

Participatory Approaches for Improving Rural Development Planning Effectiveness

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze rural development through a participatory planning approach in Jangkurang Village, Garut Regency. Specifically, this paper will investigate the development planning process that involves the active participation of the community in identifying local needs and their aspirations. In the context of Indonesia, many rural development plans have not been able to improve the level of community participation in identifying development priorities. Whereas, active community participation in the preparation of local development plans can increase the acceptability of government policies and support sustainable development. The research method used a qualitative method, with a literature study, observation directly in Jangkurang Village, Garut Regency, and also interviews with relevant stakeholders and the villagers. Data analysis from the results of this study was then presented in the form of descriptive analysis. In addition, the research used secondary and primary data for the overall analysis. The results of this study show that participatory village development planning in Jangkurang Village, Garut Regency during the period of 2023 through the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes) has not yet achieved effectiveness in fulfilling all stages. In conclusion, the dialog process between the government and local communities also provides an opportunity to formulate solutions that are more competitive and relevant to the social and cultural context of the rural area. In addition, this study provides recommendations for local governments and related parties to improve the effectiveness of participatory planning, such as strengthening community capacity in project planning and implementation, as well as continuous monitoring of development impacts at the village level.

Keywords: participatory, planning, rural, development

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is one of the main elements to advance a country. Rural development is critical to promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, and ensuring sustainable development (Sekushina, 2018). Successful rural development will have a positive impact on the welfare of rural communities and contribute to overall economic growth. However, in its implementation, there are often various problems and obstacles that can affect the success of rural development. The goals of rural development include achieving stable economic growth, improving the quality of life of rural communities, preserving the environment, and addressing pressing problems and challenges facing the rural economy (Oyetade, 2022). Rural development aims to realize social change and sustainable economic development, with a focus on improving the welfare of rural residents and alleviating poverty (Sharma, 2015).

Rural development will involve job creation, infrastructure improvements, and the provision of basic services such as health, education, and housing (Popescu, Popescu, Per, & Csoz, 2018). More clearly, rural development involves building rural infrastructure, mobilizing resources, and ensuring the convergence of economic, social, cultural, and political aspects (Lile, Csoz, Martin, & Ciolac, 2014). The goal is to create a better future for rural areas by promoting social progress, increasing productivity, and meeting the needs of rural communities. Rural development aims to promote modern technology in rural residents by increasing production and productivity, improving living standards in terms of

economic and social use, and environmental protection to provide them with a pleasant and permanent place to work and live (Antonovici & Udrea, 2014). In addition, community participation is seen as an important condition for successful rural development. In accordance with the opinion of Yuswani, Firdaus, Riyanda (2023) which states that community participation plays an important role in the success of rural development (Yuswani, Firdaus, & Riyanda, 2023).

The rural development planning process is important in participatory rural development, which is a big challenge and responsibility for every rural area. Therefore, the rural government is expected to be able to determine priorities that follow the conditions and needs of the rural area based on the needs of the community. Rural development planning should be in line with Regency/City development planning, which needs to be adapted and support the vision and mission of the Regency/City. In rural development, community participation is required throughout the process, starting from the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of rural development.

Planning is the initial stage of rural development implementation activities where planning for the use of rural funds is carried out at the village level, then the rural areas submit rural development planning to the sub-district level for verification, which is then submitted to the district level for verification again. Participatory development planning is a pattern of development planning approach that involves community participation, which is generally not only as an object but also as a subject of development, so that the nuances developed in development planning are truly from below

(bottom-up approach) (Maripah & Sujianto, 2017). This aims to ensure that the perspectives and needs of beneficiaries are taken into account, resulting in more effective and sustainable outcomes. According to Cahyono (2006), in the process of development planning based on community participation, it is necessary to pay attention to the interests of the people to improve the welfare of the community. Participatory planning is planning in which the objectives involve the interests of the people, and the process involves the people (either directly or indirectly) (Abe, 2005).

In general, participatory planning is important in improving rural areas as it enables the inclusion of local stakeholders and their perspectives in the decision-making process, resulting in more sustainable and effective development strategies (Yan, Huang, Tan, Lang, & Chen, 2023). It also helps identify and prioritize specific community needs and aspirations, resulting in more targeted and contextually appropriate government interventions. Participatory planning can also increase the capacity of rural communities to actively contribute to their development, especially in sparsely populated and low-capacity areas. By involving rural communities in the planning process, participatory planning empowers them to take ownership of their development and encourages social cohesion and engagement (Herrera & Valladares, 2021). In addition, participatory planning processes can help identify and utilize existing resources and potentials within rural communities, such as natural resources, social capital, and infrastructure, for sustainable development. One of the main advantages is the empowerment of local communities, allowing them to have a say in development processes that directly impact their lives (Rachmawati, 2020). Empowerment is multifunctional, encompassing economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions.



Fig. 1. Topography of Jangkurang Village

(Source: Researcher Documentation)

This research was conducted in Jangkurang Village Garut Regency, Indonesia. The area of Jangkurang Village is 967sqared occupies about 14.83% of the total area of Leles District. Administratively, Jangkurang Village consists of Thee hamlet, which includes 16 Neighborhood Association (*Rukun Warga*) and 41 Neighborhood. Jangkurang is geographically located at 107°48'53.1 East latitude - 107°51'59.1 East latitude and 7°03'49.4 South latitude - 7°06'24.5 South latitude. Jangkurang is a rural area located in the eastern part of Leles District with a land surface/topography of the village which is a slope/hillside, with an average altitude of 1100 M above sea level, and an average temperature of 25°C to 32°C. In general, the people of Jangkurang work as agricultural laborers because the topography of the Jangkurang Village is 28.42% agricultural area.

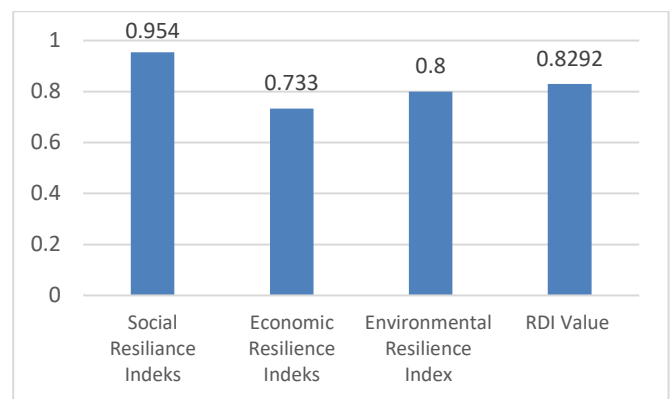


Fig. 2. Rural Development Index (RDI) Value of Jangkurang Village 2022

(Source: Rural Development Index 2022)

Jangkurang village has a Social Resilience Index value of 0.817, an Economic Resilience Index value of 0.783, and an Environmental Resilience Index value of 0.533 in the Rural Development Index (RDI) so Jangkurang is still declared a developed rural. Then seen from the relatively slow development as initial data, it is known that there are several developments carried out based on the Jangkurang Government Work Plan (*RKP*), namely 45 out of 63 development plans. The basis for making the *RKP* is the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*). Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) is one of the media to be able to absorb the aspirations of the community, which is a form of bottom-up system for development. In addition, the implementation of the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) with a bottom-up approach from non-government development stakeholders and a top-down approach from the local government is believed to encourage community participation in providing ideas for development programs based on the needs of the community itself and in line with local government policies in national development.

Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) is a formal development planning forum that seeks to bring together the aspirations of the community from below with proposed development programs from government agencies. Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) process at the local level begins with a preparatory stage, which includes deliberations at the hamlet level and community groups (such as community groups) that act as stakeholders in the hamlet area. This discussion focused on talking about the main issues faced by the local community. The results of these group meetings are then submitted and integrated as one of the input components in the framework of the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*). In fact, another problem is that communities often see the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) as merely ceremonial, with decision-making dominated by local elites (Far, 2022). The Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) must use community participatory development planning, which is regulated through the Minister of Rural Development, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Regulation Number 21 of 2020. However, in a participatory development planning process, some factors influence both the government and the community not to be involved in development planning (Amien, 2005).

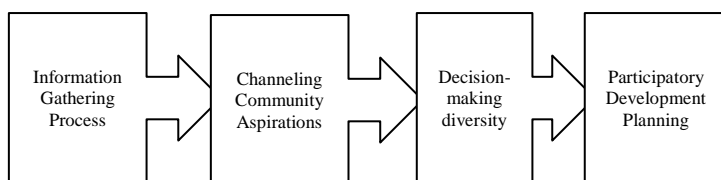


Fig. 3. Participatory Development Planning Framework

This research uses the participatory development planning frameworks as dimensions to describe and analyze how the implementation of participatory development planning in Jangkurang Village, Garut Regency, Indonesia so that we can find out what are the obstacles when implementing participatory development planning. Therefore, this paper wants to discuss in more depth the village development planning in Jangkurang, especially in terms of participatory development planning.

2. METHODS

The research method uses a qualitative method, with data analysis of the research results poured in the form of descriptions. Research conducted by exploring research problems by collecting data (text and images) that reflect participants' views on the research problem being studied is called a qualitative method (Craswell, 2018).

Data collection techniques through literature study, observation, and interviews. The literature study is done by building theories and used as a basic reference for this research. The data obtained through the literature study is used as a theoretical basis that guides this research. Observation was

carried out by conducting a location survey of Jangkurang for two weeks where researchers were at the location of Jangkurang, Garut Regency, Indonesia. Interviews were conducted with several key informants, including the Head of Leles, the Head of the Jangkurang Village Government, three Heads of Hamlets, three Heads of Neighborhood Association (*Rukun Warga*) in each Hamlet of Jangkurang Village, the Head of the Village Consultative Board (*Badan Perwakilan Desa*) of Jangkurang, the Head of the Regional Community Empowerment Agency (*Lembaga Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa*) of Jangkurang and seven community members.

Data analysis of the results of this research is poured in the form of descriptive writing, which describes the results of research related to participatory rural development planning carried out based on primary data and secondary data that has been obtained previously.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS

One aspect of participatory planning is to gather as much information as possible. (Amien, 2005). In this situation, the information needed is the actual facts about the problems faced by the community in their area related to rural development. Surveys, workshops, and public hearings are commonly used to gather information from the public (Bouw, Wiekens, Tigchelaar, & Faaij, 2023). The social inputs gathered through this method are essential for making participatory technology choices (Renoux, Veiga, Lima, & Spaan, 2020). The information-gathering process in participatory planning involves collecting data and inputs from various stakeholders. The participatory approach aims to engage communities and include their perspectives in the planning process. Overall, the information-gathering process in participatory planning involves the use of a combination of tools and methods to engage stakeholders and gather community input.

Participatory planning, which involves the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the decision-making process, relies on comprehensive and accurate information to ensure that the needs, preferences, and concerns of all parties are considered (Kangas, Kangas, Eyvindson, Kurttila, & Huja, 2015). This information will serve as a basis for consideration in development planning, as the collection of information can reduce uncertainty and increase the chances of optimal development planning success. Information gathering is a critical component of participatory planning as it provides the data and insights necessary for effective decision-making and stakeholder engagement. Therefore, even if observed simultaneously, the same object can give different perceptions when viewed by two or more observers with different viewpoints (Jordan, Gibson, Stinnett, & Howard, 2018). Thus, the process of collecting information is carried out to obtain as much data or truth as possible (Walker, Pellett, & Allen, 2019). The process of gathering information is carried out to increase

the probability of successful development planning, in other words, to reduce the level of uncertainty (Amien, 2005).

In this context, Amien stated that gathering as much information as possible refers to the number of proposals that cover the majority of community needs from each hamlet. Thus, from the three hamlets in Jangkurang Village, there are variations in the number and needs of the community, which are adjusted by the Head of the neighborhood by considering the priorities and potential of each hamlet. In the initial process of community participation in development planning, information is collected from the neighborhood level. At this stage, it was revealed that the community was expected to express their wants and needs before the Village Meeting.

This was conveyed through an interview with the Head of the neighborhood of Hamlet 1 if they want to submit a proposal, the community must submit it to the Head of the neighborhood before the Hamlet Meeting. Therefore, in Jangkurang Village, the information-gathering stage through the neighborhood heads was not based on the community's conscious initiative to be involved in development planning. In contrast, the Neighborhood Head is still actively seeking, asking, and soliciting suggestions from the community at least 2 months before the hamlet meeting.

Problems in information gathering arose because of the requirement for the community to submit their proposals before the Hamlet Meeting. In line with what was conveyed by the community of Hamlet 1, Jangkurang Village, Mr. E that if there are needs or desires in development, the community will convey them to the neighborhood head because the neighborhood head often asks for suggestions for development programs which will later be submitted at the Hamlet Meeting (Interview, 2023).

As a result, the proposals received by the Neighborhood Head are not sourced from the community's conscious initiative but are more likely to be given to individuals who are considered capable of representing their wishes. The same thing was also expressed by the Hamlet 3 community in the interview session, Mr. A said: "It's the same because there are already those who understand better to represent the community's proposals than me (informant), I (informant) don't know anything but if I am told to work together, I (informant) will definitely join in" (Interview, 2023).

Thus, it can be concluded that in the information-gathering process in Jangkurang Village, starting from Hamlet I to Hamlet III, the proposals submitted by the community through the Head of the Neighborhood did not come from the community's conscious initiative to get involved. However, because there was an element of coercion that obliged the community to submit their proposals, and only a small proportion of the community was involved, the result was that more proposals came from women cadres and the local neighborhood head rather than directly from the community. Thus, the information-gathering phase can be considered not to have taken place properly because the role of the

Neighborhood Head should only be limited to helping the community submit their proposals, not being the initiator in determining the community's needs which then become aspirations in the Village Development Planning Forum (Musrenbangdes).

3.2 CHANNELING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Participatory planning, in addition to obtaining a lot of information about development problems, is also an expression of the aspirations of the community (Amien, 2005). Aspiration is the hope and goal of success in the future, aspire to aspire and a strong desire to achieve something, such as success in the goal of the desire (Adianto & As'ari, 2016). Community participation plays an important role in the success of development planning (Kusmayadi, 2022). The Rural Consultative acts as a channel for community aspirations in village development planning, and its role is very important in absorbing and accommodating community aspirations (Tohom, Rustiadi, Juanda, & Kinseng, 2021). Channeling people's aspirations is necessary as a preventive measure against small disruptions in a system at a certain level, which can cause damage to the system as a whole (Amien, 2005). Participatory planning involves the active involvement of the community in the planning process, leading to better development outcomes (Winarni, Ahmad, & Suharno, 2021). In this context, people's aspirations can be interpreted as a way to express their hopes and goals related to future success, both individually and as a group. Thus, channeling the aspirations of the community is not only to create a feeling that they are cared for but also to encourage active community participation in the development planning process.

Channeling the aspirations of the community is not only aimed at giving "feelings," but also to stimulate active participation from the community. In this context, the aspirations of the people of Jangkurang Village are realized through the implementation of deliberations. These deliberative meetings are divided into several levels, starting from the smallest during regular meetings at the Neighborhood level in each area. After the community from each Neighborhood set several priorities in the program planning, the proposals were then discussed together with the local Hamlet head.

The Hamlet deliberation is led directly by the Head of the Hamlet and attended by the Head of the Ward, the Head of the Neighborhood, Village Community Empowerment Cadres (*Kader Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa*) members, and also representatives of the Hamlet residents to communicate the results of the aspirations of residents in each Neighborhoods/Ward. This follows what is explained in the Regulation of the Minister of Rural Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 2 of 2015 concerning Guidelines for the Rules of Procedure and Decision-Making Mechanisms of the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*).

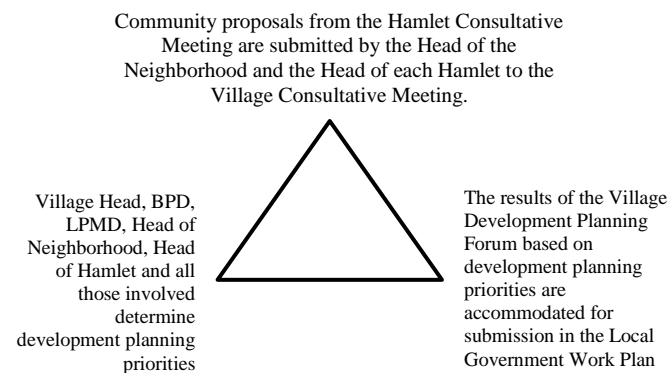


Fig. 4. Channeling the Aspirations of the Jangkurang Community
(Source: Author's Version, 2023)

The framework for channeling community aspirations in Jangkurang is based on snippets of informants' statements during interviews. The Development Planning Forum mechanism at the rural level begins with a preparatory stage in the form of deliberation at the hamlet/neighborhood level and community groups. This is following what was conveyed by Mr. E who said: "The implementation of the Village Development Planning Forum will begin with the community of each hamlet submitting information on their needs for rural development through the head of the Neighborhood at least two months before the Hamlet Meeting is held around February-March, which is led by the Head of the Hamlet and attended by the community at the house of a community leader". From the results of these interviews, it can be seen that the first step in channeling community aspirations starts with Hamlet meetings. The same thing also happens in other hamlets, as conveyed through an interview with Informant B as follows:

"In order to match the wishes and needs of the community, the community usually submits it to the Head of the Neighborhood, who will then submit it at the hamlet level at least 2-3 months before the hamlet deliberation. At the Hamlet level, a minimum of 10 proposals will be selected that can later be submitted in the village deliberation activities." (Interview, 2023).

The hamlet deliberation activity is led by the hamlet head, attended by the Head of the Neighborhood, and involves community leaders or hamlet residents to discuss the main problems faced by the community. Therefore, the discussion of the hamlet deliberation is the result of joint deliberation to plan development needs. Furthermore, the results will later be submitted or used as one of the input materials in the Rural Development Planning Meeting. However, in this activity, it was revealed that not all hamlets apply the same pattern in

channeling community aspirations as revealed by the Head of the Neighborhood of one of the hamlets who said:

"If there is anything, it will definitely be conveyed to the Head of the Neighborhood first but now here it is rare to have Hamlet deliberations because it is enough just to get together with the Head of the Neighborhood and the Head of the Hamlet at his house." (Interview, 2023)

Hence, it can be seen that the channeling of community aspirations through the Hamlet Consultative Meeting in Jangkurang Village is not done formally. The information obtained shows that the location of these activities can change according to the availability of places in each region.

Furthermore, after the deliberation process at the hamlet level is completed, the Village Development Planning Forum stage will be led by the Rural Head. The meeting was attended by the Head of the Rural Community Empowerment Agency, the Head of the Rural Consultative Body, Hamlet Heads, Community Leaders (traditional/religious leaders), Rural Officials, Neighborhood Heads, Ward Heads, and several representatives of residents from each hamlet. This activity, held at the Village Hall, aims to develop policies that will be implemented in Jangkurang Village. In addition, this activity also aims to prepare a budget for development funds under the program planning information that has been submitted by the community.

For this reason, it can be concluded that the stage of channeling community aspirations starts at the smallest level, namely at regular Neighborhood meetings in each region. After the deliberation process at the hamlet level is completed, the proposals from the community will be submitted to the Village Development Planning Forum stage to be determined as rural development planning priorities. However, in reality, this stage is not carried out under the provisions in the Minister of Rural Development, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Regulation Number 2 of 2015 concerning Guidelines for the Rules of Procedure and Decision-Making Mechanisms of the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) and the Minister of Rural Development Regulation Number 16 of 2019 concerning the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*). The activity took place with participants only listening to discussions on development plans that had been prepared by the rural government following the direction of regional development planning.

3.3 DECISION-MAKING DIVERSITY

The decision-making process can be addressed quickly and easily through diverse considerations. Sometimes, decisions are made in a dilemma situation, which can lead to inappropriate decisions that are detrimental to the agency and society, whereas diversity in the decision-making process can strengthen the overall structure, as potential turmoil can be limited to certain parts of the structure so that the overall structure remains stable (Amien, 2005). In addition, participation allows stakeholders to voice opinions and gain

insight into the balanced interests in spatial projects, thereby contributing to the diversity of decision outcomes (Kopal, 2022). Community participation in planning has a direct relationship with infrastructure development performance, and the alignment of spatial and development plans is critical to local development planning and performance (Dral, Witte, & Hartmann, 2023). Thus, in the decision-making process, several elements of the rural community must be actively involved in rural development planning through hamlet-level consultative meetings.

Inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate different values and perspectives are important for environmental decision-making and can contribute to a more horizontal and equitable organization (Tohom, Rustiadi, Juanda, & Kinseng, 2021). However, at the upper levels, it is the government representatives who have the authority to represent the community in the process. Neoliberal development has led to increasing spatial disparities, making it harder for community stakeholders to influence decision-making (Kopal, 2022). International conventions and conferences have encouraged the use of collaborative processes and the participation of diverse stakeholders, including women, in decision-making (Pettersson, Olof, & Kesitalo, 2017). Participatory models have been developed to analyze and understand the complex interactions and inputs in sectors such as tourism, helping policymakers achieve sustainable development (Noguchi & Ali, 2011).

Various proposals from the community regarding development priorities recorded in the Rural Medium-Term Development Plan will vary. This is because each hamlet in the Jangkurang Village area, both from the government and the community, has a different scale of development planning priorities to fulfill their respective wants and needs through the Village Development Planning Forum. The Head of Jangkurang Village said:

“This Development Planning Forum aims to improve the welfare of the community through development efforts. I invite all citizens to participate in these activities so that we can jointly determine the priority scale for development” (Interview, 2023).

Prioritization in development planning is done by referring to the problems that arise in each hamlet in the community and needs to pay attention to the level of urgency of each problem. Because the needs of the community are not limited to just one aspect, as revealed by the Jangkurang Village Consultative Body:

“In development planning, it should not only focus on building or improving road infrastructure. There needs to be a special program to develop other potentials such as art and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), as well as economic empowerment activities for mothers, and efforts to improve family welfare” (Interview, 2023)

In addition, from the results of interviews with several individuals involved in the process of channeling community

aspirations in Jangkurang Village, they conveyed that this stage was not carried out following the standards that should be. The situation arose because, in the decision-making process of the Jangkurang village government, they placed development planning priority programs under directions from the regional government, which were not included in the list of proposals from the three hamlets in Jangkurang Village and were not in accordance with the needs of the community in the area. One of the Neighborhood heads was more emphatic in his statement:

“The priority programs of the development planning deliberation that were realized in my area (informant) were not the results of the hamlet development planning deliberation” (Interview, 2023).

Furthermore, it can be inferred that in this context, decision-making diversity, as described by Amien (2005), refers to the variety of decisions taken by the government to determine programs to be implemented in an area through the Village Development Planning Forum. However, it appears that the decision does not yet reflect development planning priorities that should refer to a participatory development planning approach. This situation occurs because some areas of the three hamlets still do not have their needs met in the context of rural development. It should be noted that the development planning priorities did not come from the aspirations of the community through the Hamlet Development Planning Forum. However, it is selected based on budget considerations and priorities that are considered significant by the rural government. As such, this approach is not simply a form of adherence to existing Village Development Planning Forum Guidelines or rules, but a broader initiative to ensure the active participation of all elements of the community.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data analysis presented earlier, it can be concluded that in the process of preparing participatory rural development planning, several stages must be followed. Furthermore, participatory rural development planning in Jangkurang Village, Garut Regency, does not seem to be realized. This is because the three necessary stages, namely information gathering, channeling community aspirations, and diversifying community decision-making, are not given enough space.

The community also seems to be only involved in attending formal invitations, without actually involving them in conveying their aspirations. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are manipulation actions during Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) activities, creating the impression that community participation in the rural development planning process has taken place, even though in reality it is only a formality. Apart from that, in the preparation of development plans documented in the Rural Government

Work Plan, it seems that they do not fully support community participation.

The preparation of the plan still follows regional development planning directions without considering the results of the Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*). This causes Village Development Planning Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) activities, which should be a manifestation of participatory development planning, to be considered a formality or simply legitimization to comply with rural government regulations.

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