

Village Development Planning Model in the Border Region Between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

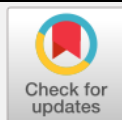
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ABSTRACT

Villages are integral to national development and serve as a cornerstone for broader regional advancement. This study introduces an innovative village development planning model designed specifically for border areas, emphasizing the alignment of national policies with the needs of local communities. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research examines the distinctive challenges and opportunities faced by villages in border regions, with a particular focus on Napan Village, situated along the border between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and subsequently processed using a systematic framework of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The proposed model highlights the importance of participatory planning and structured implementation to address community aspirations while ensuring alignment with national priorities. By offering a replicable framework for addressing the complexities of border areas, this study contributes to the discourse on governance and sustainable development, enhancing the capacity of border villages for inclusive and long-term growth.

Keywords: Border Regions; Governance; Participatory Planning; Sustainability; Village Development Transformation

1. Introduction

The enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages by the Indonesian government marks a significant shift in the approach to rural development. This legislation redefines villages as active agents in development processes rather than passive recipients of government programs (Lisnawati & Lestari, 2019). It emphasizes the importance of participatory development planning, where local village governments engage with community members to identify priorities and design strategies for growth (Akbar et al., 2019). A notable mechanism under this law is the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan* or *Musrenbang*), which serves as a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue to ensure that development initiatives reflect local aspirations while aligning with broader national development goals (Fitrah, 2013).

Despite this progressive framework, villages situated in border regions face unique and persistent challenges. These include poor accessibility, limited resources, and fragmented coordination across multiple levels of government. For instance, Napan Village in North Central Timor Regency, located on the border between Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, exemplifies these issues. While substantial research exists on rural development, studies addressing the specific needs of border areas—such as harmonizing national policies with local priorities and overcoming geographical and administrative constraints—are still scarce (Pike et al., 2016; Shatkin, 2014). Globally, studies on border-region development emphasize the importance of adaptive governance and participatory planning to address the diverse and complex conditions faced by these areas (Chambers, 2014; Scott, 2015). Moreover, research on cross-border governance highlights the necessity of multi-stakeholder collaboration to achieve sustainable outcomes in geographically and administratively challenging environments (Wróblewski & Kasperek, 2019).

In response to these challenges, this study proposes a tailored village development planning model specifically designed for border regions. The model integrates participatory planning with a structured implementation process to address the unique needs of Napan Village. Additionally, it offers a replicable framework for other border villages facing similar complexities. This research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable rural development and governance by aligning community priorities with national policies, addressing geographic and resource-related challenges, and fostering inclusive growth in rural border areas.

2. Literature Review

Research on village development has increasingly highlighted the importance of community participation, governance structures, and localized approaches to achieve sustainable outcomes. Several previous studies share similarities with this research but differ in focus and scope. For example, Chotimah et al. investigated the effectiveness of Village Community Empowerment Institutions in facilitating village development in Bululawang (Chotimah et al., 2019). Their findings underscored the role of these institutions in promoting active community participation as a critical driver for successful development programs. Similarly, Samaun et al. explored strategies to encourage community participation in village development initiatives, emphasizing the collaborative role of village governments and community leaders (Samaun et al., 2022). Another relevant study by Mamoto et al. examined the implementation of village infrastructure development using Village Funds in Ongkaw II Village, South Minahasa Regency (Mamoto et al., 2018). This study focused on policy execution,

community involvement, and the monitoring of infrastructure projects, providing insights into how government funding mechanisms support local development.

While these studies contribute valuable knowledge to the field of village development, they primarily address general village contexts without considering the unique challenges posed by border regions. This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on villages located in border areas, specifically those between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. The novelty of this research lies in its development of a tailored village development planning model that accounts for the geographic, administrative, and socio-economic complexities of border regions. By integrating participatory planning with structured implementation, this study provides fresh insights and practical solutions that can be applied to similar border village contexts worldwide.

The approach to solving village development challenges rests on a well-structured planning framework that prioritizes both analytical and participatory processes. Village development planning, as described by Samad et al., serves as a comprehensive system to explore various options and ideas for community-driven growth (Samad et al., 2019). The process typically begins with analytical activities, where community needs and priorities are identified through data collection and consultations. This analytical foundation is essential for formulating actionable and context-specific development programs. Furthermore, ecological development principles guide these initiatives, ensuring that renewal programs not only enhance community welfare but also foster social harmony and environmental sustainability.

Another critical aspect of effective village planning is its problem- and resource-based orientation. Programs are designed to address local challenges while leveraging available resources to achieve tangible outcomes. This localized approach enables development initiatives to reflect the actual needs, desires, and capacities of the community. Community participation remains a central pillar in this process, as it provides direct evidence of the community's active involvement in shaping its development trajectory. Participation not only enhances program relevance but also fosters a sense of ownership and trust among stakeholders, which are key to successful implementation.

Lastly, effective village planning emphasizes long-term impact. According to Imawan et al., well-designed development programs yield sustained improvements in community welfare, economic prosperity, and societal harmony (Imawan et al., 2019). Such initiatives, when grounded in participatory principles and adaptive strategies, can address systemic challenges and deliver enduring benefits.

This study builds on these concepts while introducing a new perspective tailored to the border village context. By addressing the challenges of accessibility, resource limitations, and fragmented governance in regions such as Napan Village, this research contributes to advancing the discourse on village development. The proposed model not only aligns national development goals with local priorities but also responds to the complexities of border areas, offering a framework that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth in geographically challenging regions.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the village development planning system in border regions, with a specific focus on Napan Village in North Central Timor Regency. This approach was chosen due to its ability to explore social phenomena and community-based planning processes in depth, particularly in geographically complex and administratively challenging border areas (Creswell, 2018; Moleong, 2017). The activities,

methods, and data collection techniques employed in this research are summarized in the table below:

Table 1. Summary of Research Activities and Data Collection Methods

Activity	Method	Data Collection Techniques	Object	Information
Identifying needs	Survey	Observation, interviews, discussions	Village government, community	Results of interviews and discussions
Describing findings	Survey	Interviews, discussions, documentation	Village government, community	Primary data (interviews) and secondary data (village office records)

The research combines multiple data collection techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the development planning process. Observations were conducted to study the dynamics of local governance, particularly in participatory forums such as Village Development Planning Forums (*Musrenbang*). These forums offer insights into the interaction between community aspirations and national policies, showcasing how decisions are collectively made (Bryman, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including village officials, community leaders, and members of the Village Consultative Body (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* or BPD), to gain in-depth perspectives on the challenges and practices of development planning. This interview method allowed flexibility in exploring emerging themes during the discussion (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Document analysis was another critical component of this research. Key documents, such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa* or RPJMDes), the Village Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa* or RKPDes), and relevant government regulations, were reviewed to understand how national policies are contextualized and adapted to meet local needs. This analysis aligned with Bowen's framework for using documents as a qualitative research method (Bowen, 2009).

Triangulation was employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data. This involved cross-verifying data obtained from different sources and using different methods to enhance credibility and consistency (Patton, 2002). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with informants to confirm their accuracy and minimize potential misinterpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, data saturation was achieved by conducting interviews until no new information emerged, ensuring the adequacy of the collected data to address the research questions (Guest et al., 2006).

The data were analyzed through a systematic and iterative process comprising three stages. First, data reduction was performed to filter irrelevant information and focus on data aligned with the research objectives. Next, data presentation involved organizing the data into tables and matrices to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through repeated analysis to ensure consistency and robustness in the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Development Planning System in Napan Village

The development planning system in Napan Village is anchored in two primary documents: the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka*

Menengah Desa or RPJMDes) and the Village Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa* or RKPDes). These documents serve as essential tools for ensuring that village development priorities align with broader national objectives. The RPJMDes functions as a long-term strategic framework that has articulated the village head's vision and mission for over six years. In contrast, the RKPDes outlines specific action plans on an annual basis. The foundation of this planning system is participatory governance, demonstrated through the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan* or *Musrenbang*), a platform for community members to engage in identifying and prioritizing development programs (Akbar et al., 2019).

According to Marselus Siki, the Secretary of Napan Village, the planning process is both structured and inclusive. He described the approach as follows:

"The RPJMDes outlines the vision and mission of the village head and serves as a six-year strategic guide. Each year, in July, the RKPDes are developed to detail specific activities to be implemented annually. These documents are refined through discussions during the Musrenbang forum with the community to ensure alignment with local needs and aspirations."

This participatory approach ensures that development planning not only addresses long-term goals but also remains responsive to the community's immediate needs and priorities.

Community participation is pivotal in the planning process, as it ensures that proposed programs align with actual local needs. Shatkin highlights the importance of participatory governance in fostering local ownership and ensuring that decision-making reflects the community context (Shatkin, 2014). Similarly, findings from Napan Village show that strong community engagement enhances both the relevance and sustainability of development initiatives. A local community leader emphasized,

"Active participation in planning meetings strengthens our sense of ownership of development projects and builds trust in the village administration."

This involvement promotes transparency and accountability while fostering a collective sense of responsibility among stakeholders.

The theoretical framework of decentralization (Smith, 2023) provides a broader context for understanding Napan Village's development planning process. Decentralization facilitates the transfer of authority to the village level, empowering local communities to address their challenges and enhance resilience. In Napan Village, decentralization has yielded tangible results, particularly in infrastructure development. Yohanes Emanuel Loka, a village official, noted that infrastructure projects such as road construction and the enhancement of educational facilities have significantly improved accessibility and overall quality of life for residents. These outcomes reflect the critical role of participatory planning in achieving community development objectives.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. As noted by Fitrah, limited community participation often arises due to a lack of understanding among residents regarding the planning process (Fitrah, 2013). Addressing this issue requires enhancing human resource capacity within village administrations to support effective implementation. Studies have shown that limited competencies among village officials can impede effective governance and development initiatives (Susan & Budirahayu, 2018).

Furthermore, intergovernmental coordination is crucial in overcoming challenges specific to border regions like Napan Village. Fragmented coordination between local and national governments can hinder resource allocation and project execution. Research indicates that weak policy coordination across ministries and between central and subnational governments can lead to inefficiencies in service delivery and development outcomes (Negara & Hutchinson, 2021).

Therefore, a more strategic and collaborative approach is necessary to enhance intergovernmental coordination, ensuring that local and national entities work synergistically to address the complexities of border region development.

Overall, the development planning system in Napan Village demonstrates the importance of participatory governance and decentralization in addressing local challenges. By combining long-term strategic planning with community involvement, Napan Village has achieved significant progress, particularly in infrastructure and service delivery. However, continued efforts to strengthen human resource capacity and intergovernmental coordination will be essential to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of development initiatives in this border region.

4.2. Implementation of Development Planning in Napan Village

The implementation of development planning in Napan Village is guided by two key documents: the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa* or RPJMDes) and the Village Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa* or RKPDes). These documents are developed through a participatory process that incorporates community input gathered during Village Development Planning Forums (*Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan* or *Musrenbang*). This participatory model aligns with the principles of Community-Driven Development (CDD), which emphasizes empowering communities to actively engage in planning and implementing their development initiatives (Mansuri & Rao, 2012). By adopting this approach, Napan Village ensures that its development priorities are responsive to the needs of its residents while remaining consistent with broader national and regional development objectives.

The success of this community-driven planning approach is evident in its implementation process and outcomes. Jacobus Boik, the Head of the Village Consultative Body (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* or BPD) in Napan Village, highlighted the significance of inclusive community participation. He explained,

"The active involvement of community leaders and residents at every stage of the planning process – from drafting to evaluation – ensures that the village's development priorities genuinely reflect the needs of the community."

This inclusive planning process reflects core principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Antlöv et al., 2016). By fostering collaboration between the village administration and the community, the system ensures that decision-making is both participatory and aligned with local aspirations.

The tangible impacts of this participatory planning approach are evident in key infrastructure developments within Napan Village. For example, road construction projects have significantly improved connectivity between villages, facilitating the movement of people and goods. Similarly, upgrades to educational facilities have created better learning

environments, enhancing access to quality education for children in the village. Jose Benu, the Head of Development and Economic Affairs in Napan Village, elaborated on these outcomes:

"These infrastructure projects, prioritized through community discussions, have significantly improved residents' access to essential services and their overall quality of life."

These developments demonstrate the effectiveness of participatory planning in achieving measurable improvements in community welfare. Improved infrastructure not only enhances physical connectivity but also contributes to economic opportunities and social well-being, while investments in education foster human capital development.

The findings from Napan Village underscore the critical role of participatory development planning in achieving sustainable outcomes. By involving the community at every stage—from planning to evaluation—the village administration ensures that projects are both relevant to immediate needs and sustainable in the long term. This observation aligns with Pike et al., who emphasize that active community participation strengthens the effectiveness and longevity of development initiatives (Pike et al., 2016).

Overall, the implementation of development planning in Napan Village illustrates how a participatory, community-centered approach can drive sustainable development. By integrating local needs with broader policy frameworks, the village has successfully addressed infrastructure gaps and improved quality of life, setting a replicable example for other rural and border regions.

4.3. Challenges in the Implementation of Development Planning

Despite the progress achieved in Napan Village's development planning system, several challenges continue to impede its optimal implementation. One of the most prominent issues is the limited human resource capacity and budgetary constraints, which are frequently cited in discussions on rural development and local governance (Mansuri & Rao, 2012). A significant challenge is the lack of technical expertise among village officials, often leading to inefficiencies and delays in executing planned development programs (Smoke, 2015). Addressing this issue aligns with the capacity-building framework, which underscores the importance of enhancing local governance systems to improve the effectiveness and impact of development initiatives (Grindle, 2009). Capacity building focuses on providing skills, knowledge, and institutional support to enable local administrations to deliver more efficient and targeted development outcomes (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010).

In addition to human resource limitations, geographical constraints pose significant barriers to the effective implementation of development plans. Napan Village's remote location in a border region presents logistical challenges that exacerbate the complexity and costs of infrastructure projects. Limited accessibility hampers the timely transportation of materials and resources, frequently leading to project delays or incomplete initiatives. These challenges align with Lauermann's assertion that addressing geographic and infrastructural barriers is essential for promoting development in border areas and mitigating socio-economic disparities (Lauermann, 2018).

To address these challenges, targeted interventions are required. First, improving the skills and capacities of human resources through structured training programs can equip village officials with the technical expertise needed to implement development plans efficiently. Training initiatives should focus on enhancing project management, financial planning, and

technical problem-solving skills to reduce inefficiencies and delays. Second, strengthening intergovernmental coordination between village and regency governments is essential. Improved collaboration ensures that resource allocation, project monitoring, and policy implementation are aligned across administrative levels. This approach reflects the principle of horizontal accountability, which highlights the importance of cooperative governance between local and higher government authorities to address resource limitations and ensure alignment with broader development goals (Fox, 2015).

Finally, securing additional funding is critical, particularly for infrastructure projects designed to overcome geographical and logistical challenges. Allocating targeted financial resources can help mitigate the higher costs associated with transportation and construction in remote areas, thereby accelerating project completion and ensuring better outcomes for the community.

While Napan Village has made commendable progress in implementing its development plans, significant challenges remain, particularly in human resources, budgetary constraints, and geographical barriers. To achieve sustainable and inclusive development, enhancing local capacities, promoting collaborative governance, and securing additional funding is crucial. These strategies are essential to overcoming obstacles and fully realizing the village's development potential.

5. Conclusion

The development planning system in Napan Village, anchored in the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa* or RPJMDes) and the Village Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa* or RKPDDes), has yielded positive results, particularly in improving infrastructure and enhancing community welfare. These achievements are largely attributed to the adoption of a participatory approach, which ensures that development priorities reflect local needs while aligning with broader national objectives.

However, several persistent challenges continue to hinder the full realization of development initiatives in Napan Village. Key issues include limited human resource capacity, inadequate budget allocations, geographical barriers, and fragmented intergovernmental coordination. These challenges, particularly in remote border regions, restrict the implementation of large-scale and high-impact projects necessary for sustainable progress.

To address these obstacles, policymakers need to prioritize the development of human resource capacity through targeted training and capacity-building programs. Strengthening coordination between village and regency governments is equally important to ensure efficient resource allocation, policy alignment, and project monitoring. Securing additional funding, particularly for infrastructure projects, will help mitigate the logistical and financial challenges associated with geographically isolated regions.

Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of capacity-building initiatives, exploring innovative cross-border governance models, and identifying effective solutions to geographical constraints. Additionally, further investigation into the role of participatory planning in border villages can provide valuable insights for refining development practices and policies.

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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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