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Transforming Sustainable Villages Through Local Potential-Based Empowerment, Digitalization, Food Security, Education, and Quality of Life Improvement in Soppeng Regency

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Abstract. Sustainable village transformation is an important approach to strengthening rural communities by optimizing local potential, improving economic conditions, strengthening food security, utilizing digital technology, and improving the quality of life. This Community Service Program (PKM) aimed to provide education and strengthen community understanding of sustainable village transformation based on local potential. The activity was conducted in Soppeng Regency through a participatory counseling approach involving lecturers from several higher education institutions. The activities included counseling, discussion, knowledge sharing, and identification of opportunities for developing local potential. The main topics covered community economic empowerment, local potential development, village digitalization, food security, education, and quality of life improvement. The implementation of the activity indicated that an integrated empowerment approach can encourage communities to recognize and develop the potential available in their local environment. Digitalization was also introduced as an important instrument for supporting product promotion, marketing, information dissemination, and the development of community networks. The activity contributed to increasing community awareness of the importance of managing local resources productively, innovatively, and sustainably. The novelty of this program lies in integrating several dimensions of village development into a single community empowerment approach that positions local potential as the foundation for economic empowerment and quality-of-life improvement. Further activities should focus on continuous mentoring, capacity development, measurement of community empowerment outcomes, and the development of local-potential-based enterprises. The program is expected to contribute to strengthening community independence and supporting sustainable village development in Soppeng Regency.

Keywords: Sustainable Village Transformation, Local Potential, Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Food Security, Quality of Life
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INTRODUCTION

Villages play a strategic role in development because they possess various local resources that can be developed into social and economic strengths for communities. Agricultural and plantation resources, micro and small enterprises, human resources, and socio-cultural assets constitute important capital for strengthening village independence. Sustainable village development should not focus solely on

infrastructure development but should also emphasize community capacity building, local economic development, human resource improvement, and the utilization of technology.

Community empowerment is an important approach for promoting local economic independence. Empowerment is directed toward improving people's ability to identify their potential, develop businesses, acquire skills, and make decisions regarding the management of available resources. Previous community service activities in Soppeng Regency demonstrated that counseling for community business groups could improve the understanding of MSME actors regarding work motivation, entrepreneurship, and efforts to improve business performance [1]. This indicates that strengthening human resource capacity is an important component of local economic development.

Local economic development should also be directed toward utilizing the potential possessed by communities. Local products and resources should not merely be produced for basic consumption but should be further developed to generate added value and reach broader markets. Community empowerment can serve as a strategy for strengthening local economic independence through individual, group, institutional, and business capacity building [2]. Therefore, village economic development needs to position communities as the main actors in the process of developing local potential.

At the same time, the development of digital technology provides new opportunities for rural communities to improve marketing and market access. Digital technology can assist business actors in promoting products, communicating with consumers, expanding marketing networks, and improving business efficiency. Community service activities in Sadar Village showed that the application of digital technology could support agricultural product marketing and farmers' economic empowerment. The adoption of digital technology has the potential to expand market access and improve farmers' ability to manage their businesses more efficiently [3]. Studies on village digitalization have also indicated that technology can be utilized to support local economic empowerment and the development of smart village concepts [4].

In addition to economic empowerment and digitalization, food security is an important component of sustainable village development. Rural communities possess local food resources that can be optimized to strengthen food availability while simultaneously supporting productive economic activities. Community empowerment programs based on food security demonstrate that education, technological support, business development, and institutional strengthening can contribute positively to village food security [5]. A participatory approach to utilizing local resources can also improve community capacity to manage food resources independently and sustainably [6].

Village development is also closely related to education and quality-of-life improvement. Education plays an important role in improving community knowledge, skills, and capacity to respond to social and economic changes. In the context of sustainable development, rural communities have an important role in achieving the Village Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs Desa), because sustainable development requires communities to actively participate as development actors [7]. Therefore, village transformation needs to integrate economic, social, educational, technological, food security, and quality-of-life dimensions.

Several community service programs have been implemented separately in the areas of MSME empowerment, digital marketing, food security, and community development. However, an integrated approach combining economic empowerment, digitalization, food security, education, and quality-of-life improvement within a local-potential-based village transformation framework, particularly in the context of communities in Soppeng Regency, still needs to be strengthened. This gap provides the basis for implementing this Community Service Program.

This community service activity was conducted under the theme “Sustainable Village Transformation Based on Local Potential through Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Food Security, Education, and Quality of Life Improvement in Soppeng Regency.” The theme is consistent with the Letter of Statement Number 136/14/DMT/VII/2026 issued by the Village Government, which states that a team of lecturers from several higher education institutions conducted a Community Service Program in the form of counseling with the aforementioned theme.

Therefore, this activity aimed to improve community understanding and awareness of the importance of managing local potential productively, strengthening community economic capacity, increasing the utilization of digital technology, supporting food security, and improving human resource quality as part of efforts to achieve sustainable village development. The implementation of the activity is documented in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3.



Figure 1. Documentation of the sustainable village transformation counseling in Soppeng Regency

METHODS

1 Location and Target Community

The Community Service Program was conducted in **Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia**, involving village communities as the target participants. The activity was supported by a team of lecturers from several higher education institutions.

Based on Letter of Statement Number **136/14/DMT/VII/2026**, the Village Head confirmed that lecturers from several higher education institutions had conducted a Community Service Program in the form of counseling concerning sustainable village transformation based on local potential.

2 Community Service Approach

The activity applied a **participatory counseling approach**. This approach provided the community with relevant information while creating opportunities for participants to share their experiences, problems, and local potential.

The activity consisted of the following stages:

1. Identification of village potential and problems;
2. Delivery of counseling materials;
3. Discussion and question-and-answer sessions;



Figure 2. Participants attending the counseling session

4. Identification of opportunities for developing local potential;



Figure 3. The counseling session with community participants in Soppeng Regency

5. Strengthening understanding of digitalization and marketing;
6. Strengthening awareness of food security;
7. Discussion of the role of education in village development; and
8. Evaluation of participants' understanding and follow-up activities.

3 Counseling Materials

The counseling materials focused on five major aspects, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Focus of Sustainable Village Transformation Counseling

No.	Aspect	Main Focus
1	Economic empowerment	Business development and increasing the added value of local potential
2	Digitalization	Utilization of technology for information, promotion, and marketing
3	Food security	Optimization of local food resources
4	Education	Improvement of community knowledge and capacity
5	Quality of life	Strengthening social and economic welfare

4 Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted descriptively by observing participant responses during the counseling sessions, participation in discussions, ability to identify local potential, and understanding of the materials delivered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1 Implementation of Sustainable Village Transformation Counseling

The Community Service Program was conducted through counseling on sustainable village transformation. The activity involved lecturers from several higher education institutions as part of a collaborative approach to community service. The Letter of Statement issued by the Village Government lists eleven lecturers from different higher education institutions as the team involved in the Community Service Program.

Cross-university collaboration provides added value because the community can obtain diverse perspectives. A multidisciplinary approach allows communities to understand village development not only from an economic perspective but also from education, technology, food security, and quality-of-life perspectives.

2 Economic Empowerment Based on Local Potential

Economic empowerment was one of the main focuses of the activity. Communities were encouraged to view local potential not merely as resources for daily use but also as economic assets that can be developed into higher-value products and services.

Local potential can be developed through several strategies, including improving product quality, packaging, product identity or branding, strengthening business institutions, and expanding market access. This approach is important because the success of village economic development is not determined solely by resource availability but also by the community's ability to transform resources into products with added value.

The findings are consistent with previous community service activities emphasizing MSME counseling and strengthening the capacity of community business groups [1]. Such activities demonstrate that community knowledge and entrepreneurial capacity are important elements in strengthening local economic activities.

3 Digitalization as a Supporting Instrument for Marketing and Village Information

Digitalization is an important component of village transformation. Digital media enables communities to introduce local products and village potential to wider markets.

In this activity, digitalization was introduced as an instrument that can be used for:

- promoting local products;
- marketing products through social media;
- disseminating information about village potential;
- developing business networks;
- expanding consumer access; and
- strengthening product identity and branding.

The implementation is consistent with previous community service activities demonstrating the potential of digital technology to improve agricultural marketing and economic empowerment [3].

Therefore, digitalization can function not only as a communication tool but also as an economic empowerment instrument that supports local product competitiveness.

4 Strengthening Food Security

Food security is an integral component of sustainable village development. Rural communities have significant opportunities to optimize local food resources through land utilization, agricultural product processing, product diversification, and food-based business development.

Strengthening food security should not only focus on increasing food availability but also on how local food resources can be managed productively to generate economic benefits for communities.

The integration of food security and economic empowerment is important because local food resources can be processed into higher-value products. A participatory approach can further strengthen community involvement in managing food resources and developing sustainable food systems [5], [6].

5 Education and Community Capacity Building

Education is one of the main foundations of village transformation. Communities with adequate knowledge and skills are better able to identify problems, develop local potential, and make appropriate decisions concerning resource management.

Counseling is one form of non-formal education that can be used to improve community knowledge. Through discussion and knowledge sharing, communities gain opportunities to understand development opportunities while identifying challenges faced in the local context.

In this regard, education does not only mean formal schooling but also includes continuous learning, training, counseling, and capacity development relevant to community needs.

6 Quality of Life Improvement

Village transformation should ultimately contribute to improving community quality of life. Therefore, economic development needs to be implemented alongside human capacity development, food security, education, and technology utilization.

An integrated approach can establish a stronger village development ecosystem. Communities are not positioned merely as recipients of programs but as active actors who identify, manage, and develop local potential. The integration of the programs is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Integration of Sustainable Village Transformation Programs

Aspect	Intervention	Expected Outcome
Economy	Empowerment of local-potential-based businesses	Increased economic activity
Digitalization	Utilization of digital media	Expanded information and market access
Food security	Optimization of local food resources	Strengthened food availability
Education	Counseling and capacity building	Improved community knowledge
Quality of life	Integration of social and economic dimensions	Improved community welfare

7 Sustainability Potential of the Program

The activity indicates that counseling can serve as an initial step in building community awareness regarding the importance of sustainable village transformation based on local potential. However, counseling needs to be followed by continuous mentoring to ensure that the knowledge gained can be translated into practical activities.

Program sustainability can be supported through business-group development, local product mentoring, digital marketing training, strengthening village economic institutions, and regular monitoring and evaluation.

Thus, the Community Service Program should not end with knowledge transfer but should be developed into a continuous empowerment process that strengthens community independence.

CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program entitled **"Sustainable Village Transformation Based on Local Potential through Economic Empowerment, Digitalization, Food Security, Education, and Quality of Life Improvement in Soppeng Regency"** contributed to strengthening community understanding of integrated village development. An approach combining economic empowerment, digitalization, food security, education, and quality of life can provide a foundation for encouraging communities to utilize local potential productively and sustainably. The activity also demonstrates the importance of collaboration among higher education institutions in supporting community empowerment. The long-term impact of the program depends on the continuity of mentoring; therefore, subsequent programs should focus on implementing the counseling outcomes through local business development, digital technology utilization, community capacity building, and regular monitoring and evaluation. Such continuity is expected to strengthen community independence and contribute to sustainable village development.

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