

# Inclusive social development of the coastal area of Pabean Udik Village Indramayu through the Poverty Alleviation Social Assistance Program

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**Abstract.** This study investigates how inclusive social development can be achieved in coastal communities via social assistance programs aimed at poverty alleviation. Adopting a constructivist paradigm and qualitative descriptive method, it examines Pabean Udik Village, a coastal area where residents primarily depend on small-scale fisheries and informal work. The research centers on the village head's communicative leadership in facilitating participatory village deliberations (*musyawarah desa*) to select recipients of Direct Cash Transfer from Village Funds (BLT-DD). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews, analyzed thematically. Key Findings reveal that inclusive decision-making in Pabean Udik Village hinges on three interrelated factors: communicative leadership, deliberative forums, and accountable governance. The village head's fosters trust and legitimacy by transparently explaining policies, enabling two-way dialogue, and resolving social tensions. Inclusive deliberation involving neighborhood leaders (RT), village consultative bodies (BPD), and community figure, enhance accountability, curb conflicts, and reduce jealousy. Ultimately, the study asserts that poverty alleviation in coastal villages. Succeed not just through financial aid but via robust inclusive governance and communication. Bolstering communicative leadership and participation is vital for sustainable socio-economic progress in Indonesia's coastal regions.

## 1 Introduction

Poverty and inequality in rural areas remain a significant challenge globally, with rural communities often experiencing more limited access to infrastructure, public services, and economic opportunities [1, 2]. Although the national poverty rate is decreasing, multidimensional poverty indicators in villages remain high due to limited access to education, health services, employment, and infrastructure [3].

In many developing countries, the level of multidimensional poverty in rural areas is much higher than in urban areas, indicating that development transformation must include an inclusive dimension not to widen social disparities [4]. Rapid socio-economic changes and

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recurring disruptions such as pandemics, economic fluctuations, and disasters mean that the spatial planning of village development policies faces increasingly uncertain conditions [5].

Poverty alleviation strategies focusing solely on financial transfers without involving villagers often fail to achieve their targets due to a lack of social legitimacy and participation in determining beneficiaries. Village social assistance programs, such as direct cash assistance from village funds (BLT-DD), are expected to be crucial in reducing the burden of poverty. However, their implementation often faces various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the low level of community participation in village deliberation forums, which results in uneven distribution of aid and gaps in the receipt of benefits by vulnerable groups [6].

Active inclusive participation of all elements of society and village stakeholders in determining recipients of BLT-DD assistance through village deliberation forums can increase accountability, transparency, and the quality of village development. Inclusive social development requires that the BLT-DD program be more than just administrative, participatory, and responsive to local needs. Village policies significantly reduce disparities by allocating village funds in community-based economic empowerment and social protection programs, especially if communities are meaningfully involved in decision-making. In development communication literature, participatory inclusion is seen as the key to ensuring that policies truly reflect the real needs of rural communities. Inclusive rural transformation requires the involvement of multiple actors: local government, village officials, civil society organizations, and residents in the planning and evaluation process so that no group is left behind in the benefits of development [7].

In addition, local leadership that supports cooperation between village governments and communities can increase the effectiveness of aid distribution and enhance local economic potential, which in turn contributes to poverty reduction. As local leaders, village heads strategically mobilize community participation through village deliberations. They serve not only as administrative implementers of social assistance but also as communication facilitators, conflict mediators, and policy narratives acceptable to residents. The success of village heads in mobilizing citizen participation is also linked to the accuracy of the distribution of aid, where the use of village funds managed with local coordination and feedback from the community shows an increase in household consumption of people experiencing poverty.

The role of the village head is central in the management of BLT-DD, because he not only acts as an administrative implementer, but also as a communicative leader who articulates policy objectives, manages community expectations, and mediates conflicts that arise due to perceptions of injustice or unclear information [8]. Recent studies show that communicative leadership that emphasizes openness of information, policy rationale narratives, and two-way dialogue facilitation can increase public trust and reduce resistance to local decisions [9].

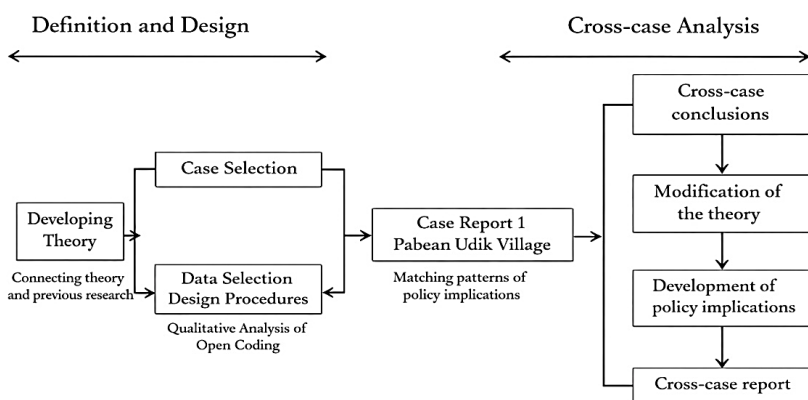
On the other hand, even though village assistance programs and policies exist, complex substantive challenges such as limited knowledge of procedures among residents, lack of transparency in receiving benefits, unclear selection criteria, centralization of decision-making, and low capacity of village governments in implementing public communication are often the main obstacles. Contemporary views on public policy emphasize that responding to Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) situations cannot simply rely on bureaucratic rules; instead, it requires strong interpretive and communication capacities from local leaders to make decisions meaningful at the community level [10].

BLT-DD distribution is most effective when focusing on financial distribution and community participation in decision-making. Therefore, it is important to examine in-depth how the village deliberation process can be optimized through local leadership, community participation, and public communication design to ensure that social assistance programs are

genuinely effective and inclusive. To address this gap, this study examines how inclusive social development in the coastal area of Pabean Udik Village, Indramayu, is pursued through poverty-alleviation social assistance programs, with a particular focus on village deliberation mechanisms and village leadership. It analyzes how community participation is mobilized and how the village head's leadership facilitates a process that is fair, transparent, accountable, and responsive to local conditions.

## 2 Method

This research is based on a constructivist paradigm, which views social reality as jointly constructed through interaction, dialogue, and interpretation [11]. The research design employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore local actors' experiences and to describe governance and communication processes in depth and contextually [12]. To obtain a rich and context-sensitive understanding, this study adopts a single-case study design [13], focusing on Pabean Udik Village (Indramayu Regency, West Java) as a coastal community where poverty alleviation through social assistance is closely intertwined with the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries and informal labor.



**Fig. 1.** Single-case study design: Pabean Udik Village (Adopted from Yin 2018)

Figure 1 illustrates a single-case study workflow that moves from research design to analytical outputs. It begins with Definition and Design, where the study develops theory by connecting it to previous research, then proceeds through an iterative loop between case selection and data selection/design procedures, including qualitative analysis via open coding. These steps lead to the production of a single case report (Pabean Udik Village), which becomes the basis for the analytical stage on the right. In that stage, the case findings are synthesized into conclusions, used for modification of the theory, and translated into the development of policy implications, culminating in a final report, with feedback links indicating that conclusions and theoretical refinement can inform subsequent interpretation and reporting.

The unit of analysis is the village-level process of inclusive social development through the implementation of poverty alleviation social assistance, particularly the deliberative mechanism (*musyawarah desa*) for determining beneficiaries of Direct Cash Transfer from Village Funds (BLT-DD) and related governance practices. The case was selected purposively because it represents a coastal village context with recurring socio-economic vulnerability and high dependence on natural-resource-based livelihoods, making it

analytically relevant for examining communicative leadership, community participation, and social legitimacy in social assistance governance.

**Informants and data sources.** Key informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the deliberation and implementation of social assistance programs. They included the village head and relevant village actors participating in deliberative forums (e.g., village apparatus, neighborhood leaders/RT, village consultative body/BPD, and community representatives). Documents reviewed included village meeting minutes, decrees/regulations related to beneficiary determination, and official records relevant to poverty alleviation and social assistance implementation.

Data was collected using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews explored village heads' narratives, experiences, and communication strategies in responding to development challenges [14]. Meanwhile, document analysis included a review of meeting minutes, village regulations, and official data on poverty and inequality. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began with data reduction through reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents [15].

Next, initial coding was conducted to identify themes of sensemaking, communicative leadership, participation, and social legitimacy. This coding developed broader thematic categories per the research's conceptual framework. Data were presented as a thematic matrix, interpretive narrative, and model visualization. Validity was strengthened through member checking with key informants, peer debriefing with fellow researchers, and triangulation of sources and methods.

### **3 Finding and discussion**

Social assistance governance in Pabean Udik Village demonstrates how inclusive social development in a coastal community is negotiated through the interaction of centralized data authority, neighborhood-level knowledge, and formal deliberative procedures. The village's inclusion practices unfold across five interconnected components: (1) data sources and authority, (2) BLT-DD formalization and quota allocation, (3) routine deliberation as a legitimacy arena, (4) verification and documentation as evidentiary devices, and (5) social dynamics arising from visibility and perceived equality.

First, the village's initial reference points for beneficiary identification remain strongly shaped by central program data (Ministry of Social Affairs) and facilitated administrative assistance. This centralized arrangement makes the village apparatus function primarily as an implementing and proposing actor, rather than a fully autonomous decision-maker in the central scheme. Consequently, inclusion is conditioned not only by local recognition of deprivation, but also by how local realities can be translated into administratively acceptable forms and channels. This structure reveals a practical constraint of inclusive development: the village may recognize vulnerability broadly, yet eligibility is filtered through centralized categorical logic and administrative boundaries.

Second, a more apparent local authority emerges through the governance of BLT-DD, which is formalized by the village head via a decree following a village meeting. A salient mechanism is the allocation of quotas per neighborhood unit (RT). This approach functions as an institutional fairness strategy: it distributes selection responsibility to the smallest governance unit closest to household realities, while simultaneously reducing perceptions of favoritism at the village level. In practice, the RT quota system also becomes a conflict-management device because it frames inclusion as the outcome of distributed representation rather than the product of a single centralized village decision.

Third, the village's routine monthly deliberation forum operates as the core legitimacy infrastructure. The forum serves as a recurring cycle of proposal verification, list

consolidation, and ratification of meeting minutes. The monthly rhythm matters analytically: it transforms inclusion into an ongoing governance process capable of incorporating change, contestation, and correction over time. Participation is structured through full attendance of RT officials and leaders, while residents are included via representation. This indicates that inclusiveness in Pabean Udik is primarily procedural and representative, relying on neighborhood intermediaries rather than on open mass participation. The perceived legitimacy of inclusion thus depends heavily on whether neighborhood representation is trusted and whether decisions are communicated back to residents in a credible manner.

Fourth, the verification mechanism combines neighborhood screening with evidentiary documentation. Each RT is asked to identify the most vulnerable households within its jurisdiction, and photo-supported beneficiary files strengthen proposals. Photographs of recipients' houses function as an evidentiary device that helps standardize vulnerability claims across RTs, enabling the village to justify decisions when questioned. This practice indicates that verification is not purely technical; it is communicative and performative, producing tangible artifacts that can stabilize agreement, reduce suspicion, and support accountability. The governance outputs ratified lists and meeting minutes—further reinforce procedural accountability by creating an auditable trail that frames inclusion as institutionally processed rather than informally negotiated.

Fifth, the findings highlight the social consequences of targeting visibility. The practice of marking houses with stickers triggered a perception that “everyone wanted assistance,” revealing a tension between procedural justice and a locally felt sense of equality in a context where hardship is often experienced as widespread. While quota allocation, routine deliberation, and verification documentation aim to make inclusion fair and defensible, visible markers can unintentionally amplify stigma, jealousy, or the moral claim that vulnerability is collective and therefore assistance should be more universal. This episode underscores that inclusive social development is not secured solely through correct administrative targeting; it also depends on how procedures are perceived, how social meanings of assistance circulate, and how the village manages expectations and dignity during implementation.

Taken together, the findings from Pabean Udik Village show that inclusive social development in a coastal setting is not produced by cash transfers alone, but by a governance process that continually negotiates inclusion through centralized eligibility structures, RT-based screening, routine deliberation, and documentary accountability, while also managing the social meanings attached to targeting practices (e.g., house marking). These empirical patterns provide the basis for a deeper interpretation of why such mechanisms generate legitimacy in some moments yet trigger contestation in others. Therefore, the Discussion section theorizes the Pabean Udik case through the lenses of development communication and inclusive governance, focusing on the tension between centralized data and local knowledge, the role of communicative leadership and sensemaking in structuring deliberation, and the gap between procedural fairness and residents' lived perceptions of equality in poverty alleviation programs.

The case of Pabean Udik Village demonstrates that inclusive social development in a coastal area is not an automatic outcome of cash distribution, but a social governance process that must continuously secure legitimacy, accountability, and perceived fairness. This aligns with development communication perspectives that place participation and inclusive governance at the center of policy effectiveness, especially when poverty alleviation programs risk losing legitimacy if community involvement is weak.

A key tension in Pabean Udik is the boundary between centralized eligibility lists and local knowledge. The village's initial reference points for beneficiary identification remain strongly shaped by central program data and facilitator support, which positions village actors primarily as proposers rather than fully autonomous decision-makers in centrally managed

schemes. This reveals an important implication for inclusive social development: inclusion is constrained not only by who is vulnerable, but by whether vulnerability can be translated into administratively recognized categories and channels. In such a setting, village inclusion efforts become a form of translation work, aligning lived conditions with formal eligibility logic while also managing the political risks of public disagreement over who deserves what.

The findings show that Pabean Udik maintains legitimacy through routine monthly village deliberation forums that verify proposals, consolidate lists, and ratify meeting minutes. The repeated rhythm of deliberation matters theoretically because inclusion becomes an ongoing process that can accommodate contestation and correction over time, rather than a one-off administrative event. Participation here is structured: RT officials and leaders attend fully, while residents are included through representation. This form of representative participation offers feasibility and order, but it also places weight on neighborhood intermediaries (RT) as gatekeepers of inclusiveness and as translators of decisions back to residents.

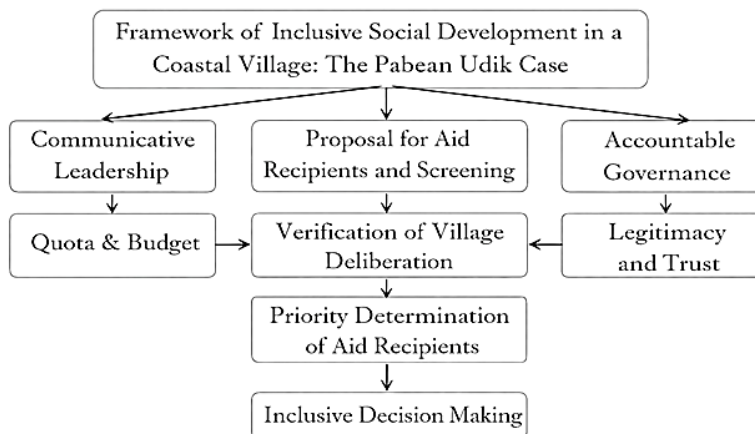
In Pabean Udik, verification is not merely technical screening; it is a communicative device that produces evidence to stabilize acceptance. Photo-supported beneficiary files strengthen RT-based screening of vulnerability, and the governance outputs (ratified lists and meeting minutes) create an auditable trail that frames decisions as institutionally processed. In this sense, inclusive governance is reinforced through documentation that can be mobilized when decisions are questioned. Rather than treating transparency as a post-hoc disclosure, the Pabean Udik case suggests that transparency is embedded in the process design through traceability and evidence-making so that accountability becomes part of how inclusion is produced and defended.

The most striking tension emerges when targeting becomes visible. The practice of marking houses with stickers triggered the perception that “everyone wanted assistance,” exposing a conflict between procedural justice rule-based selection, documentation, and orderly data, and residents' lived sense of substantive fairness and equality in a context where hardship may be experienced as widespread.

This indicates that inclusive social development requires more than correct targeting; it requires attention to how targeting practices generate social meanings, stigma, jealousy, or moral claims about collective vulnerability. In coastal communities where livelihoods can be uncertain and shocks can be frequent, inclusion may be interpreted through a collective moral lens (“many households feel at risk”), making the politics of visibility particularly sensitive. The implication is practical and communicative: inclusion mechanisms must protect dignity and avoid symbolic practices that unintentionally label households, even when those practices are administratively efficient.

Taken together, Pabean Udik supports the argument that the village head's role in poverty alleviation programs is not limited to administration but extends to sensemaking, narrative clarification of policy rationale, and mediation of tensions through deliberation and evidence-based justification. This resonates with the article's positioning of communicative leadership and participatory governance as key conditions for inclusive outcomes.

In Pabean Udik, communicative leadership is expressed through designing a repeated deliberative rhythm, distributing selection responsibility through RT quotas, and institutionalizing accountability via documentary outputs and verification artifacts. Therefore, the inclusive social development framework proposed in this article should be read as grounded in a single-case mechanism: legitimacy is generated when centralized eligibility structures are locally translated, deliberation is routinized, and accountability practices are visible in the form of traceable documentation, while social tensions are managed by careful communication choices that balance procedural fairness with residents' lived perceptions of equality.



**Fig. 2.** Framework of inclusive social development in a coastal village: Pabean Udik Case

Based on the single-case evidence from Pabean Udik Village, this study proposes a context-specific framework of inclusive social development in a coastal community, emphasizing how centralized eligibility structures are translated through neighborhood representation (RT), routinized deliberation, and evidence-based verification. At the same time, legitimacy is continuously negotiated through communication and perceived fairness. Figure 2 maps how social assistance governance leads to inclusive outcomes. At the center, the process runs vertically from proposal and screening of aid recipients, to verification through village deliberation, followed by priority determination of recipients, and culminates in inclusive decision making, indicating a step-by-step pathway toward inclusion. This central sequence is supported by contextual and governance drivers positioned on the sides: communicative leadership and quota & budget on the left, and accountable governance as well as legitimacy and trust on the right, each feeding into the core process to show that both leadership/administrative capacity and legitimacy, accountability are necessary conditions for inclusive social development in the Pabean Udik coastal context.

## 4 Conclusion

This single-case study of Pabean Udik Village, a coastal community in Indramayu, West Java, shows that the effectiveness of poverty alleviation social assistance, especially BLT-DD, depends not only on the adequacy of funds and administrative targeting, but also on the quality of inclusive governance and communication practices that accompany beneficiary selection and implementation. In Pabean Udik, inclusive social development is achieved through a governance pathway in which communicative leadership enables clear policy explanation, two-way dialogue, and mediation of social tensions; routinized village deliberation provides a legitimate arena to verify proposals and ratify decisions; and accountable governance is strengthened through traceable documentation and evidence-based verification (e.g., RT-based screening and supporting records). Together, these elements help the village manage the tension between centralized eligibility structures and local knowledge, while reducing jealousy and contestation that can arise when targeting becomes socially visible.

The study extends development communication arguments by showing that inclusive social development in a coastal setting is best understood as a sensemaking and legitimacy-building process, not merely as a technical distribution problem. Inclusion emerges from

communicative interactions that connect policy rationale, local representations (RT), deliberative verification, and accountable documentation into a socially acceptable decision-making chain. Practically, the findings suggest three priorities for strengthening social assistance governance in coastal villages: (1) invest in communicative capacity of village leaders (clear rationale, dialogic facilitation, conflict mediation); (2) institutionalize regular, documented deliberation that includes RT, BPD, and community representation for verification and ratification; and (3) design accountability tools that protect dignity avoiding practices that unintentionally stigmatize households while ensuring traceability of decisions through transparent records and complaint/clarification routes.

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