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Village Development and Sustainable Employment: Valuable Lessons from West Seram District

Leroy Samy Uguy^a, Esther Kembauw^{b*}, Liza Handoko^c, Marlita. H. Makaruku^d, Anna. Y. Wattimena^e

^{a,c}Faculty Economic, Pelita Harapan University Jakarta, Indonesia

^{b,d,e}Faculty of Agriculture, Pattimura University Ambon, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the impact of village development on sustainable employment in West Seram District, focusing on strategies implemented to improve the local economy and reduce community dependence on seasonal sectors. A qualitative approach with a case study method was used in this research, involving in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as village heads, local business actors, and village communities. In addition, secondary data from government reports and academic literature were used to enrich the analysis. The results show that village development integrated with entrepreneurial skills development and local resource management can create more stable and sustainable employment. However, this study also found several constraints, particularly limited infrastructure and access to technology. These limitations pose a major challenge in achieving sustainable employment in rural areas. The implications of these findings suggest the importance of policies that support community capacity building and sustainable infrastructure investment to facilitate economic growth in villages. This research provides insights for policymakers and village development practitioners in designing more effective strategies for sustainable employment in rural areas.

Keywords - **Village Development, Sustainable Employment, Local Economy, West Seram District, Village Entrepreneurship.**

INTRODUCTION

Villages in Indonesia play an important role in supporting the national economy, especially for people who depend on the agriculture, fisheries and plantation sectors. West Seram District has abundant natural resources, but challenges in sustainable employment are major issues to overcome. Unequal welfare, low levels of education, and lack of access to technology and markets are factors that limit economic growth in villages. Therefore, rural development strategies need to consider sustainable employment to ensure inclusive and environmentally friendly growth.

Rural development has become a national priority in Indonesia in an effort to reduce social and economic disparities between urban and rural areas. West Seram District (SBB) in Maluku Province is one of the regions with great natural resource potential, especially in the fisheries, plantation and forestry sectors. Despite its abundant natural resources, West Seram Regency still faces challenges in achieving sustainable economic and employment development. The high poverty rate, lack of infrastructure, low quality of education, and limited access to markets are some of the factors that hinder economic growth in the region (Todaro & Smith, 2012).

The concept of sustainable employment includes efforts to create jobs that are not only productive but also environmentally friendly and viable for people's welfare in the long term (Sachs, 2015). In the rural context, sustainable employment must also consider aspects of environmental sustainability, especially for communities that depend on local natural resources. Sustainable rural development requires a holistic approach, including improving

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community skills, providing adequate infrastructure, and strengthening market access for local products. West Seram District, with its geographical challenges as a remote area, requires a development strategy that is able to overcome infrastructure limitations and utilize resource potential optimally and sustainably (Sen, 1999).

The central government has launched various village development programs, such as the Village Fund and labour-intensive programs, as a form of support for the 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, and Outermost) regions. However, the effectiveness of these programs is still often constrained by the lack of community participation and limited skills and knowledge in managing village development programs (Ministry of Village, 2020). Several studies show that the success of village development is strongly influenced by collaboration between the government, local communities, and the private sector. By involving communities in the planning and implementation of development programs, villages can be more independent and able to manage their resources sustainably (ILO, 2017).

In West Seram District, villages that have tried to develop products based on local natural resources have shown economic improvement, especially in the areas of fisheries and non-timber forest products. However, this potential has not been optimized due to limited infrastructure, such as transportation and access to information technology, which are still barriers to the development of village product markets (Sachs, 2015). In addition, the low level of education and skills of the community makes villages less competitive in the broader market. According to Amartya Sen (1999), sustainable employment requires proactive policy support and improved community capabilities to innovate and adapt to change. The problems found are: 1). How is the village development strategy implemented in Seram Bagian Barat Regency in supporting sustainable employment? 2). What are the obstacles faced in the implementation of these strategies? 3). What is the role of government and community in optimizing sustainable employment in West Seram District?

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Concept of Village Development

Village development is an effort to improve the quality of life and welfare of rural communities by utilizing local potential, increasing human resource capacity, and integrating with national and global economic systems (Tirtosudarmo, 2020; Kartodiharjo, 2019). According to Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, village development includes economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects that involve local communities as the main actors. Some researchers, such as Sutrisno (2021) and Suharto (2018), emphasize the importance of collaboration between local governments, communities, and the private sector in realizing sustainable village development.

2. Sustainable Employment in Village Development

Sustainable employment is a concept that emphasizes the provision of decent, safe employment that has a long-term impact on the local economy (Amartya Sen, 1999). In the village context, sustainable employment involves the efficient utilization of local resources and the creation of added value for the local economy.

Sustainable employment involves creating jobs that are not only productive but also decent and support social and environmental sustainability. According to the ILO (2019), sustainable employment in rural areas requires support for environmentally friendly agricultural sector jobs

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and skills upgrading for rural workers to compete in the modern labour market (Arifin & Nugraha, 2020; Widjaja, 2021).

3. Sustainable Village Development in Indonesia

Sustainable village development in Indonesia is directed at reducing inequality between villages and cities, as well as improving access to economic resources, education, and health. Research by Suyanto and Prasetyo (2018) shows that sustainable village development can improve welfare through the development of a resilient agricultural sector and the improvement of the local tourism sector (Mardiyanto, 2019; Kartika & Iskandar, 2021).

Sustainable rural development aims to create balanced economic, social, and environmental welfare in rural areas (Todaro & Smith, 2012). This development includes the provision of decent employment, the provision of public facilities, and the development of local potential. Sachs (2015) stated that the involvement of local communities is crucial in ensuring the success of village development programs, especially in areas that depend on natural resources.

4. Case Study: West Seram District

West Seram District in Maluku Province is an example of a region that is developing village potential through sustainable employment programs, particularly in the fisheries, agriculture, and ecotourism sectors (Hidayat & Rahman, 2020; Puspita & Andriani, 2021). Development programs focusing on these sectors have helped reduce unemployment rates and increase community incomes (Zulkifli, 2022). Furthermore, the involvement of indigenous peoples in development has enriched the diversity and competitiveness of village economies (Purwanto, 2020).

5. Challenges and Opportunities for Employment in Rural Areas

Some of the challenges faced in realizing sustainable employment in rural areas include limited access to infrastructure, low workforce skills, and dependence on the informal sector (Wijaya & Santoso, 2019; Harsono, 2021). There is also a lack of skills training, limited access to capital, and low access to technology and market information (ILO, 2017). Villages that rely on the primary sector are often limited in their ability to create sustainable employment, which requires interventions that support local entrepreneurship and access to markets. However, opportunities such as the potential for organic farming, local products, and improved digital connectivity can support rural job creation (Utomo, 2022).

6. Lessons from Seram Bagian Barat District for Village Development in Indonesia

The study of the West Seram District provides some valuable lessons related to village development and sustainable employment in Indonesia. The success of employment programs in this district, such as the development of seafood processing industries and ecotourism, can serve as a model for other regions (Hakim & Mulyadi, 2021; Wibowo, 2022). In addition, the role of local government in providing job training and building networks with the private sector has been shown to improve the quality of life of local communities.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, with a case study method in West Seram District. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with local government officials, village leaders, and local communities involved in village economic activities. In addition, this study also used field observations to observe the condition of infrastructure, market access, and

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business opportunities in the village. The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis techniques to get a comprehensive picture of the implementation and challenges of village development and sustainable employment.

RESULTS

1. Profile of Village Development in West Seram District

The research results reveal that village development in West Seram District is focused on increasing community capacity through entrepreneurship training programs and utilizing the potential of local natural resources. Villages with potential in fisheries, plantations, and traditional handicrafts have benefited from these programs. Some villages have begun to develop processed seafood and agricultural products in an effort to create added value and increase community income.

West Seram District has demonstrated various initiatives in village development, focusing on improving the local economy and sustainable employment. Based on data obtained from interviews with village leaders, local communities and relevant documents, village development programs cover sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and handicrafts. In many villages, local governments are working with communities to establish integrated farming systems that increase crop yields.

- A. These integrated farming programs not only increase crop yields, but also create new jobs for villagers, particularly in post-harvest processing.
- B. Villages that have access to regional markets have a higher success rate in maintaining job sustainability.

2. Economic Empowerment and Skill Enhancement Strategies

In an effort to increase sustainable employment, village economic empowerment strategies have been a key component. For example, community skills training in modern agriculture and farming technology improves villagers' ability to manage their land more productively. These programs also integrate training in agro-processing so that village products have added value before being marketed.

- A. Skills training improves productivity and economic resilience of villages.
- B. The involvement of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) also plays an important role in providing entrepreneurship education, helping communities set up MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) that support local employment.
- C. Villagers engaged in training are more likely to retain their jobs and actively participate in village economic activities.

3. Challenges in Achieving Sustainable Employment

Despite the successes, the research also revealed some key challenges in creating sustainable employment in the villages of West Seram District. These challenges include limited access to technology, financial resources and broader markets. Access to education also remains limited, resulting in a low capacity for innovation.

- A. Infrastructure limitations, such as inadequate road access, hinder the distribution of village products to wider markets.
- B. Lack of access to technology and market information limits innovation and economic resilience.
- C. Some villagers still rely on seasonal work, which tends not to provide a steady income.

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4. Government Role and Policies in Supporting Village Employment

The government of West Seram District plays an important role in supporting village development programs and sustainable employment. Policies focusing on village economic empowerment through the allocation of village funds have been a key instrument in supporting employment projects. One of the policies implemented is the allocation of special funds for the development of village MSMEs that focus on increasing local production.

- A. The village fund allocation program enables communities to establish small businesses that support local employment.
- B. Local governments also encourage the formation of joint business groups (KUBE) that help communities share resources and expertise to maximize the economic potential of the village.
- C. Support from the government in providing relevant skills education is also an important step in creating sustainable employment.

5. The Impact of Village Development on Community Economic and Social Welfare

Village development in West Seram District has had a significant positive impact on the economic and social welfare of the community. Development programs that focus on sustainable employment have reduced unemployment rates in some villages and increased community incomes. Many villagers reported that these programs also helped improve their access to education and health services through increased income and access to local facilities.

- A. Improvements in the village economy are driving improvements in the quality of life of the community.
- B. Village development programs improve education levels by providing scholarship funds for young people to pursue higher education.
- C. Successful employment programs have seen increased participation of women in economic activities, which also increases their empowerment and role in the community.

6. Recommendations for Future Sustainable Employment Improvement

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations that can be suggested to improve sustainable employment in West Seram District include:

- A. Improve access to technology and infrastructure to support village economic productivity.
- B. Encourage collaboration between local governments, civil society organizations and the private sector in supporting relevant skills training programs.
- C. Develop broader market networks to make village products accessible beyond the local area, and strengthen local production capacity.
- D. Provide incentives for village businesses to support local product development.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that village development in West Seram District has had a significant impact in creating sustainable employment and improving the welfare of village communities. Through analysis of field data and in-depth interviews with stakeholders, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. Effectiveness of Village Development Programs in Supporting the Local Economy
Village development programs focused on sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and

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local crafts have been successful in creating jobs and reducing economic dependence on seasonal work. With the support of the local government and the involvement of local communities, the program has successfully integrated locally appropriate innovations, such as integrated farming systems and post-harvest processing training. This success shows that local potential-based development strategies can provide optimal results in sustainable employment.

2. Skills Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Education

Skills empowerment efforts through technical skills training and entrepreneurship are proven to increase the capacity of village communities to create and sustain jobs. Community participation in economic activities such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) not only creates jobs but also helps strengthen the competitiveness of the village economy.

3. Limited Infrastructure and Technology as Major Challenges

Although village development in West Seram District shows much progress, infrastructure challenges and access to technology are still major obstacles. Limited road access, communication networks, and market facilities make the distribution of village products to wider markets difficult. In addition, limitations in information technology and entrepreneurship education hamper innovation and sustainable economic growth. This suggests the need for additional investment in basic infrastructure to support employment and broader economic development in villages.

4. The Role of Government Policy in Supporting Sustainable Employment

The local government of West Seram District plays a very important role in supporting village employment through various policies such as the allocation of village funds for economic empowerment and MSME development. These policies make a positive contribution in creating more stable employment opportunities and improving the quality of life of village communities. Programs that focus on capacity building and sustainable training show better results compared to temporary programs or cash transfers without skills training.

5. Opportunities and Recommendations for the Future

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the government and stakeholders continue and increase investments in relevant skills education programs and village infrastructure. Collaboration between local government, private sector, and civil society organizations should also be enhanced to expand access to technology and market information. In addition, village development programs should also include activities that encourage local innovation and open access to wider market networks, both at the regional and national levels, to enable village products to compete in a more competitive market.

Overall, sustainable village development in West Seram District shows that an approach that combines community empowerment, government support, and utilization of local potential can be an effective model in creating sustainable employment. The findings provide valuable insights for other regions looking to implement similar programs, considering existing local contexts and challenges.

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