

Village Government Strategy in Local Economic Empowerment and Community Welfare: An Empirical Study in Sungai Duren Village

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategy of the Sungai Duren Village Government in improving community welfare through optimizing the food security sector and diversifying the productive economy. This study uses a qualitative research method with data collection techniques including interviews, field observations, and documentation analysis. Research informants were determined purposively, consisting of the village government, micro-entrepreneurs, tilapia fish cage managers, and community beneficiaries of the program. Data analysis was carried out interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the village government's strategy is articulated into four pillars: strengthening food security based on tilapia fish cages, downstreaming processed fishery MSME products, poverty mitigation through Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), and projections of microfinance institutions through the Merah Putih Village Cooperative. The village government acts as a facilitator and dynamic agent of multi-actor collaboration (collaborative governance) with the academic and private sectors. However, the sustainability of the program is still hampered by ecological vulnerability in the form of water pollution, limited village fiscal capacity, and low community technological literacy. This study recommends the need to strengthen local environmental protection regulations and strengthen the managerial capacity of village economic institutions in a structured manner.

Keywords: community empowerment, strategy, village government, social welfare.

Introduction

Rural development is a fundamental pillar of Indonesia's national development structure (Sulaiman et al., 2022). The strategic position of villages is demonstrated by their abundant natural resource potential, the availability of productive land, and their role as a primary supporter of national food security (Turmudi et al., 2022). Despite their significant geographic and demographic potential, rural areas have historically faced a variety of complex structural issues (Pribadi et al., 2023). These include high poverty rates, limited access to capital and markets, low human resource quality, and asymmetry in information technology (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

This situation emphasizes that village development can no longer be solely focused on physical infrastructure. Rural development must shift toward an inclusive human development paradigm through a community empowerment approach (Azwar et al., 2023; Supri et al., 2023). Conceptually, empowerment is a process of strengthening capacity, increasing participation, and expanding community control over economic and social development resources (Muthoifin & Rhezaldi, 2024). Through empowerment, communities are encouraged to transform from mere objects of benefit (objects of development) into active, independent and competitive subjects (subjects of development) (Dawson & Walker, 2022).

From a Governmental Science perspective, the enactment of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages provides strong political and fiscal legitimacy for reconciling village governance. Village governments now hold full authority (self-governing communities) to plan and manage development according to the real needs of the local community (Harinurdin et al., 2025; Rahman & Hakim, 2024; Risfandini et al., 2023). The Village Fund allocation support rolled out annually by the central government is a crucial fiscal instrument for escalating sustainable local economic empowerment programs (Nurkomala et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of converting village budgets into programs that directly impact poverty reduction and welfare improvement still varies significantly at the empirical level.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the national poverty rate has decreased to around 8.47% in 2025, equivalent to 23.85 million people. Although this macroeconomic trend shows improvement, the welfare disparity between urban and rural areas remains very wide (Nugroho & Triyono, 2022; Pagani et al., 2023). Poverty rates in rural areas remain persistently higher than in urban areas. This reality indicates structural blockages in the distribution of welfare and the effectiveness of economic empowerment programs at the village level (Maulida et al., 2023; Muzaqi & Tyasotyaningarum, 2022; Saptanno & Timisela, 2024). Therefore, an in-depth analysis is needed regarding the local strategies implemented by village governments to maximize local potential and narrow the gap in inequality.

Sungai Duren Village, located in the Jambi Luar Kota District, Muaro Jambi Regency, is an area with riverine geographic characteristics that have great potential for the development of the inland fisheries sector and community-based micro-enterprises. The Sungai Duren Village Government seeks to integrate this local potential through the

formulation of a productive economic empowerment program, which includes tilapia fish cage cultivation, downstreaming of processed food products for women's groups, a social safety net through Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), and plans to establish a microfinance institution in the form of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative.

Despite these programs' comprehensive strategic designs, their implementation in the field still faces sustainability challenges (Bakari et al., 2026; Setiawan, 2024; Sihidi et al., 2026). These include high fisheries mortality rates due to river environmental degradation, limited capital, and low community managerial capacity to adopt digital marketing technologies (Setyaputri et al., 2026). Previous research on rural community empowerment often focuses partially on the social assistance aspect (Sukmawati & Maryanti, 2021) or development of MSMEs separately (Novita et al., 2024; Purnomo et al., 2023; Simatupang et al., 2025). This study attempts to fill the literature gap by integratively analyzing the dynamics of economic empowerment from a collaborative governance perspective. Thus, this study aims to identify, classify, and critically analyze the effectiveness of village government strategies, the multi-actor partnerships formed, and the systemic challenges faced in realizing sustainable rural economic independence in Sungai Duren Village.

Thus, this research is crucial because it not only highlights economic empowerment practices at the village level but also examines the extent to which village government strategies are able to address structural issues of poverty, strengthen local economic resilience, and maintain program sustainability amidst fiscal constraints, low technological literacy, and ecological vulnerability. This study also has strategic value because it presents a more integrative analysis through a collaborative governance perspective, thus explaining how the relationship between village governments, communities, academics, and the private sector forms a sustainable empowerment ecosystem. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to serve as academic references and policy input for strengthening local potential-based economic development strategies in villages.

Methods

This research employed qualitative methods. This approach was chosen to explore in-depth, systematic, and factually the dynamics of village government strategies in community empowerment programs and the institutional interactions that occur within them (Marwanto & Pramono, 2023; Subiyakto et al., 2022). The research was conducted in Sungai Duren Village,

Jambi Luar Kota District, Muaro Jambi Regency, Jambi Province. This location was chosen purposively due to the region's strategic position, which utilizes river ecosystems as a basis for food security and community-based creative economic development.

The research data is sourced from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly through limited participatory field observation and in-depth interviews. Informants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Secondary data were obtained through analysis of official village government documents, accountability reports on the realization of the Sungai Duren Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes), poverty statistics from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2025, and relevant academic literature.

Table 1. Research Flow and Stages

No.	Research Stages	Activity Description	Source / Instrument
1	Preparation & Location Determination	The location was selected purposively in Sungai Duren Village.	Literature Study & Initial Observation
2	Data collection	Collection of primary data directly in the field and collection of secondary data from official documents.	Interviews, documentation, Village Budget, & BPS 2025
3	Data Reduction	Selecting, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from interviews and field observations.	Field Notes & Interview Transcripts
4	Data Presentation	Arrange the reduced data into logical narrative form, matrix tables, and other findings.	Research findings
5	Conclusion Drawing	Formulate conclusions during the research.	Analysis Results

(Source: processed by researchers 2026)

The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation and method triangulation techniques to minimize the subjective bias of researchers in the field with the following flow:

1. Data Reduction: Selecting, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from interviews and field observations related to empowerment strategies.
2. Data Presentation: Compiling and presenting reduced data into logical narrative forms, comparative matrix tables, and visual diagrammatic schemes (concept maps).
3. Drawing Conclusions: Formulating theoretical and practical conclusions from field findings that are continuously verified throughout the research process.

Findings and Discussion

Typology and Empirical Study of the Local Economic Empowerment Program in Sungai Duren Village

Community empowerment in Sungai Duren Village is constructed as a strategic policy instrument to escalate local welfare through optimizing Village Fund allocation (Bennett & Meers, 2025). Based on the results of research that has been conducted, the current governance of village economic development is no longer based on a charitable aid approach, but has shifted towards structured and productive empowerment programs. The economic intervention strategy initiated by the Sungai Duren Village Government is identified into three main sectoral pillars: strengthening food security based on fisheries cultivation, diversifying economic value-added through processed micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and protective social protection schemes.

The first pillar focuses on a village food security program through tilapia cage cultivation. This policy leverages the comparative geographical advantage of Sungai Duren Village, which is irrigated by a potential river ecosystem. Throughout 2025, the Sungai Duren Village Government allocated a budget to facilitate the construction of approximately 20 active cages, managed through a partnership scheme with non-permanent community members. Theoretically, the economic potential of this inland fisheries sector is highly prospective, with projected revenues reaching IDR 35,000,000 per harvest cycle (3 to 5 months) assuming a stocking capacity of 10,000 seeds per cage.

However, empirical findings confirm significant ecological vulnerability. The survival rate of tilapia in the field is only 20% to 50% (only around 2,000 to 5,000 survive to harvest) due to accumulated river pollution. This reality demonstrates an asymmetry between the village's macroeconomic projections and the carrying capacity of the local micro-ecosystem.

The second pillar is articulated through a product diversification program, which involves downstreaming fishery commodities into processed MSME products, such as tilapia crackers and salted fish. Objective assessments indicate that this program is inclusively designed, involving women and housewives. The active involvement of these gender-vulnerable groups sociologically contributes to the accumulation of social capital and gender mainstreaming at the rural domestic level.

In addition to increasing the economic added value of raw products, this program simultaneously improves the group's managerial capacity in terms of production standardization. The acceleration of MSME product competitiveness is further strengthened through facilitation of business legality, such as halal certification, and the introduction of digital marketing (e-marketing) in collaboration with academic institutions through community service schemes.

The third pillar focuses on social protection through the distribution of Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), targeting 30 vulnerable beneficiary families (KPM), with an assistance index of IDR 300,000 per month per KPM. In public policy studies, cash transfer social assistance is often criticized for its susceptibility to creating dependency traps. To anticipate these negative externalities, the Sungai Duren Village Government is projecting the integration of social assistance beneficiaries into the village's productive economic ecosystem.

This plan is accelerated through village fiscal policy in the form of a projected allocation of strengthening Village Funds in 2026 which is specifically aimed at establishing and supporting the initial capital of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative as a microfinance institution supporting sustainable collective capital.

Comprehensively, the differentiation of typology, targets, outputs, welfare implications, and obstacles of each empowerment program instrument in Sungai Duren Village is presented in the following table 1:

Table 2. Performance Matrix and Program Typology
Economic Empowerment of Sungai Duren Village

No	Program Dimensions	Target Target	Real Program Output	Implications for Welfare	Major Obstacles
1	Food security (Tilapia Fish Cage Cultivation)	Local cultivators & non-permanent workers	Stimulation of 20 active cage units; stocking 10,000 seeds per cycle (3–5 months).	Job creation; projected potential income of Rp35,000,000/harvest.	Ecological vulnerability, water pollution reduces the survival rate of fish.
2	Diversification of MSMEs (Downst	Village women and	Halal certified fish cracker	Increasing family marginal income, strengthening	Limited technological literacy

	ream Processing of Tilapia)	housewiv es groups	products, digital marketing implementat ion.	gender social capital.	& dependen ce on external assistance. Budget allocation is consumpti ve in nature; there is a risk of social dependen cy emerging. Limited manageria l capacity of cooperativ e managers at the rural level.
3	Social Protection (Villa ge Fund Direct Cash Assistance)	30 KPM are in the socio-economica lly vulnerabl e category	Consistent distribution of stimulus funds worth IDR 300,000/mon th.	Preservation of purchasing power of extremely poor households, consumption stability.	
4	Institutional Strengthening (Red and White Village Cooperative - 2026 Projection)	MSMEs and cage farmers	Planning of cooperative institutional structure & micro credit scheme.	Strengthening independent capital.	

(Source: processed by researchers 2026)

Village Governance Formulation: Multi-Actor Synergy and Ecosystem Sustainability

The success and sustainability of the community empowerment program in Sungai Duren Village is largely determined by the shift in the governance model from a purely bureaucratic model to a Collaborative Governance paradigm (van de Wetering, 2024). From a Government Science perspective, authority relations in rural development are no longer linear and instructive (top-down) but have mutated into a horizontal collaborative network of partnerships between the public, private, community, and academic sectors (quadruple helix). In this context, village governments position themselves in a crucial role as regulators, facilitators, and dynamic network drivers.

Based on the analysis of institutional interactions, the collaborative pattern formed in Sungai Duren Village involves a structured division of roles, namely the Village Government

holds regulatory authority, allocates budgets through the Village Fund (APBDes), and mitigates horizontal conflicts between farmer groups. Academics (Universities) act as actors in technology and knowledge transfer, intervening in community administrative weaknesses through business legality assistance, halal certification facilitation, and the development of digital marketing architecture. The Private Sector/Investor acts as a provider of external capital stimulus and guarantees the availability of production inputs (high-quality fish seeds). The Local Community/Target Community positions itself as the main actor that operates work programs independently to ensure the efficient use of assistance in the field.

Although this multi-actor synergy provides a significant boost to economic acceleration, critical-academic analysis indicates institutional gaps that threaten the sustainability of this empowerment ecosystem. First, the limited fiscal capacity of the Village Fund requires village governments to conduct strict selection in determining recipients of fish cage and MSME assistance. This, if not accompanied by transparent data on eligibility criteria, has the potential to trigger social friction at the grassroots level. Second, the low technological literacy of rural communities has implications for the high dependence of the sustainability of MSME marketing digitalization on external (academic) assistance. Third, the absence of village regulations (such as Village Regulations/Perdes) governing the protection of river ecosystems from domestic and industrial pollution, placing economic investment in the tilapia fish cage sector in Sungai Duren Village at a high risk of failure.

Therefore, the transformation of future governance policies requires strengthening local regulations and optimizing the use of Village Funds in the 2026 budget year, specifically directed at strengthening village economic institutions through the Merah Putih Village Cooperative. This synergy aims to create rural economic independence in line with the downward trend in the national poverty rate by 2025, which currently stands at 8.47% according to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). Despite the decline in national poverty, the still wide rural-urban disparity emphasizes that collaborative strategies based on local potential, such as in Sungai Duren Village, must become a national model.

To provide a comprehensive visualization of the actor relations, systemic challenges, and welfare outputs to be achieved in this empowerment governance, the following is a concept map (mind mapping) of the research findings:

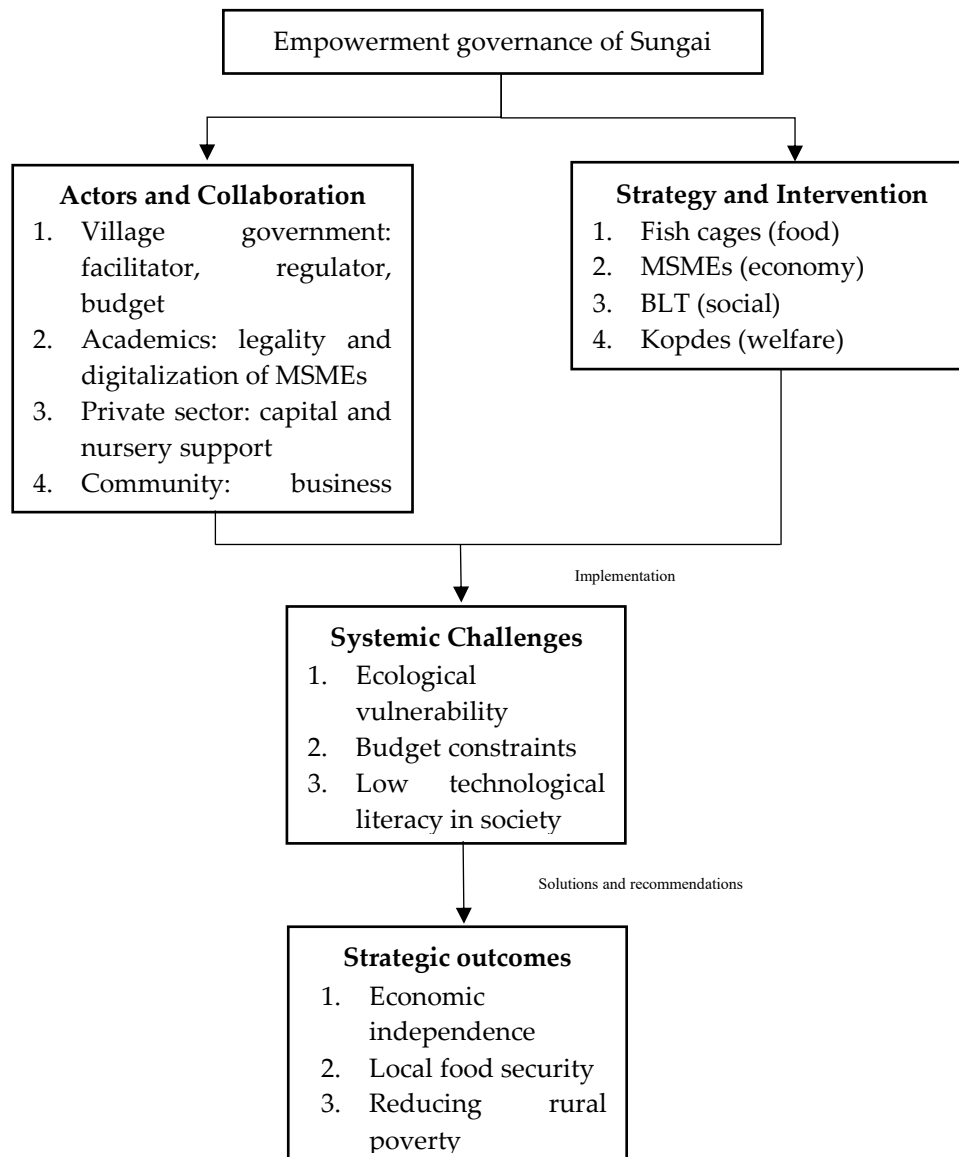


Figure 2. Mind mapping of research findings
(Source: processed by researchers 2026)

Theoretically, the Collaborative Governance approach implemented in Sungai Duren Village demonstrates that the success of economic empowerment programs cannot be achieved through partial sectoral interventions. Sustainable community income is determined by the village government's ability to simultaneously and sustainably integrate the ecological potential of the waters, strengthen social capital through women's participation, regulate microfinance institutions, and collaboratively integrate with academics and businesses.

Conclusion

The Sungai Duren Village Government's strategy to improve community welfare is implemented in an integrated manner through the convergence of food security policies

(tilapia fish cages), downstreaming of MSMEs based on local potential, social safety nets (Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance), and strengthening financial institutions (projection of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative in 2026). The shift from charitable assistance to productive empowerment has proven to be able to escalate social capital, particularly through increasing the involvement of women's groups in the domestic economic value chain.

However, this study found systemic constraints in the form of ecological vulnerability of waters due to river pollution, which suppresses tilapia cultivation productivity to a survival rate of only 20% to 50%. Furthermore, limited technological literacy necessitates ongoing external support to prevent the digitalization of village product markets from stagnating after the support phase ends.

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