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The Role of Village Facilitators in Optimizing Rural Development in Gattareng Village, Pujananting District, Barru Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of village facilitators in optimizing rural development in Gattareng Village, Pujananting District, Barru Regency. Village facilitators serve as key agents in bridging government programs with community needs, ensuring that development initiatives are effectively implemented and aligned with local priorities. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving facilitators, village officials, and community members. The findings reveal that village facilitators play a significant role in planning, coordination, capacity building, and monitoring of village development programs. However, challenges such as limited resources, administrative constraints, and varying community participation levels remain. Strengthening the capacity and support for facilitators is essential to maximize their contribution to sustainable and inclusive rural development.

Keywords: village facilitator, rural, development, empowerment, local governance.



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A.INTRODUCTION

Village development constitutes an integral part of national development, aimed at sustainably enhancing the welfare of rural communities. Within the framework of regional autonomy, villages are granted authority to manage and administer their affairs independently. However, many villages continue to face a variety of challenges, including limited institutional capacity, a shortage of human resources, and suboptimal utilization of village funds. To address

these challenges, the presence of village facilitators (*tenaga pendamping desa*) has become a key strategy adopted by the government to support participatory and inclusive development.

Village facilitators are strategic actors who serve as intermediaries between the central government and village communities. Their primary duties include providing technical assistance, empowerment, and facilitation in village planning and development implementation. According to Djabbar (2021), facilitators play a vital role in ensuring that village development processes are participatory, transparent, and accountable. Equipped with adequate capacities, facilitators can stimulate active community involvement across various stages of development.

Optimizing the role of village facilitators relies heavily on policy support, continuous training, and cross-sectoral coordination. In practice, overlapping regulations, insufficient training, and excessive administrative burdens often hinder their effectiveness (Simon et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the actual contribution of village facilitators is necessary, particularly in local contexts such as Gattareng Village in Pujananting Subdistrict.

Gattareng Village, located in Barru Regency, is actively engaged in development programs based on its local potential. With increasing allocations of village funds each year, managing and implementing these programs has grown increasingly complex. In this context, the role of village facilitators becomes crucial in ensuring effective and efficient development. This study aims to examine how village facilitators contribute to optimizing village development in the area.

Facilitators also play an important role in strengthening village governance to become more responsive to community needs. As noted by Purwanto et al. (2023), the success of village development is not solely dependent on financial resources, but also on the competence of village officials and facilitators in managing the development process collaboratively. This includes the preparation of village government work plans (RKPD_{Des}), village meetings, and budget accountability reporting.

In addition, improving human resource capacity in villages is also a key indicator of development success. Village facilitators are expected to deliver training, provide technical assistance, and motivate the community to become more self-reliant. Research by Febrianty

and Sentanu (2023) shows that villages receiving intensive facilitation generally demonstrate better development performance compared to those without such support. Hence, their role should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, in practice, village facilitators often encounter various obstacles. These include limited support from village governments, low community participation, and inadequate working facilities. Suheryadi (2019) highlights that many facilitators face difficulties bridging the interests of villagers and local authorities, especially when conflicts of interest arise during decision-making processes. This situation necessitates that facilitators possess strong communication and negotiation skills.

Moreover, the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) also influences the role of village facilitators. The implementation of the smart village concept demands facilitators to have sufficient digital literacy. According to Herdiana (2024), the use of ICT in village development can enhance efficiency and transparency, but also requires intensive facilitation to ensure that rural communities can effectively access and utilize such technologies.

The importance of community participation in village development is another central aspect of the facilitators' role. Simon et al. (2023) emphasize that active community involvement in all phases of development from planning to evaluation—can significantly improve the success of village programs. Facilitators are responsible for ensuring this participatory process, making sure that the voices of the people are heard and reflected in village policies.

In the context of sustainable development, facilitators are also instrumental in integrating sustainability principles into village programs. Purwanto et al. (2023) argue that a community-based development approach that emphasizes social, economic, and environmental sustainability is essential to ensure that village development yields long-term benefits for future generations.

This study is of critical importance as it contributes to the existing literature on rural development, particularly concerning the role of village facilitators in remote and rural settings like Gattareng. The research not only provides an overview of facilitators' general roles but

also explores the social, administrative, and technical dynamics that influence the success of facilitation efforts. By understanding these aspects, more targeted and context-sensitive policy recommendations can be formulated.

Methodologically, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The primary focus is on analyzing the roles, strategies, and challenges faced by village facilitators. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for local governments, community empowerment institutions, and the facilitators themselves in strengthening sustainable and community-based village development.

B.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the role of village facilitators in optimizing village development in Gattareng Village, Pujananting Subdistrict, Barru Regency. A qualitative method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the social, administrative, and participatory dynamics associated with the facilitation of rural development. This approach enables the researcher to capture the perceptions, experiences, and strategies of key stakeholders involved in village development processes.

Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted in Gattareng Village, located in Pujananting Subdistrict, Barru Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This location was selected based on its active implementation of village development programs and the presence of village facilitators involved in various development activities. The research subjects consisted of:

- a) Village Facilitators (Tenaga Pendamping Desa)
- b) Village Government Officials (Head of Village, Village Secretary, Planning Staff)
- c) Community Leaders
- d) Members of Village Development Committees
- e) Residents involved in development programs

Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected using the following techniques:

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected informants to explore their perspectives, experiences, and roles in village development. The interviews were guided by a flexible question framework and allowed room for probing and clarification.

2. Observation

Non-participant observation was conducted to understand the actual practices and interactions between village facilitators, the village government, and the community. The researcher observed meetings, planning discussions, and implementation of village development programs.

3. Documentation

Relevant documents such as village development plans (RKPDs), facilitator reports, village fund realization reports, and policy guidelines were analyzed to complement the primary data obtained through interviews and observations.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants who were directly involved in or had knowledge about village development processes. The selection criteria were based on the relevance of the informants to the research objectives and their experience in the facilitation process.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which includes the following stages:

1. Data Reduction – Organizing and simplifying interview transcripts, field notes, and documents to focus on relevant information.

2. Data Display – Presenting data in the form of matrices, summaries, and thematic groupings to facilitate pattern recognition.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – Interpreting the data to draw meaningful conclusions and verifying their validity through triangulation.

Validity of the Data

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, data triangulation was applied. This involved comparing data from multiple sources (interviews, observations, and documents) to cross-validate findings. In addition, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected informants for feedback and confirmation.



Figure 1 Thought Flow Diagram

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Research Results

The role of village facilitators in Gattareng Village, Pujananting Subdistrict, Barru Regency, encompasses a complex range of functions, including assistance in planning, implementation, community empowerment, as well as monitoring and evaluation of village

development. Based on observations and interviews with various stakeholders, the presence of village facilitators is greatly valued by both the village government and the community.

During the village development planning stage, village facilitators actively participate in various deliberations held. As stated by Mr. Afdal, S.Pd, the Secretary of Gattareng Village:

“The village facilitators always provide the necessary advice to the community members present in every deliberation to decide which programs should be prioritized for implementation this year, as well as offer input on which activities may be funded by the village funds and which may not.”

This quotation illustrates the strategic role of village facilitators in ensuring that the planning process is conducted participatively and based on the community's priority needs. Furthermore, in the implementation phase of development, village facilitators are responsible for ensuring that planned activities are carried out in accordance with the work plan and budget. They oversee the execution process, provide technical guidance, and assist village officials in resolving field issues.

In terms of community empowerment, village facilitators also participate in delivering education and training to community groups to increase their independence and capacity in managing development programs. Facilitators serve as facilitators in entrepreneurship training, agriculture, and the management of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes).

The presence of facilitators is also crucial in the evaluation and reporting stages. They assist the village in preparing accountability reports, compiling data on program achievements, and providing feedback on the programs that have been implemented. Several supporting factors influence the role of village facilitators in Gattareng. One of the primary factors is the positive response from the village government towards the presence and input from the facilitators. Harmonious communication between facilitators and village officials facilitates coordination processes. The quality and competence of village facilitators are also significant factors. Observations indicate that facilitators in Gattareng possess adequate knowledge of village fund regulations and governance, which greatly aids in providing appropriate guidance.

A strong sense of responsibility from the facilitators is an important social capital. They do not merely perform formal tasks but also demonstrate concern for the social and economic

dynamics of the village community. However, there are challenges that hinder the optimization of the facilitators' roles. One such challenge is the low quality of human resources at the village level, both among community members and village officials.

The low educational level of many village officials poses difficulties in absorbing the technical guidance from facilitators. This results in certain policies or programs being implemented sub-optimally. Short and uncertain contract durations also constitute an inhibiting factor. Facilitators without long-term contract certainty tend to experience decreased motivation and limitations in designing medium-term assistance programs.

In addition, limitations in working facilities such as transportation, internet access, and other supporting infrastructure present real challenges, especially in remote areas like Gattareng. Community participation in development activities still requires improvement. Although village deliberations are held regularly, not all residents feel encouraged to actively contribute to the planning and implementation processes.

To address this, village facilitators are expected to develop more inclusive communication approaches and build stronger relationships with community leaders, women's groups, and youth organizations. In the context of sustainable development, facilitators also need to promote integration between physical development and socio-economic empowerment of the community. A balance between these elements is key to long-term success.

Facilitators are also responsible for maintaining accountability and transparency in the use of village funds. They ensure that all expenditures comply with applicable regulations and provide maximum benefits to the community. Overall, the role of village facilitators in Gattareng can be categorized as positive and highly supportive in guiding participatory and needs-based village development.

Sustained efforts from both regional and central governments are necessary to strengthen the capacity and institutional framework of village facilitators, so that their role in village development becomes increasingly optimal and sustainable.

Understanding the dynamics in Gattareng provides important insights for formulating policies to improve the quality of village facilitation in the future. In the context of rural development, village facilitators play a crucial role in ensuring that programs are implemented

based on the actual needs of the community. In Gattareng Village, facilitators contribute significantly to participatory planning by involving both the village government and the local community in decision-making processes. Their ability to translate technical policies into simple and applicable guidance is highly appreciated by the villagers.

Moreover, village facilitators act as a bridge between the community and the government. They serve not only as advisors but also as advocates for transparency and accountability. By clearly explaining the permitted and non-permitted uses of village funds, facilitators help prevent misuse of resources and ensure that development programs are in line with national and regional regulations.

Despite their contributions, village facilitators face structural challenges such as limited contract durations, lack of operational support, and inadequate capacity among local government officials. These factors can hinder their performance and reduce the overall impact of their assistance. To overcome these limitations, stronger institutional support and capacity-building programs are urgently needed.

In conclusion, the success of village development in Gattareng depends not only on funding and infrastructure but also on the effective role of village facilitators. Strengthening their function through consistent training, clear regulations, and improved collaboration with local stakeholders will greatly enhance sustainable development in rural areas like Gattareng.

➤ Discussion

The role of village facilitators in Gattareng Village demonstrates the critical importance of facilitation in participatory village development. Village facilitators act not only as connectors between the village government and the community but also as mediators ensuring that community aspirations are effectively incorporated into development planning. This aligns with the theory of community participation, which emphasizes that citizen involvement in decision-making processes is vital for sustainable development success.

Village facilitators' active involvement in village development planning meetings enables them to provide essential technical and strategic input. Their understanding of village fund regulations and government policies assists the village in prioritizing programs that are appropriate, targeted, and compliant with fund usage regulations. This role highlights

facilitators as agents of change who bridge the gap between community needs and applicable regulations.

Furthermore, village facilitators significantly contribute to the implementation phase of development projects. By participating in supervision and providing technical assistance, they enhance the effectiveness and accountability of village fund utilization. This strengthens the management of village development activities, ensuring adherence to plans, minimizing misappropriation, and generating tangible benefits for the community.

In the area of community empowerment, facilitators serve as facilitators for capacity building by organizing training and education programs. This approach aligns with the human development concept, which stresses the importance of enhancing human resource capabilities to support social and economic village development. Facilitators help foster community independence, enabling residents to engage more actively and productively in utilizing development programs.

Nonetheless, the role of village facilitators faces various challenges, particularly regarding the quality of human resources at the village level and limited supporting facilities. The low educational levels of village officials and residents hinder knowledge transfer and policy implementation. This indicates the necessity for ongoing capacity-building programs to enable both facilitators and village officials to perform their roles effectively.

The temporary nature of facilitators' employment contracts is another significant obstacle. Employment uncertainty affects motivation and the continuity of facilitation efforts. Hence, regulations ensuring job stability and continuity for village facilitators are needed so they can design and implement medium- and long-term programs more effectively.

Additional challenges include limited working facilities such as transportation and access to information technology, which impede task execution, especially in remote areas like Gattareng. The government must address logistical and operational support to enable facilitators to perform optimally without being hindered by inadequate infrastructure.

Overall, the success of village development in Gattareng heavily relies on the synergy between the facilitators' roles, government support, and community participation. Well-qualified facilitators, supported by adequate facilities and clear policies, can promote

development that is more participatory, transparent, and sustainable. Therefore, strengthening the institutional capacity of village facilitators should be a priority in future village development strategies.

D.CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Conclusions

The role of village facilitators in Gattareng Village is crucial in supporting the optimization of village development. They actively participate in planning, implementation, community empowerment, as well as monitoring and evaluating development activities. Village facilitators provide constructive input during village meetings and help ensure that the use of village funds complies with applicable regulations. Supporting factors such as positive responses from the village government, the facilitators' competence, and a strong sense of responsibility strengthen their role. However, challenges remain, including low human resource quality at the village level, limited education among village officials, short-term employment contracts, and inadequate working facilities.

➤ Recommendations

Local and central governments should provide continuous support to enhance the capacity of village facilitators through training and competency development. Regulations guaranteeing secure and longer-term contracts for facilitators are necessary to maintain their motivation and the quality of their assistance. Additionally, the provision of essential infrastructure such as transportation and access to information technology is needed, especially in remote areas. Village facilitators are also encouraged to adopt more inclusive communication approaches and strengthen relationships with all community elements to increase community participation in development. With these measures, the role of village facilitators can be optimized to promote sustainable and participatory village development.

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