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and the functioning of LPM, PKK, and Posyandu. A study by Rodi Wahyudi et al. (2021) further indicates that Bengkalis Regency has one of the strongest demands for continuous community empowerment programs across Riau Province, reflecting high community expectation for sustainable development initiatives.

In response, the Bengkalis Regency Government has strengthened empowerment policies focusing on (1) improving village government professionalism, (2) enhancing empowerment through village community institutions, and (3) advancing rural development and area management. These programs are executed by the Community and Village Empowerment Office, which is responsible for assisting the Regent in policy formulation and implementation.

However, major issues persist. Institutional capacity among village organizations remains weak, BUMDes productivity is often suboptimal, and community participation is still limited. These conditions hinder the achievement of Village SDGs, especially in border areas prioritized for accelerated development.

Based on this problem context, the guiding research questions are: (1) How are the priority village community empowerment programs implemented in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bengkalis Regency? (2) What challenges hinder their implementation, particularly regarding village governance professionalism, empowerment through community institutions, and rural development management?

Thus, the purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of Bengkalis Regency's priority community empowerment programs and identify the obstacles faced in achieving Village SDGs. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on comparing empowerment performance between the regency capital and a national border sub-district, providing new insights into spatial-institutional disparities in Village SDGs implementation.

2. Theoretical Background

The Concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global development agenda established by the United Nations to achieve holistic and inclusive development encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions. In the rural context, SDGs serve as a framework for ensuring that development benefits all individuals without leaving any group behind. According to del Arco et al. (2021), SDGs implementation in rural areas requires integrated strategies that strengthen energy access, education, innovation, and research to improve community welfare. Sustainable development in villages emphasizes equitable distribution of resources, environmental preservation, and inclusive economic growth aligned with long-term sustainability principles (Franco & Tracey, 2019; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

In Indonesia, the SDGs are operationalized at the village level through the Village SDGs framework as mandated by the Ministry of Villages Regulation No. 21/2020. The Village SDGs integrate 18 development goals to accelerate rural transformation, reduce disparities, and strengthen community resilience. Research has shown that the Village SDGs play a strategic role in reducing poverty, eliminating hunger, improving health, and strengthening local governance (Amruddin et al., 2024; Ashoer et al., 2024). Studies also highlight the significance of village funds as a financial mechanism that supports SDGs achievement, particularly in improving infrastructure, social services, and local economic development (Saputra et al., 2021; Manurung et al., 2022). The measurement of SDGs performance in villages often considers indicators such as institutional capacity, economic productivity, environmental sustainability, and public participation (Sjaf et al., 2021; Sugandi et al., 2023).

Despite its importance, SDGs implementation at the village level faces challenges such as unequal resource allocation, weak governance structures, and limited community participation. Zuber et al. (2024) found that villages often struggle with administrative readiness and data quality, affecting SDGs reporting accuracy. Likewise, Khoiriah and Perbawati (2023) emphasize that although villages play a crucial role in SDGs realization, many still lack the institutional capacity required to translate SDGs targets into concrete actions.

Thus, SDGs in rural settings require synergy among government, communities, and village institutions to ensure that sustainable development goals translate effectively into measurable community welfare outcomes.

The Concept of Village Community Empowerment Programs

Village community empowerment refers to a strategic effort to enhance the capabilities, independence, and resilience of rural communities. Empowerment programs aim to improve knowledge, skills, attitudes, and institutional capacity to enable communities to manage resources, participate in decision-making, and sustain local development initiatives. As noted by Kurniawan et al. (2023), community empowerment rooted in local wisdom strengthens social capital and supports sustainable rural development. Franco and Tracey (2019) further argue that community capacity-building is essential for enabling rural communities to achieve long-term sustainability targets.

Empowerment programs in Indonesia commonly involve strengthening village institutions such as Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), community empowerment agencies (LPM), family welfare organizations (PKK), and health service posts (Posyandu). These institutions serve as operational units that channel community participation, improve service delivery, and enhance economic productivity (Luthfiyah & Rizki, 2024; Meirinawati et al., 2024). Research highlights that well-managed village institutions have a significant impact on achieving SDGs, especially in poverty alleviation, food security, gender empowerment, and economic development (Zahari et al., 2025; Yanova et al., 2024).

Village empowerment programs also include training, socialization, participatory planning, and institutional strengthening. Amruddin et al. (2024) show that SDGs socialization programs significantly increase community awareness and participation in addressing hunger and poverty. Ashoer et al. (2024) emphasize that collaborative empowerment programs—such as international community service initiatives—can enhance innovation, knowledge sharing, and local development capabilities. Meanwhile, Triatmanto & Natsir (2019) highlight the importance of participatory rural appraisal approaches to ensure that empowerment aligns with community needs and local priorities.

However, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of empowerment programs, including limited human resource capacity, weak institutional governance, and low community involvement. Zuber et al. (2024) report that many villages still experience gaps in organizational management and program monitoring. Lestari et al. (2023) and

Sugandi et al. (2023) further reveal that planning and budgeting documents often lack integration with SDGs indicators, reducing the effectiveness of empowerment interventions.

Overall, village community empowerment programs play a crucial role in accelerating SDGs achievement by strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing community participation, and promoting sustainable rural development. Effective empowerment requires continuous collaboration among government agencies, communities, and local institutions to ensure long-term independence and welfare.

3. Methodology

Type study Description qualitative intended For explain findings study in a way intensive , note taking in a way Be careful what happened , did analysis reflective to various documents found in the field , and make report study in a way detailed .. Partly big literature Which used For dig source the data originate from ingredients relevant libraries and references like books and articles journal . Materials made into references will reviewed in a way deep use support idea And proposition For produce conclusion And suggestions. Data collection through observation , interviews and documentation analyzed with reducing , presenting data and interesting conclusionResults study give outlook about empowerment public namely priority programs development sustainable For community in the Regency Bengkalis Riau province . With thus ,study This expected can give contribution Which valuable in understanding about empowerment programs public village and the efforts made government area in increase independence and well-being public .

Variables and Operationalization

Furthermore, the aspects examined from these activities are further regulated in the technical instructions stipulated by the Head of the Bengkalis Regency PMD Service for implementation in 2021. The implementation of the village community empowerment program has the following work targets:

- a. Improvement Professionalism of Village Government with indicator is improvement amount village independent in the Regency Bengkalis where the target is to increase the status of independent villages.
- b. Increasing the empowerment of village communities where the indicator is income contribution original Village Revenue (PADes) to Village Budget and Development of Rural Economic Institutions with the indicators is Improvement Village-Owned Enterprises Active .
- c. Improving the development and management of rural areas with indicator increasing empowerment and community institutions for village communities where the strategic targets are PKK and Posyandu Active .

4. Empirical Findings/Results

Priority Programs Community Empowerment in the Regency Bengkalis in Achievements Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Village Government Professionalism Improvement Program with Village Independence.

The village community empowerment program with its strategic target is to increase the professionalism of the village government with the aim of improving the economy and village community institutions so that the capacity of the village government apparatus can support and strengthen the policy objectives of the Bengkalis Regency government as stated in the 2021-2026 RPJMD regarding the community and village empowerment program.

Based on the 2021 strategic plan of the Bengkalis Regency PMD Office, the professionalism of village government is measured by village independence, specifically the number of independent villages. Achieving this status requires measuring the Independent Village Index. Therefore, village government officials and their communities play an active role.

Research results in one of the Villages in the Regency Bengkalis namely Village Rhu Bay about apparatus efforts government villages to achieve independent villages is by increasing the capacity of village government administrators by participating in training and technical guidance held to achieve the Independent Village Index . The same conclusion was also reached by researchers get from one of them informant study namely Secretary Dungun Baru Village is part of the sub- district area North Rupat and is a division area convey As a new area expanded needed development capacity apparatus government and institutions community as well as village community financial institutions in carry out independence village .

For It is known that in the implementation of the community empowerment program in 2021, the indicator was to increase the professionalism of village government, where the target was to increase the number of independent villages, namely changing the status of villages to independent villages. Data researchers found in 2021 showed an increase in the number of independent village status in Bengkalis Regency. This shows that the efforts of the PMD Service in the Bengkalis Regency Village community empowerment program were quite good, with an increase in the number of independent villages in 2021, namely from 136 villages in 2021 there were 46 independent villages, 52 developed villages and 38 developing villages. And for villages in Bengkalis Regency there are no longer categories of very underdeveloped villages and underdeveloped villages.

The increase in the number of independent villages in Bengkalis Regency, according to the 2021 PMD Agency strategic plan, has exceeded the planned target . In 2020, the number of independent villages in terms of performance achievement was 24. In 2021, the number increased from 38 to 46. The achievement of the number of

independent villages in Bengkalis Regency cannot be separated from the support and policies of the Bengkalis Regency government, especially the PMD Service as an OPD in implementing the Bengkalis Regency Community and Village Empowerment Program as well as the important role of the village government and the Village community.

Conclusive evidence from achievement professionalism apparatus government villages in the district Bengkalis based on results study there is The Village Development Index in Bengkalis Regency continues to increase, there are no longer very underdeveloped villages and underdeveloped villages in Bengkalis Regency. Government Regency Bengkalis Keep going synergize with government village through Musrenbang so that villages can prepare development programs that can boost their IDM levels so that getting better.

Improving Village Community Empowerment through Strengthening Institutional Village-Owned Enterprises

Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) are village business institutions whose management is entrusted to village communities and village governments to strengthen the village economy and community social welfare. which is formed based on needs And potential village. So Village-Owned Enterprises is something institution business Which It means own function For do business in frame get something results like profit or profit . In the Regency Bengkalis process And procedure establishment Village-Owned Enterprises poured out in Regional Regulation Regency Bengkalis Number 01 Year 2014 About Tata Method FormationAnd Management Body Business Village Owned .

One of the driving forces behind the successful implementation of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMdes) is the role of the Village Head in advancing and mobilizing BUMDes so that the objectives of BUMDes can be achieved. In Bengkalis Regency, out of 136 villages spread across 11 sub-districts, 134 villages have BUMDes with an active category and 2 villages with an inactive BUMDes category. Therefore, empowering the community economy through BUMDes development in Bengkalis Regency requires systematic and continuous efforts to encourage village-owned enterprises to continue to be active so that they are able to manage strategic economic assets in rural areas while developing economic networks to increase rural economic competitiveness through:

1. Training in managing village-owned enterprises, including efforts to increase the institutional capacity of BUMDes, increase human resource capacity and develop the empowerment of village-owned enterprises themselves.
2. Socialization of business entities owned by village done with sustainable .

The indicator for the number of active BUMDes can be realized because BUMDes has been formed in 136 units in Bengkalis Regency as seen from:

1. BUMDes management is active in managing BUMDes.
2. Businesses run according to the needs of the local community.
3. Strategic business location.
4. There is good community participation

5. There is transparency in financial management.

Findings study show activity BUMDes in the Regency Bengkalis not off from role Government Regency Bengkalis which continues promote institutional programs economy public through effort increasing the budget for coaching and training BUMdes administrators, participating in BUMDes financial management training, and for BUMDes assistance in 2022 has been included in the Bermasa program, namely 1 billion per village by the Regent of Bengkalis .

For budget implementation of flagship programs Help finance One billion One The village level assistance program is stipulated in Bengkalis Regency Regent Regulation Number 74 of 2021 concerning Guidelines for the Management of Special Financial Assistance for the Village Program for the Bengkalis Regency Village Government. The purpose of this special assistance is to optimize village governance, village development , and village community development. So for year this 2022 budget budgeted amounting to Rp. 14,500,000,000.00 .

In addition, for 2022, the special financial assistance is divided into:

1. 60% for village development and village infrastructure
2. 32% for community empowerment and village community development.
3. 8% for coaching and program supervision.

Program to Improve Development and Management of Areas by Increasing Active PKK and Posyandu

Issue strategic Village Community Empowerment in the Regency Bengkalis is Still weakness capacity institutions and capacity public the village that caused low development independence villages in the Regency Bengkalis . Therefore government area Regency Bengkalis in effort achievement objective development sustainable development (TPB) continues do empowerment program evaluation public Village with create empowerment programs that can strengthen independence village and its people .

In the 2021-2026 Bengkalis Regency RPJMD for the implementation of community empowerment programs in improving village community empowerment and community institutions where the strategic targets are PKK and Posyandu Active . Therefore, several efforts need to be made, namely:

1. Facilitating the arrangement, empowerment and utilization of village/sub-district community institutions, one of which is the PKK and Posyandu with the number of Posyandu pokjanal in the Regency.
2. Provision of institutional facilities and infrastructure for village/sub-district community institutions with a number of digital posyandu applications.

The key to the successful implementation of community empowerment programs is largely determined by the role of cadres, including Family Welfare Movement (PKK) cadres, Integrated Health Service Post (Posyandu) cadres, and others, in conducting community development activities for their target groups. The following data shows the performance achievements of the Village Community Empowerment Agency

(PMD) regarding village community institutions in Bengkalis Regency in 2021.

Findings In the field , the implementation of this empowerment program was realized 100% in 2021 due to several factors, namely:

- a. Active Integrated Health Post
 - 1. The existence of a decree from sub-district head or head village
 - 2. The existence of coaching from service excited until subdistrict
 - 3. The existence of supporting facilities and infrastructure activity
 - 4. The existence of honorarium for cadre integrated health post
 - 5. The existence of activity in form race integrated health post Good level sub-district , district and national
 - 6. Formation of Posyandu Working Group in the Regency
- b. Success For indicator percentage of active PKK
 - 1. The implementation of 10 PKK programs
 - 2. The way activity routine monthly
 - 3. The existence of participation every village / sub-district and district PKK to activities carried out .
- c. Success Percentage of active KPM
 - 1. The existence of a decree for each KPM cadre by the village or sub-district head.
 - 2. There is training and outreach for each KPM cadre in the village by the relevant agencies down to the sub-district level to increase knowledge about the functions and duties of each KPM cadre.

There are obstacles in achieving the community and village empowerment program in Bengkalis Regency. is Still There is quality source Power man device villages that have not been get coaching and training in increase performance work , duties and functions institution government village not yet and performance institution society and institutions customs village in implementation development not yet optimal. Meanwhile empowerment public Still limited infrastructure basic , facilities and infrastructure in rural areas , institutions BUMDes which is still lack in problem quality Its human resources namely role companion village in give function empowerment to BUMDes . Persn women and

5. Discussion

Community participation plays a central role in regional development planning, beginning at the village, sub-district, and district levels. Village community empowerment essentially aims to develop the community's own abilities so they can actively engage in local development processes. Wilson (2006) outlines four stages of empowerment—awareness, understanding, utilization, and habituation—where the habituation stage reflects a condition in which communities are fully capable of sustained participation in local development initiatives. This perspective aligns with the view that community empowerment is fundamental to achieving sustainability and resilience, as described by Dushkova and Ivlieva (2024) and Franco and Tracey (2019).

The institutional structure of village governance serves as a crucial support system for implementing development policies. Village governance includes village government units, BPD, LPM, PKK, youth organizations, BUMDes, and neighborhood associations, all of which function as actors in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Prior studies show that village governance institutions significantly influence SDGs implementation, particularly in poverty alleviation, hunger reduction, and strengthening social services (Amruddin et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2021; Manurung et al., 2022).

Human resource capacity development is equally essential, as the professionalism of village officials determines the effectiveness of public services and local development performance. Strengthening the capacity of village apparatus ensures better governance practices, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to community needs. This is consistent with findings by Meirinawati et al. (2024), who highlight the importance of continuous competency development programs for village officials as part of SDGs Desa implementation. Capacity-building efforts also support the long-term sustainability of empowerment programs, as emphasized by Kurniawan et al. (2023) and Triatmanto and Natsir (2019).

Historically, villages have served as the socio-political roots of Indonesian society, making their role critical in regional development (Amruddin et al., 2024). Consequently, village-level SDGs programs serve not only as administrative frameworks but as instruments for strengthening local autonomy, community welfare, and cultural resilience. Research has shown that effective community empowerment significantly enhances SDGs achievement, including improvements in local economic structures, social services, and environmental management (del Arco et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2023; Khoiriah & Perbawati, 2023).

Recent studies also demonstrate the importance of integrating local wisdom and community-driven innovation into empowerment programs (Ashoer et al., 2024; Yanova et al., 2024). These approaches strengthen community independence while ensuring the relevance of development initiatives to local socio-cultural contexts. Village Funds, for example, have been shown to contribute meaningfully to hunger reduction, economic resilience, and the achievement of SDGs indicators (Saputra et al., 2021; Manurung et al., 2022; Sjaf et al., 2021; Sugandi et al., 2023).

Despite positive progress, challenges remain. Several studies highlight persistent obstacles such as limited institutional capacity, low productivity in BUMDes, and inadequate managerial skills among village officials (Zuber et al., 2024; Luthfiyah & Rizki, 2024). These limitations hinder the optimization of empowerment programs and the achievement of SDGs targets at the village level. Zahari et al. (2025) further note that empowerment programs require continuous evaluation and adaptation to ensure communities remain active agents of change.

Overall, the literature consistently shows that village community empowerment, supported by strong governance institutions, professional human resources, and

community participation, is foundational for realizing sustainable development and achieving SDGs at the local level.

6. Conclusions

Village community empowerment is an important goal in sustainable development and a priority for the Bengkalis Regency government. The goal of village community empowerment in Bengkalis Regency is an effort to develop community independence and welfare by improving knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, abilities, awareness, and utilizing resources through the establishment of policies, programs, activities, and mentoring that are in accordance with the essence of the problems and priority needs of village communities. Therefore, the village community empowerment program of Bengkalis Regency in the sustainable development goals in 2021 has the following targets: increasing village independence, improving the quality of performance towards village governments and improving the quality of empowerment towards the community.

The implementation of the community empowerment program from the three program targets for implementation in 2021 based on the research findings, the achievement of the program implementation averaged 90% of the target and was declared successful. Although the program implementation has been achieved and successful according to the targets planned by the Bengkalis Regency government, especially the PMD Service, several inhibiting factors were found in the implementation of the empowerment program in general, namely the ability of human resources in managing village community institutions, the institutional capacity of BUMDes in productivity is still lacking and the low capacity of village government administration, especially KPM.

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