

Empowering Communities Through the Desa Berdaya Program: Lessons from Bligo Village

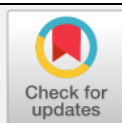
Eny Boedi Orbawati , Fadlurrahman *, , Sujatmiko , and Ari Mukti 

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tidar,
56116, Magelang, Central Java Province, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: fadlurrahman@untidar.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Publication Info:
Research Article



How to cite:

Orbawati, E. B., Fadlurrahman, F.,
Sujatmiko, S., & Mukti, A. (2024).
Empowering Communities
Through the Desa Berdaya
Program: Lessons from Bligo
Village. *Society*, 12(2), 397-414.

DOI: [10.33019/society.v12i2.445](https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v12i2.445)

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Received: November 15, 2022;
Accepted: November 29, 2024;
Published: December 7, 2024;

ABSTRACT

Desa Berdaya (Empowered Village) is an acceleration initiative in rural areas utilizing an integrated approach encompassing capacity building, economy, health, education, environment, and disaster preparedness. Its primary aim is to foster and develop local institutions to address community issues. This study seeks to portray the success of community empowerment through the Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village, initiated by the private organization Rumah Zakat, by analyzing the 5P empowerment strategies: enabling, strengthening, protecting, supporting, and maintaining. A qualitative method with a case study approach was employed. Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively, including Bligo Village Government officials, Rumah Zakat facilitators, women's farming groups, the Bligo Beriman waste bank, entrepreneurs, and local community members, totaling ten informants. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village does not follow specific criteria but is based on program facilitators' recommendations, often prioritizing their home villages. Based on the 5P empowerment strategy, the enabling stage involved dialogues with the village head, community leaders, and other key members deemed capable of implementing the Desa Berdaya program. During the strengthening stage, formal groups were formed, and collaborations with various internal and external parties were initiated. The protection stage was realized by issuing official decrees for the established groups, along with financial support from Rumah Zakat, Bligo Village Government, and the Magelang Regency Agricultural Office. The supporting stage was conducted through facilitation and guidance provided by

program facilitators to the community. Finally, the maintenance stage was carried out by fostering a conducive atmosphere within the empowerment groups. The Desa Berdaya program positively impacts Bligo Village, particularly in social, health, environmental, and economic aspects. The reactivation of community groups and the establishment of a waste bank, which remains well-managed, are among the significant outcomes. The people of Bligo Village have become increasingly critical in addressing social and economic issues in their community due to the continuous empowerment process, which persists to this day.

Keywords: 5P Strategy; Bligo Village; Desa Berdaya; Integrated Empowerment; Rumah Zakat

1. Introduction

Empowerment serves as an antithesis to the development paradigm that prioritizes growth and welfare. The growth paradigm is considered a failure as it leads to steeper social inequality, community dependence on government programs, and low participation in development (Hodler & Dreher, 2013). This is because the development process focuses on industrialization, investment, asset ownership, and capital accumulation, which ultimately excludes the lower levels of society from enjoying its outcomes (Ibrahim, 2017).

The empowerment paradigm positions the community as the subject of development and the main actors in the development process (Suaib, 2023). Every individual needs to possess sufficient knowledge, experience, attitudes, and skills to support their livelihood and achieve welfare, either through external assistance or internal group support (Muslim, 2012). Facilitators generally stimulate empowerment. In empowerment programs, facilitators act as guides, listeners, and learners from the community. Their goal is to understand the community's problems and needs rather than to teach them. Thus, the main task of facilitators is to assist so that the community can solve their problems independently (Agustin & Supriyadi, 2017). Through empowerment, communities are encouraged to recognize their potential and needs, enabling them to become self-reliant and competitive. Empowerment programs fundamentally aim to assist communities in becoming independent and sustainable (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2017; Margayaningsih, 2018; Pujayanti & Mashur, 2021). Consequently, empowered communities become stronger and more confident in addressing their issues (Muryanti, 2023). Efforts to build self-reliant communities involve two main stages: enabling, which creates an environment for community development, and empowering, which strengthens community capacity through concrete and positive actions (Muslim, 2012).

Community empowerment is a shared responsibility between government and private entities. One such private organization committed to community empowerment is Rumah Zakat through its Desa Berdaya (Empowered Village) Program. This program focuses on empowering rural communities through an integrated approach that includes capacity building, economic development, health, education, environmental management, and disaster preparedness. Its main goal is to establish independent local institutions capable of addressing their issues by leveraging available assets and resources and collaborating with various stakeholders, particularly village governments (Prasetyo et al., 2020).

The Desa Berdaya initiative is based on three strategies. First, it develops untapped village potential to maximize its management, turning it into productive enterprises that drive rural economic growth. Second, it strengthens local institutions by focusing on enhancing existing businesses and creating new opportunities, managed professionally through competitive business management principles. Third, it improves human resource capacity and capability through intensive training, covering both soft and hard skills.

Over the past decade, studies on empowerment have explored various approaches, such as government roles, budget policies, and policy implementation (Arfianto & Balahmar, 2014; Syaranamual, 2018; Wathoni, 2018). The tourism sector, for example, has shifted from a money-oriented to an empowerment-oriented focus, with empowerment being analyzed using community-based tourism approaches as an alternative perspective on sustainable development (Asy'ari et al., 2021; Diswandi et al., 2022; Pribadi et al., 2021; Widaningsih et al., 2024). Additionally, community empowerment activities often support health programs through models like adaptive conservation and the Precede-Proceed framework (Kusuma et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2018; Reskiaddin et al., 2020; Sulaeman et al., 2017).

One factor critical to the success of community empowerment is effective communication during program implementation (Nindatu, 2019; Nugraha et al., 2019; Zainun et al., 2019). Moreover, communities must understand legal frameworks to achieve program effectiveness (Afif et al., 2022; Rahmanto & Purwaningsih, 2017). Several studies also reveal that technology plays a crucial role in creative industry empowerment during the globalization era (Andiyansari, 2014; Antara, 2016; Rahmiyati, 2016; Simanjuntak, 2011). In the agricultural sector, community empowerment is essential for achieving food independence. Food-independent communities are characterized by active community empowerment (Baharuddin et al., 2019; Fadlurrahman & Fauziah, 2021; Iqbal et al., 2016; Irwan et al., 2023; Rasyid et al., 2022).

Despite these contributions, gaps remain, particularly in analyzing empowerment success narratives by NGOs like Rumah Zakat. Moreover, empowerment studies in Bligo Village, Magelang Regency, are minimal, adding value to this study's contribution to community empowerment literature.

Bligo Village, located in Ngluwar Subdistrict, Magelang Regency, was selected as an example of the Desa Berdaya Program's implementation. Around 45% of its residents are farmers, with the rest working as artisans, small traders, livestock farmers, or in general occupations. The average household income in Bligo Village is IDR 600,000 per month. The empowerment programs in Bligo Village focus on leveraging local potential, including agriculture, freshwater fisheries, water springs, livestock (chickens, rabbits, goats, cattle), water apple centers, river tourism, and home industries (traditional snacks). Programs like the durian farming group utilize residents' yards to cultivate high-quality durian trees. Additional programs include waste bank management, productive mother schools, nutrition gardens, and water tourism villages.

The transformation of Bligo Village through the Desa Berdaya program began in 2015 with various initiatives, as illustrated below:



Figure 1. Development of the Desa Berdaya Program in Bligo Village (2015-2019)

Source: Rumah Zakat report document (2021)

The Desa Berdaya program empowered Bligo Village residents through long stages until they achieved independence under Rumah Zakat's guidance. Facilitators played a critical role as companions and integral parts of the community, ensuring needs were well identified. Bligo Village's strategy involved collaboration with various stakeholders, including the private sector, through training for the Waste Bank and Women Farmers Group, which emerged as community-driving groups. These groups successfully reformed into socio-economic entities capable of reducing poverty and environmental pollution.

Studies like those by Dushkova and Ivlieva emphasize that empowerment effectiveness requires collective participation involving various parties (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Similarly, Sujatmiko et al. found that Bligo Village adopted a collaborative governance model within the Desa Berdaya program, achieving independence, especially among groups like Bligo Beriman Waste Bank and Women Farmers Group (Sujatmiko et al., 2023). Further, enhancing local knowledge capacity, independence, and integrity should be key considerations for program facilitators. Dushkova and Ivlieva concluded that program success depends on aligning strategies with local community needs (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

Thus, it is essential to capture the process of successful community empowerment through the Desa Berdaya program as a learning model for other villages striving for self-reliance. The research question addressed is: *How is the community empowerment process through the Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village analyzed using the 5P empowerment strategy?* This study aims to analyze the success of community empowerment through the Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village, initiated by Rumah Zakat as a non-governmental organization.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Essence of Community Empowerment

Since the concept of empowerment emerged in the 1970s, its essence has continuously evolved. Empowerment has been defined in various ways and perspectives by different individuals. Due to the plethora of definitions and differing viewpoints, Lashley argued that the meaning of empowerment has become almost meaningless (Lashley, 2012). However, the core idea of empowerment is to create a fair and civilized environment for society (Najiyati et al., 2005). This idea stems from Western reflections on power imbalances, where some individuals wield significant power over others (*homo homini lupus*) (Najiyati et al., 2005).

Empowerment is an effort to improve community welfare and security by enhancing the capacity to achieve self-reliance in managing resources (Wibhisana, 2021). Issues such as poverty and the vulnerability of marginalized communities are central problems that must be addressed through empowerment approaches (Najiyati et al., 2005). Several authors

conceptualize empowerment as the granting or sharing of power, autonomy, and authority to individuals or groups in need, aiming to create a balance that strengthens and empowers these individuals or groups (Fatimah, 2021; Ife, 1995; Mulyawan, 2016; Redclift & Friedmann, 1994; Suartha, 2012).

Empowerment should not lead to dependence on external assistance, as such aid is merely a stimulant to achieve the ultimate goal of empowerment: fostering community self-reliance and building resilience for a better and sustainable future (Fatimah, 2021; Tulusan & Londa, 2014). Delegating authority or transferring power aims to encourage individuals or empowerment groups to manage themselves and their environment according to their potential and capabilities, shaping a future aligned with their aspirations (Faisal, 2020; Margayaningsih, 2018).

Suaib describes two tendencies in empowerment (Suaib, 2023):

- 1) Primary tendency
Focuses on granting or sharing some authority, ability, power, and decision-making to enhance self-reliance. This process is supported by efforts to build material assets as a means of achieving self-reliance through organizational support.
- 2) Secondary tendency
Emphasizes stimulation, encouragement, and motivation of individuals and groups to develop the willingness and ability to create empowerment and make life decisions through dialogue (Najiyati et al., 2005; Suaib, 2023).

Implementing empowerment programs must include fundamental principles aligned with the empowerment approach itself, both in terms of activity effectiveness and the empowered individuals or communities. Effective empowerment incorporates at least five principles (Najiyati et al., 2005; Ulumiyah et al., 2013):

- 1) Equality principle
This principle is vital at every stage of community empowerment. Equality here refers to creating a balanced relationship between the community and institutions implementing the empowerment program, as well as between genders. The key point is that no party dominates, fostering fair relationships with mutual knowledge sharing, experiences, and expertise. All parties acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and learning. Empowerment must proportionally consider each individual's role and responsibilities.
- 2) Participatory principle
This principle should always be applied at every stage of the empowerment process. Najiyati et al. stress the importance of empowerment conducted alongside the community from the planning stage to evaluation to encourage their independence (Najiyati et al., 2005). Communities should be encouraged to participate actively from the beginning to the end of the program. The government or institutions managing empowerment programs should avoid excessive intervention, as the community is the driving force of empowerment, understanding the problems and issues in their surroundings. During the empowerment process, the community learns to identify and resolve emerging issues through the programs.
- 3) Self-reliance principle
This principle places the community as the actors of empowerment rather than objects. It emphasizes appreciating and encouraging the community's abilities (Harahap & Sujadmi, 2018; Najiyati et al., 2005; Suaib, 2023). Community capabilities are crucial in empowerment

efforts, with external assistance serving as supporting aid without undermining community self-reliance.

4) Sustainability principle

This principle highlights the importance of program continuity. Empowerment programs should be designed with sustainability in mind. Although facilitators may play a more dominant role initially, their involvement should gradually and consistently decrease until eventually eliminated as the community develops the capability to manage activities independently.

5) Integration principle

This principle emphasizes the importance of synergy and integration between policies and strategies at various levels (local, regional, and national). Empowerment programs often face challenges due to a lack of synergy between policies and strategies, leading to low program achievements. Therefore, emphasizing integration across levels is essential.

From the actors' perspective, empowerment is viewed as a collaborative process where communities, as empowerment actors, are expected to participate actively as partners. Recommended principles include emphasizing the community's position as subjects or actors of empowerment, positioning communities as agents of change, exploring individuals potential and experiences for empowerment, respecting diversity, leveraging social networks, raising awareness, providing access to all resources, strengthening dynamic, synergistic, and evolutionary processes, and achieving empowerment through personal and economic development structures simultaneously (D. Setiadi et al., 2023).

2.2. Empowerment Strategies

Empowerment strategies are approaches used to implement empowerment activities. One commonly utilized strategy in various empowerment programs is the 5P strategy or approach, which consists of enabling, strengthening, protecting, supporting, and maintaining (Afriansyah et al., 2023; Noor, 2011; Putra et al., 2016; Zainun et al., 2019):

1) Enabling

This involves creating an environment or context that supports the optimal growth of community capacities and potential. This process is based on the argument that each individual and community has capacities and potential that can be enhanced. Enabling is carried out by stimulating the community through dialogues and activities that encourage the emergence of community potential.

2) Strengthening

This focuses on enhancing community knowledge and skills through concrete actions in solving problems and finding solutions to challenges. This process may include providing various inputs and opening opportunities that enable the community to become empowered.

3) Protecting

This entails protecting the community, particularly vulnerable or marginalized groups, in terms of competition, resource utilization, and access to information and resources.

4) Supporting

This involves guiding and assisting the community in fulfilling their duties and roles throughout the empowerment process.

5) Maintaining

This refers to preserving the conducive conditions and environment that have been established to maintain the balance of authority or power distribution among various parties.

Additionally, three strategic approaches can be applied to the empowerment process (Harahap & Sujadmi, 2018; Raehani et al., 2019):

- 1) The Welfare Approach
This approach focuses on assisting specific groups that lack the strength to face challenges.
- 2) The Development Approach
This emphasizes building community independence, capacity, and self-reliance.
- 3) The Empowerment Approach
This views poverty as a result of political processes and activities, thereby necessitating community empowerment by training them to overcome their powerlessness.

2.3. Desa Berdaya (Empowered Village)

Desa Berdaya is an acceleration movement aimed at expediting the community empowerment process through a series of interconnected activities tailored to local potential, enabling villages to grow and address their issues independently. The concept of Desa Berdaya refers to empowerment initiatives implemented in rural areas and some urban villages. This program adopts an integrated approach encompassing community capacity development, economic growth, education, health, environmental management, and disaster preparedness. Its primary goal is to strengthen and expand local institutions, enabling them to solve problems by leveraging existing potential and resources while collaborating with various parties, particularly village governments.

The Desa Berdaya program focuses on enhancing the capabilities of communities and individuals to become empowered. The empowerment level of a community can be evaluated through the establishment and strengthening of community institutions in the economic sector, such as Community-Owned Enterprises (BUMMAs). Indicators of individual empowerment include increased motivation, knowledge, and skills applied in specific areas such as health, education, and environment, which positively impact overall well-being.

Desa Berdaya offers several specialized programs to advance rural development, including:

- 1) Senyum Juara Program
This program aims to improve the quality of education by focusing on students, infrastructure, and high-quality educators. It aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by ensuring that every child in Indonesia can complete free, equitable, and quality primary (SD) and secondary (SMP) education with effective and relevant learning outcomes.
- 2) Senyum Mandiri Program
This program seeks to develop an economy based on local potential to assist underprivileged communities and reduce poverty levels.
- 3) Senyum Sehat Program
This program focuses on improving community health through individual, communal, and participatory approaches within the community itself.
- 4) Senyum Lestari Program
This program emphasizes environmental improvements to enhance the quality of life and address social issues related to access to clean water, sanitation, and environmental cleanliness.

The Desa Berdaya program is an initiative by the Rumah Zakat organization. Rumah Zakat is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that has operated since 1998 and has transformed from a traditional institution into a world digital philanthropy institution. As of now, Rumah Zakat has established 1,684 Desa Berdaya villages out of its target of 2,814 villages to be empowered across Indonesia.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method with a single instrumental case study approach. The research focuses on a specific case: community empowerment carried out by Rumah Zakat. The study was conducted in Bligo Village, Ngluwar Subdistrict, Magelang Regency, Central Java. This location was selected because Bligo Village serves as a pilot project for the implementation of the Desa Berdaya program. Additionally, Bligo Village represents the dynamics of rural community empowerment with diverse local potentials, such as agriculture, fisheries, and human resources, including economic and environmental groups actively participating in empowerment efforts.

The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling, considering specific criteria such as individuals knowledgeable about the situation or issues being studied. The informants included Bligo Village Government officials, Rumah Zakat facilitators, the women's farming group, the Bligo Beriman waste bank group, business actors, and local community members. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, and documentation.

Data analysis utilized an interpretative approach with the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify patterns and key themes.

- Open coding was the initial stage, identifying key concepts emerging from the collected data. This process involved selecting raw data relevant to the research topic, such as the roles of Bligo Village Government, Rumah Zakat, facilitators, and empowerment groups, as well as the challenges faced in implementing the program.
- Axial coding connected these concepts into broader categories, illustrating program planning, actor involvement, and the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of the Desa Berdaya program.
- Selective coding identified the main theme: how the community empowerment process through the Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village aligns with the 5P empowerment strategy.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Process and Development of the Desa Berdaya Program in Bligo Village

The Desa Berdaya program was initiated in Bligo Village in 2015, with its implementation beginning in 2016. In 2015, Rumah Zakat opened applications for empowerment facilitators. One of the Bligo Village residents, Mr. Wimbo, who currently serves as the facilitator for the Desa Berdaya program, applied to become a facilitator. During the selection process, applicants could choose their village (with a preference for their village) as the target village for empowerment. As a result, Bligo Village was selected as one of the villages to implement the Desa Berdaya program by Rumah Zakat.

In the initial phase, facilitators and the community conducted social mapping (Nuryati et al., 2020). Social mapping is the process of identifying a village's potential and the problems faced by the community (Handoyo et al., 2020; Sukaris, 2019). The social mapping study provides a description or overview of the social, economic, and cultural conditions of Bligo

Village. This activity continues to this day, allowing facilitators and the community to identify untapped potential in Bligo Village. The facilitator's involvement in social mapping stems from their status as part of the Bligo Village community, giving them the right to shape the village's development. In contrast, some case studies suggest that a facilitator's role should not overshadow that of the community (Ishom et al., 2021; Okech et al., 2020). In Bligo Village, however, the dual role of the facilitator—as both a companion and a community member receiving empowerment programs—has proven beneficial. Facilitators with dual roles possess deep knowledge of local social and cultural contexts, enhancing the effectiveness of community-based empowerment strategies (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Similar cases of dual-role facilitators in empowerment initiatives include farmer empowerment in Batu City, East Java (Fibriani et al., 2022), and in Tanjung Karang Permai Village, West Nusa Tenggara (Nurkomala et al., 2023).

In the second phase, empowerment activities were further developed through collaboration with various stakeholders, such as the Bligo Village Government and the target community groups. The selection of target communities and involved stakeholders was based on the social mapping or assessment conducted in the initial phase (Nuryati et al., 2020). One such group was the women's farming group, chosen for its potential as a social and economic driving force (Evendi & Suryadharma, 2020) in Bligo Village. The decision to engage this group aligned with the community's needs, ensuring the Desa Berdaya program's objectives could be achieved effectively.

Empowerment activities in Bligo Village have progressed well and expanded, with the program being recognized as successful in 2018, ultimately serving as a role model. This study identifies several key indicators of success:

- 1) Emergence and growth of new community groups as platforms for empowerment activities. These groups include the durian farmers' group, focusing on planting durian seedlings in limited spaces; the tourism-awareness group, utilizing Mataram canals to create tubing tourism; the champion women's farming group, engaging in traditional snack sales; and the waste bank management group, focused on collecting and selling waste.
- 2) Consistency of facilitators and community members in reporting and submitting activity updates to Rumah Zakat. These reports and updates are an essential form of accountability and a critical part of the empowerment process (Asnamawati et al., 2021).
- 3) The Desa Berdaya program in Bligo Village has had a positive impact on building human resource capacity and sustainable community economics, contributing to poverty alleviation (Abdussalam & Gunawan, 2023).

The story of Bligo Village's success in becoming empowered through the Desa Berdaya program was not without challenges. According to informants, several activities failed despite receiving financial assistance—for example, goat and rabbit farming initiatives. These failures were attributed to a lack of regular mentoring, leaving the groups managing the farms without adequate knowledge and guidance. Regular mentoring is crucial for strengthening individual and group capacities (Fatimah, 2021; Jentoft, 2005; Redclift & Friedmann, 1994).

4.2. Implementation of the 5P Empowerment Strategy in the Desa Berdaya Program

The Desa Berdaya program aims to optimize the potential of Bligo Village by enhancing skills and knowledge to improve the community's economy, with the expected outcome of increasing the quality of life by leveraging local resources. Bligo Village receives full support from Rumah Zakat, the owner of the Desa Berdaya program, both in terms of funding and

facilitation, with the facilitator being a resident of Bligo Village itself. Allowing facilitators to prioritize their village is an effective approach to achieving the program's goals. This strategy has distinct advantages, such as a superior understanding of the village's conditions, which makes the mapping process more effective. Additionally, when facilitators empower their village, they are likely to exhibit stronger motivation and enthusiasm as it positively impacts their community and themselves.

The implementation of an empowerment program must involve strategies or approaches that ensure the program's effectiveness. One commonly used approach in empowerment programs is the 5P strategy, which includes enabling, strengthening, protecting, supporting, and maintaining (Afriansyah et al., 2023; Noor, 2011; Putra et al., 2016; Zainun et al., 2019). The success of the Desa Berdaya program can be explained through this strategy, as empowerment aims to create community self-reliance, beginning with enabling conditions and culminating in sustained independence.

1) Enabling

The first phase, enabling, involves creating an atmosphere or climate that allows the community's capabilities and potential to develop optimally. This phase is based on the assumption that every individual and community has capacities and potential that can be enhanced. The enabling process is carried out through stimulation, dialogue, and activities that encourage the emergence of community potential (Putra et al., 2016; Zainun et al., 2019). In Bligo Village, this phase included meetings between facilitators, the village head, community leaders, and key community members to discuss the Desa Berdaya program.

Prior to the program's implementation, Bligo Village was designated as a cadre for village community empowerment tasked with mapping village potential. However, the KPMD initiative was ineffective due to limited village budgets (Mulyawan, 2016). The Desa Berdaya program by Rumah Zakat addressed these limitations, providing solutions for empowerment activities (Prasetyo et al., 2020; Sujatmiko et al., 2023). The enabling phase in Bligo Village began with social mapping, identifying community needs, potential groups for empowerment, and activities to be implemented. This was followed by regular socialization and education by community leaders, which encouraged participation in the program.

2) Strengthening

The second phase, strengthening, focuses on enhancing community knowledge and skills through concrete steps to solve problems and find solutions (Muskin et al., 2011; Simanjuntak, 2011). During this phase, formal groups were established, transforming previously informal groups into legal entities. These groups collaborated with various stakeholders to increase their chances of success and achieve more sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Ahmad & Islam, 2024; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

For example, collaboration with organizations like the Indonesia Juara Foundation provided education and training for the Sijura Women Farmers Group in traditional snack-making. The six-month training resulted in skill improvements and the establishment of a traditional snack business that has expanded to branches in Sleman and Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta. Similarly, the Bligo Village Government issued formal recognition through a decree for the Bligo Beriman Waste Bank group, enabling them to access government funding and facilities.

3) Protecting

The third phase, protecting, involves safeguarding vulnerable groups in terms of competition, resource utilization, and access to information and resources (Suaib, 2023). In Bligo Village, this included issuing decrees that provided legal protection and recognition for community groups. These formalities enabled groups to access funding, such as IDR 10,000,000 from Rumah Zakat, IDR 8,000,000 from Bligo Village, and IDR 5,000,000 from the Magelang Agricultural Office. These funds were instrumental in supporting groups like the Bligo Beriman Waste Bank and Sijuaara Women Farmers Group.

4) Supporting

The fourth phase, supporting, entails mentoring and assisting the community in fulfilling their roles during the empowerment process. Facilitators in Bligo Village acted as “champions,” offering guidance and motivation to community groups while also receiving support from community leaders. This reciprocal process fostered a harmonious relationship between facilitators and the community, emphasizing knowledge sharing to integrate local understanding and values (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024; Hikmawati, 2022; Suaib, 2023).

5) Maintaining

The final phase, maintaining, focuses on preserving conducive conditions to sustain power distribution and harmonious relationships among community groups (Haliza & Sifa, 2021; M. B. Setiadi & Pradana, 2022). Challenges that arose were resolved through group discussions involving facilitators. For instance, decisions such as dismissing members who disrupted group dynamics were made to maintain harmony. This phase is critical as it ensures the sustainability of empowerment efforts. With the success of this phase, Bligo Village reached self-reliance, leading Rumah Zakat to cease financial support and designate the village as a model for the Desa Berdaya program.

The Desa Berdaya program successfully optimized Bligo Village’s local potential, leading to community independence. The enabling phase was pivotal in shifting the community’s mindset to recognize their potential and actively participate in the empowerment process (Najiyati et al., 2005; M. B. Setiadi & Pradana, 2022; Ulumiyah et al., 2013; Wathoni, 2018). Despite initial challenges, especially regarding funding, the strong determination of the community and empowerment groups helped Bligo Village secure support from Rumah Zakat. The program’s success highlights the importance of collaboration, formal recognition, and continuous mentoring in achieving sustainable community empowerment.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion presented, the success of Bligo Village in implementing the Desa Berdaya program can serve as a valuable lesson for facilitators, other villages, and communities striving to empower their people. The approach used by Rumah Zakat in selecting facilitators and determining target villages for empowerment has proven effective, as evidenced by Bligo Village’s success. Furthermore, analyzing the empowerment process in Bligo Village using the 5P strategy, from enabling to maintaining, reveals that the 5P strategy has been effectively implemented in the Desa Berdaya program.

Despite the dual role of the facilitator in Bligo Village—both as a guide assisting the community in running the Desa Berdaya program and as a member of the community being empowered—the program has successfully achieved its intended goals. This is evident from the

growth of empowerment groups, the businesses established, and the harmonious relationships between groups and stakeholders, culminating in Bligo Village being recognized as a role model for successful empowerment programs.

Thus, it can be concluded that community empowerment is a long and unique process. Each village being empowered has different characteristics, and therefore, the approaches used cannot be uniform. Although the empowerment concept emphasizes minimal facilitator intervention “from the community, by the community, and for the community”), meaning the process should be fully entrusted to the community to foster independent capacity development, the approach used in Bligo Village—allowing facilitators to empower their village—proved to enhance the success of the Desa Berdaya program.

This study offers several recommendations to improve the effectiveness of empowerment programs:

1) Prioritize local facilitators

Governments can design empowerment programs that prioritize local facilitators by adopting the Rumah Zakat model. Local facilitators have a superior understanding of the socio-economic context, making programs more relevant and effective.

2) Strengthen empowerment groups through formal legalization

Governments should provide formal recognition to empowerment groups, enabling them to access various government resources.

3) Collaborate with the private sector

Governments should work with private entities to address their resource limitations and support empowerment programs.

This study has several limitations that future researchers could address:

1) A small unit of analysis

The focus on community driving groups may not fully generalize to the broader Bligo Village population.

2) Time frame of the study

The research was conducted in 2022, and given the potential for social changes since then, further in-depth research is necessary.

3) Quantitative studies

Future research should incorporate quantitative methods to measure empowerment more comprehensively and include the broader population of Bligo Village.

6. Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Universitas Tidar for the research grant funding support and for providing an opportunity for the author to work. Furthermore, the author is also grateful to the people of Bligo Village for the support of information and data needed to improve this writing.

7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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About the Authors

- 1) **Eny Boedi Orbawati** obtained her Doctoral degree from Diponegoro University, Indonesia, in 2019. The author is a lecturer at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tidar, Indonesia.
E-Mail: enyorbawati@yahoo.co.id
- 2) **Fadlurrahman** obtained his Master's degree from Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, in 2016. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tidar, Indonesia.
E-Mail: fadlurrahman@untidar.ac.id
- 3) **Sujatmiko** obtained his Master's degree from Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia, in 2012. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tidar, Indonesia.
E-Mail: sujatmikoko@untidar.ac.id
- 4) **Ari Mukti** obtained his Master's degree from Universitas Tidar, Indonesia, in 2018. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Tidar, Indonesia.
E-Mail: arimukti@untidar.ac.id