



Empowering Rural Communities through Village-Owned Enterprise Strategies

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Abstract

This study reports on a community engagement program aimed at strengthening the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in empowering communities in the village. The program employed a participatory and action-oriented approach involving 25 participants, including village officials, BUMDes managers, and community members. The program was conducted over three months through four main stages: initial assessment, program design, implementation (training, workshops, and mentoring), and evaluation. Initial findings revealed several key constraints, including the absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs), limited managerial capacity (only 2 of 8 managers were able to prepare basic financial records), low community participation (fewer than 10 active participants), and stagnant business activities. Following the intervention, measurable improvements were observed. A basic SOP document was developed, 7 of 8 managers were able to prepare simple financial reports, a draft business plan was produced, and community participation increased to approximately 18–20 people. In addition, two new potential business ideas were identified, and improvements were noted in the management of existing business units. This study suggests that effective BUMDes development should prioritize simple governance mechanisms, applied capacity building, and inclusive community engagement. Insights from this program provide practical implications for village governments and policy makers in improving community-based economic institutions.

Keywords: Village-Owned Enterprises, Community Empowerment, Capacity Building, Village Governance

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INTRODUCTION

Village development plays a crucial role in improving community welfare, particularly in rural areas where economic opportunities and access to resources remain limited. In the Indonesian context, villages are not only administrative units but also social and economic spaces where community-based development initiatives are implemented (Shilfani et al., 2022). The enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages has strengthened village autonomy, enabling local governments to manage resources and design development programs that are more responsive to community needs (Ali et al., 2021; Setyowati et al., 2023; Sumbulah et al., 2022). One of the key instruments introduced through this policy framework is the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Desa/BUMDes), which are expected to support local economic development and community empowerment. BUMDes are designed as village-level economic institutions that manage local potential and provide services aimed at improving community welfare (Haryanto et al.,



2023; Junarti et al., 2023; Maulina et al., 2023). In practice, BUMDes are expected to generate village income, create employment opportunities, and strengthen local economic resilience. However, the effectiveness of BUMDes varies significantly across regions, depending on institutional capacity, community participation, and the ability to adapt to local socio-economic conditions. In many cases, BUMDes face challenges related to limited managerial skills, weak governance, low community involvement, and difficulties in developing sustainable business units (Hasan et al., 2024).

In the context of Krembangan Village, Panjatan Subdistrict, Kulon Progo Regency, the existence of BUMDes represents an important effort to empower the local community through economic activities. Nevertheless, preliminary observations indicate that the implementation of BUMDes programs has not yet fully achieved its intended goals. Several issues can be identified, including limited diversification of business units, suboptimal community participation, and constraints in institutional management (Hakim & Sukri, 2022; Prakoso et al., 2020; Zuhdi et al., 2024). These challenges raise questions regarding how BUMDes strategies are formulated and implemented at the village level, as well as how they contribute to community empowerment in practice. Previous studies on BUMDes have generally focused on institutional performance, financial contributions, or policy implementation (Candra et al., 2025; Maulina et al., 2024; Raimi & Bamiro, 2025). While these studies provide important insights, they often pay limited attention to the practical strategies employed by BUMDes in engaging communities and addressing local empowerment challenges. In addition, there is still a need for more context-specific research that examines how BUMDes operate within particular village settings, taking into account local dynamics, resources, and constraints (Alamuiza et al., 2024).

Recent discussions on BUMDes increasingly emphasize that their contribution to community empowerment cannot be assessed solely through financial performance or administrative compliance, but must also be understood through the strategies used to mobilize local participation, develop village potential, and strengthen social as well as economic capacity. Existing literature shows that BUMDes function as hybrid institutions positioned between public service and business management, requiring a balance between social objectives and economic sustainability (Ghofar et al., 2022; Meikhati & Oktaviani, 2025; Sari & Ilham, 2024). In many villages, BUMDes are expected to serve as instruments for job creation, income generation, and local resource management; however, their performance often depends on the quality of institutional governance, leadership, and community trust (Fitriani, Md Shahbudin, et al., 2024; Fitriani, Shauki, et al., 2024; Suyatna & Yuda, 2025). Several scholars note that weak managerial competence, limited innovation in business diversification, and low participation from village residents frequently reduce the ability of BUMDes to operate as effective empowerment institutions (Asmuni et al., 2024; Kamil et al., 2023). Community empowerment through BUMDes should be interpreted not merely as the provision of economic programs, but as a broader process of enabling villagers to participate in decision-making, access productive opportunities, and strengthen collective control over local resources.

Another important theme in the literature concerns the need to understand BUMDes within specific village contexts rather than through generalized policy assumptions. Village economic institutions operate in environments shaped by local social relations, available natural resources, market access, administrative capacity, and the historical experience of community cooperation (Imam & Januari, 2022; Sgroi, 2022). Because of these differences, strategies that are successful in one village may not be directly applicable in another (Hanif et al., 2023; Sitanggang & Solikin, 2022). Previous discussions have often highlighted institutional performance indicators, legal frameworks, and financial outcomes, yet fewer analyses explore how BUMDes formulate practical strategies to respond to local constraints

while maintaining community engagement. A context-based perspective therefore becomes essential for examining how empowerment strategies are translated into daily practice, how local actors negotiate challenges, and how village enterprises adapt to limited resources or changing economic opportunities. Such an approach provides a stronger analytical basis for understanding BUMDes not only as formal organizations, but also as dynamic local institutions embedded in village life and community development processes.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the strategies of BUMDes in community empowerment in Krembangan Village. The focus of this research is not only on the formal structure of BUMDes but also on how strategies are implemented in practice, including efforts to involve the community, develop local economic potential, and overcome existing challenges. By emphasizing a case study approach, this research seeks to provide a more grounded understanding of the role of BUMDes in supporting community empowerment at the village level. The contribution of this study lies in providing empirical insights into the strategies and practices of BUMDes in a specific local context. Rather than offering broad theoretical generalizations, this study highlights practical lessons that may be relevant for improving the implementation of BUMDes in similar rural settings. It is expected that the findings of this research can inform policymakers, village governments, and practitioners in strengthening community-based economic institutions and enhancing the effectiveness of village-level empowerment programs.

RESEARCH METHOD

This community engagement programme was conducted to strengthen the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in community empowerment in Krembangan Village, Panjatan Subdistrict, Kulon Progo Regency. A participatory and action-oriented approach was employed, enabling the engagement team to work collaboratively with village stakeholders in identifying problems, designing interventions, and implementing capacity-building activities (Zimmerman, 2002). The programme involved 25 participants, consisting of 5 village officials, 8 BUMDes managers, and 12 community members representing local economic groups. Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in BUMDes activities and local economic initiatives. This composition was intended to ensure that both institutional and community-level needs were represented in the programme.

The programme was implemented over a period of three months, from June to August 2025, and was organised into four main stages: initial assessment and problem identification, programme design, implementation and mentoring, and monitoring and evaluation. In the initial stage, field observations, informal interviews, and one focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted to identify key challenges related to BUMDes management, business diversification, and community participation. The findings from this stage served as the basis for formulating intervention activities that were relevant to local conditions and community needs. A summary of the stages, activities, participants involved, and expected outputs of the programme is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages and Activities of the Community Engagement Programme

Stage	Main Activities	Participants Involved	Expected Outputs
1. Initial assessment and problem identification	Field observations, informal interviews, and one focus group discussion (FGD) to identify challenges in BUMDes management, business diversification, and community participation	Village officials, BUMDes managers, community members	Identification of key problems and priority needs
2. Programme design	Collaborative formulation of intervention priorities, including	Engagement team, village officials,	Programme design based on local needs

	business management training, financial administration guidance, business planning assistance, and community involvement strategies	BUMDes managers	and feasibility
3. Implementation and mentoring	Two one-day training sessions, one business planning workshop, and six weeks of mentoring through regular visits and consultations; activities covered bookkeeping, business development, marketing, and community engagement	BUMDes managers and community members, supported by village officials	Improved managerial understanding, draft business plans, and practical financial records
4. Monitoring and evaluation	Pre- and post-activity comparison, participant feedback, short interviews, observations, and documentation review	All participant groups	Evaluation of changes in knowledge, skills, business planning, and community involvement

The programme design prioritised three main activities, namely training on basic business management and financial administration, assistance in preparing simple business plans, and strengthening strategies for community involvement in BUMDes activities. Practical relevance and feasibility were emphasised throughout the design process to ensure that the intervention could be implemented effectively according to local conditions. The implementation stage included two training sessions, each lasting one day, one workshop on business planning, and six weeks of mentoring through weekly visits and informal consultations with BUMDes managers. The materials delivered covered basic bookkeeping, business unit development, simple marketing strategies, and approaches to increasing community participation in BUMDes activities. Practical exercises were also included, such as preparing financial records and drafting business plans for potential village-based enterprises.

Monitoring and evaluation were carried out at the final stage using a simple pre- and post-activity comparison and participant feedback (Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2018). The indicators used included: (1) improvement in participants' understanding of BUMDes management, (2) ability to prepare basic financial reports, (3) development of business ideas or plans, and (4) level of community involvement in BUMDes activities. Data were collected through short interviews, observation during activities, and documentation of outputs such as business plans and financial records. The collected data were analysed descriptively to assess changes before and after the intervention. To strengthen the validity of the findings, information obtained from village officials, BUMDes managers, and community members was compared across sources. Overall, the method emphasised collaborative problem-solving and practical engagement while providing applicable knowledge and skills to support the strengthening of BUMDes in local economic empowerment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of The Engagement Program

The implementation of the community engagement programme in Krembangan Village provides empirical insights into the condition of BUMDes management before and after the intervention. The initial assessment, conducted through observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and interviews with 25 participants, showed that although BUMDes had been formally established, its role in community empowerment had not yet functioned effectively. From an institutional perspective, the absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and unclear division of roles indicated weak organisational structuring (Retnowati et al., 2023). This condition reflects what institutional capacity literature identifies as "low formalisation," where organisational practices rely more on informal arrangements than

structured systems. As a result, coordination and accountability tend to be inconsistent. In Krembangan Village, this was evident in overlapping responsibilities between BUMDes managers, particularly in financial decision-making.

Managerial limitations were also apparent. Prior to the intervention, only 2 out of 8 managers were able to maintain basic financial records, and no formal business planning documents existed. This finding aligns with the notion that small-scale community enterprises often operate with “survival-oriented management,” focusing on day-to-day operations rather than strategic development. Consequently, business activities remained stagnant and lacked innovation. Community participation was similarly limited. Fewer than 10 individuals were actively involved in BUMDes activities, primarily as service users rather than contributors. This condition suggests a weak sense of collective ownership. From a community empowerment perspective, participation is not merely physical involvement but also includes engagement in decision-making processes. The limited participation observed indicates that BUMDes had not yet been fully internalised as a shared village institution. These initial conditions are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Initial Condition of BUMDes Management in Krembangan Village

Aspect	Empirical Findings	Implications
Governance	No SOPs; unclear division of roles	Weak coordination and accountability
Managerial capacity	Limited financial recording; no business planning	Low business development capacity
Community participation	Fewer than 10 active participants	Weak sense of ownership
Business condition	One dominant business unit, limited innovation	Stagnation of economic activities

The intervention programme was implemented through training, workshops, and six weeks of mentoring. The results demonstrate several observable changes. In terms of governance, the introduction of a simple SOP and clearer task distribution contributed to more structured organisational practices. This shift can be understood as a movement from informal to semi-formal governance, where basic rules begin to guide organisational behaviour (Rustam Saleh et al., 2023). The emergence of routine meetings and financial documentation indicates early stages of institutional strengthening.

The implementation of the engagement programme indicates that BUMDes strengthening in Krembangan Village generated measurable early improvements in organisational governance, managerial capacity, and community participation. The initial condition of weak institutional structuring, limited financial management skills, and low collective involvement reflected a BUMDes model that was still administrative in form but not yet effective as an instrument of community empowerment. Through training, workshops, and mentoring, the programme contributed to the introduction of more structured governance practices, clearer task distribution, and better financial documentation, while also encouraging greater community engagement in BUMDes activities. These changes suggest that participatory and practice-oriented interventions can support the transition of BUMDes from a passive village institution into a more functional and community-based economic organisation.

Managerial Improvements

Managerial improvements were also evident. After the intervention, 7 out of 8 managers were able to prepare simple financial reports, and one business plan was developed. This reflects an increase in what can be termed “functional capacity,” where actors are able to perform essential managerial tasks. The use of practical training and direct mentoring proved

effective in translating knowledge into application, suggesting that experiential learning approaches are particularly relevant in community-based economic settings.

Community participation showed gradual improvement, with the number of active participants increasing to approximately 18–20 individuals. More importantly, participants began to contribute ideas during discussions, indicating a shift from passive to more active engagement (Inobemhe, 2025). This change resonates with the concept of participatory development, where involvement in dialogue and decision-making becomes a key indicator of empowerment (Chin et al., 2024). In terms of business development, while no new business units have been fully established, the identification of two potential business ideas and improved management of the existing unit suggest a transition from static to more adaptive economic practices (Trapsilowati et al., 2015). This reflects an early stage of local economic activation, where awareness and planning precede expansion. These changes are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Intervention Outcomes and Measurable Changes

Aspect	Before Intervention	After Intervention
SOP availability	Not available	One basic SOP document developed
Financial management	2/8 managers capable	7/8 managers capable
Business planning	Not available	One draft business plan produced
Community participation	<10 participants	18–20 participants involved
Business development	1 stagnant unit	Improved management + 2 new ideas

The evaluation was based on observable outputs, participation records, and short interviews conducted at the end of the programme. This approach emphasises practical indicators rather than abstract perceptions, ensuring that the reported changes reflect actual improvements in skills and engagement (Panjaitan & Hutapea, 2024). From a broader perspective, the findings suggest that community empowerment through BUMDes is not achieved through a single intervention but through the interaction of three key elements: institutional structuring, capacity building, and community participation. These elements are interconnected. Improved governance creates clearer systems, which support better management practices, and in turn foster greater trust and participation from the community (Jaya et al., 2022).

At the same time, the findings highlight that empowerment is a gradual process. Although improvements are evident, they remain at an initial stage. The concept of “incremental change” is relevant here, where small but consistent improvements form the foundation for longer-term development (Assen, 2021). Without continued practice and support, there is a risk that these initial gains may not be sustained. In this context, the role of local actors becomes critical. The sustainability of BUMDes development depends not only on external facilitation but also on the commitment of village governments and community members to continue applying the knowledge and practices introduced during the programme. The results demonstrate that practical, participatory, and context-based interventions can contribute to strengthening the role of BUMDes in community empowerment (Hermawan et al., 2023). Rather than relying on complex models, simple and applicable strategies—such as basic governance tools, hands-on training, and inclusive discussions—can generate meaningful changes at the village level.

The engagement programme contributed to meaningful initial improvements in the managerial, participatory, and developmental dimensions of BUMDes in Krembangan Village. The increase in the number of managers capable of preparing financial reports, the preparation of a draft business plan, and the growth in active community participation indicate that the intervention strengthened the functional capacity of BUMDes as a village economic institution. These changes also show that empowerment through BUMDes

develops through the interaction of clearer governance arrangements, practical managerial skills, and broader community involvement rather than through isolated institutional reforms. At the same time, the outcomes remain incremental and represent an early stage of organisational strengthening, as business diversification and long-term institutional sustainability have not yet been fully achieved. Therefore, the findings underline that practical, participatory, and context-based interventions can serve as an effective foundation for BUMDes empowerment, but their long-term impact depends on continued mentoring, institutional commitment, and consistent community engagement.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement programme in Krembangan Village demonstrates that strengthening the role of BUMDes in community empowerment requires practical, participatory, and context-based interventions rather than complex institutional arrangements. Prior to the programme, BUMDes faced challenges related to weak governance, limited managerial capacity, and low community participation; however, the implementation of training, workshops, and mentoring contributed to improvements in governance practices, financial management, and community involvement. The increase in the number of managers capable of preparing financial records, along with the preparation of a basic business plan, indicates that simple and locally relevant interventions can generate meaningful initial outcomes. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of BUMDes depends on the integration of clear governance mechanisms, strengthened managerial capacity, and active community participation. Therefore, village governments need to prioritise applicable governance systems, practical capacity-building programmes, and participatory forums, while local governments should provide continuous assistance and monitoring to support the long-term sustainability of BUMDes as instruments of local economic empowerment.

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