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Economic Empowerment: A Case Study of Policy Formulation for a Poverty Alleviation Program in Dewa Tana Village, Central Sumba

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Abstract

Community economic empowerment is a strategic approach to addressing the complex, multidimensional nature of rural poverty. This study aims to analyze the policy formulation process for an economic empowerment program to alleviate poverty in Dewa Tana Village, Central Sumba Regency. The method used was community service (PkM) with a participatory approach, implemented in three stages: planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The research subjects comprised 15 participants, including village officials and community leaders. Implementation techniques included lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach using social maps, cause-and-effect diagrams, and economic seasonal calendars. The results showed an average increase in participants' understanding of 22% based on pre-test and post-test scores across policy concepts, structural factors, cultural factors, and poverty analysis. The findings also identified that the main obstacles to policy formulation include geographical, socio-cultural, and institutional factors, as well as the low quality of human resources and limited community participation. This activity resulted in a follow-up plan in the form of a policy model based on local potential and strengthening synergy between academics and the village government. This research recommendation emphasizes strengthening community participation, increasing human resource capacity, and developing sustainable programs tailored to local needs to enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation policies.

Keywords: empowerment, policy formulation, poverty, Dewa Tana, Sumba

INTRODUCTION

Community economic empowerment is a strategic approach to help improve community welfare and independence, especially in rural areas (Djadji et al., 2025; Harini et al., 2023; Ramompas et al., 2024). From an economic perspective, empowerment is defined as the process of strengthening the capacity of individuals and groups to access productive resources (capital, local assets, land, raw materials, markets) and make decisions so that they can be converted into income (Ramompas et al., 2025; Rantissi, 2024).

Poverty in rural areas has more complex characteristics, influenced by limited infrastructure (access to education and health), low-quality human resources, and dependence on the traditional economic sector (Aprilia et al., 2026; Nadhi et al., 2024).

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province continues to face poverty issues, marked by a poverty rate ranging between 18 and 19 percent from 2024 to 2025, higher than the national average of 8 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, 2025; Rahim & Isnawati, 2025). Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of poor people in NTT in March 2025 reached 1.09 million, with the percentage of urban poor at 7.68 percent, rural at 22.66 percent, and a total of 18.60 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, 2025). An important characteristic of this phenomenon is its consistent nature from year to year; this picture is not limited to statistical fluctuations but reflects deep-seated development barriers, including geographical challenges, limited access to human capital, and suboptimal economic potential (Nadhi et al., 2024;

Sugiharti et al., 2022).

As the region with the highest percentage of poor people in NTT, Central Sumba Regency is now a major concern in regional development. In 2024, this regency's poverty rate reached 30.84 percent (BPS Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, 2025). This condition indicates that conventional development strategies have failed to achieve equitable prosperity, necessitating policy interventions focused on these areas. In policy, local governments have designed various poverty alleviation programs. In the context of poverty alleviation, the Central Sumba Regency Government has taken strategic initiatives, such as an accelerated program to alleviate extreme poverty focused at the village level. One key approach is community empowerment and the utilization of local potential. The program launched is the Pekarangan Pro Oli Mila (PK POM) Model, which aims to utilize home gardens as centers for family food production and micro-enterprises (Indonesia, 2025; Suarasumba.com, 2025).

Based on the BPS data above, the disparity between urban and rural areas is striking, with rural poverty becoming increasingly chronic and structural. This means that to overcome poverty in rural areas, simply providing temporary assistance is not enough. Villages, as frontline government units, play a crucial role in formulating and implementing programs, especially given the existence of village funds (Damiti et al., 2025; Permatasari et al., 2021). Geographically, Dewa Tana Village is divided into 3 hamlets, 12 neighborhood units (RT), and 6 residents' units (RW). It has an area of 11.14 km² (5.06 percent), is 7 km from the sub-district town and 17 km from the district town, and has a population of 1,049 (Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kendal, 2023).

Dewa Tana Village has abundant natural resource potential, and so far, the agricultural sector has been the backbone of the local economy (Djadjji et al., 2025; Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kendal, 2023). The majority of the population depends directly on agricultural products such as corn, tubers, and various horticultural products, as well as local food commodities (Djadjji et al., 2025). However, despite these abundant natural resources, challenges remain, including low rainfall, pest infestations such as locusts, stunting, limited access to basic infrastructure such as roads and clean water, and dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Furthermore, dependence on subsistence farming and a lack of employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector contribute to poverty (Schulte et al., 2023). The current challenge is empowering village governments to manage and utilize economic resources to achieve prosperity and independence. Furthermore, policy implementation often faces challenges, such as a top-down approach that pays little attention to local needs and weak community participation in policy formulation (Levac & Gillis, 2025; Listiana et al., 2025).

This community service program selected Dewa Tana Village as a village that represents the characteristics of poverty in Central Sumba, as a case study to analyze in depth how economic empowerment program policies are formulated. Therefore, the purpose of this community service activity is to socialize and train the process of formulating economic empowerment program policies for poverty alleviation, identify the suitability between the program and the real needs and local potential of poor communities, and identify structural and cultural factors that influence the effectiveness of economic empowerment policy formulation at the village level.

The partners in this community service activity are village officials and the community. This activity will improve the quality of policy formulation by establishing simple written standard operating procedures (SOPs) for business group management, profit sharing, and sustainability mechanisms. It will also establish a pilot project for local empowerment that can then be applied to other villages with similar characteristics.

METHOD

The PKM activity was held on Friday, August 2, 2024, at the Dewa Tana Village office, Umbu Ratu Nggay Barat District, Central Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province.

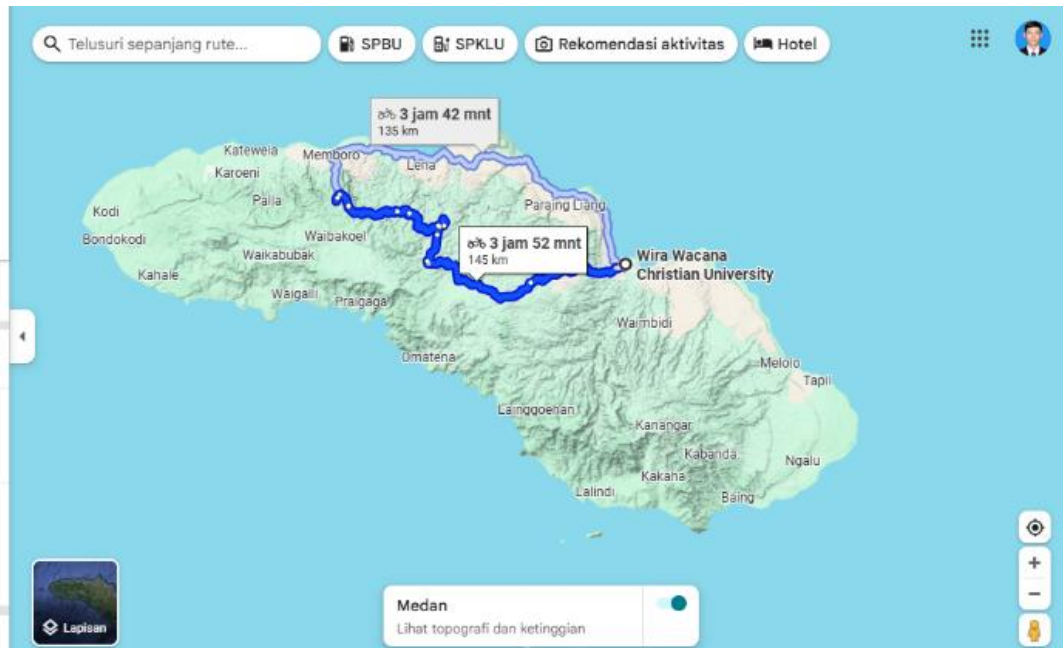


Figure 1. Location, Distance, and Travel Time from Wee Paboba Village to and from Wira Wacana Christian University, Sumba
Source: Google Maps, 2026

The implementation method for this activity follows a systematic process flow, divided into three main stages. The process begins with (i) careful program planning, followed by (ii) the field implementation stage, and ends with (iii) the monitoring and evaluation stage to ensure the achievement of objectives and make necessary improvements (Rahayuningsih et al., 2025; Ramompas et al., 2024; Renggo et al., 2025; Supriyana et al., 2026).

This community service activity is designed to maximize knowledge transfer and active community involvement through several implementation techniques, including lectures, Q&A sessions, discussions, demonstrations, and PowerPoint presentations. The following explains and focuses on each stage of the activity:

1. Program Planning

Program planning focuses on needs analysis and initial policy formulation. This stage includes identifying the root causes of poverty and local economic potential in Dewa Tana Village, determining specific target groups, and designing relevant program models or policy proposals, such as training curricula or business capital schemes.

2. Implementation Stage

The implementation phase is the direct intervention and implementation phase. The team conducts outreach by delivering materials and practical skills training to target groups and begins piloting the designed policy model using tools such as social maps. This phase also includes intensive mentoring for the community and village officials to ensure program adoption and sustainability.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation (Monev) Stage

This stage serves as a control and impact assessment. The team conducts regular monitoring to identify and address obstacles. Next, an evaluation is conducted to measure the impact of economic and social changes on the target group. The results of this monitoring and evaluation provide a solid, sustainable foundation for the Dewa Tana Village Government, a key output of this case study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As academic institutions, universities play a strategic role in supporting government efforts to improve the quality of human resources. Their existence is also crucial and integral, particularly in the economic sector and human capacity development. This is relevant to the community's economic empowerment efforts in Dewa Tana Village, Central Sumba, where universities can act as a driving force in formulating policies for poverty-alleviation programs tailored to local needs.



Figure 2. Documentation of socialization activities

Community service activities were carried out at the Dewa Tana Village office, attended by 15 participants, including village officials, community leaders, religious leaders, and youth leaders.

The Community Service Program (PKM) activity began with an opening speech by Osfred Umbu Djadji, S.E., M.M. This was followed by a presentation on the level of poverty in the village by Yuvensius Ramompas, S.E., M.E., the second member of the activity. The activity continued with a pre-test to measure the participants' initial understanding of the factors influencing the formulation of economic empowerment policies. This pre-test serves as the basis for assessing the training's effectiveness after the activity is completed.

Participants were given core material on village poverty levels, divided into two main sessions. In the first session, participants were introduced to the concept of structural factors, encompassing aspects of village institutions, regulations, and the availability and access to economic resources. The material was delivered through interactive lectures and discussions, enabling participants to connect theory to real-world conditions in Dewa Tana village. In the second session, the material focused on cultural factors, including customary values, social norms, and relationship patterns within Sumba society that influence economic activity. In the context of Sumba society, understanding local culture is very important because customary values strongly influence economic decision-making and village policies. Customs influence the way people make decisions, from agricultural matters to wealth allocation and conflict resolution (Djoh et al., 2022; Lepir & Ismanto, 2024). The method used in this session is storytelling and sharing experiences so that participants can reflect on cultural practices in the village environment.

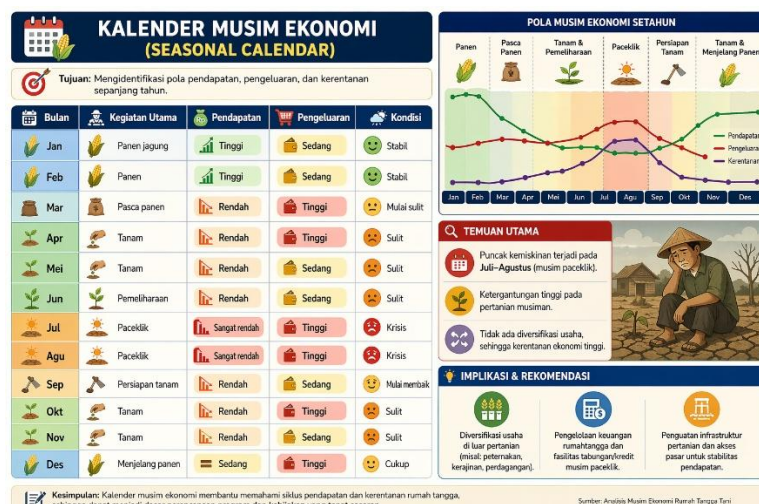


Figure 3. Economic Seasonal Calendar of Dewa Tana Village

Next, after the presentation of the material, the activity continued with training, namely a problem identification session, policy formulation, follow-up plans, and concluded with a pre-test and post-test. The problem identification session used the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach. Participants were divided into small groups to map the village's socio-economic conditions, identify the factors driving poverty, and analyze the relationships between structural and cultural factors. Gender relations in the form of limitations on women's economic activities, such as placing them in a less advantageous position in important decision-making (including their own marriage affairs) and denying them equal opportunities to pursue higher education, thus limiting access to decent work and higher income. Tools used included social maps, cause-and-effect diagrams, and economic season calendars, enabling participants to explore information from previous experiences actively.



Figure 4. Socialization of the formulation of the economic empowerment program policies

Following problem identification, a policy formulation session was held, during which participants received an overview of village deliberation activities. In this situation, participants took on the roles of actors, including village government officials, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community members. This activity aimed to hone participants' skills in formulating policies that were responsive to local conditions and took into account various interests.



Figure 5. Formulation of Economic Empowerment Policies at the Village Level

Policy formulation continued as participants developed a follow-up plan (RTL) that included priority programs, the implementing actors or responsible parties, and a timeline for implementation. This plan was expected to serve as a concrete step in implementing the training findings into village policies and programs.

The discussion continued with mapping and dividing small groups into 4-5 people. Furthermore, the formulation process was carried out by looking at the formulation. Furthermore, the PkM team

conducted an evaluation using a questionnaire with 15 participants before and after the activity. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Participants' Knowledge

Assessment Indicators	Pre-Test (Average)	Post-Test (Average)	Improvement
Understanding the Concept of Village Public Policy	60%	82%	22%
Understanding Structural Factors	60%	80%	22%
Understanding Cultural Factors	61%	84%	23%
Understanding Poverty Problem Analysis	49%	71%	22%

Source: Processed, 2026

Overall, the pre-test and post-test results for the five indicators: understanding policy concepts, structural factors, cultural factors, poverty analysis, and policy formulation skills. The results showed a 22 percent increase, indicating that the material delivery was effective in increasing participant capacity. This increase occurred not only in knowledge but also in analytical and practical skills in formulating economic empowerment policies.

As a final step, mentoring was conducted to ensure the sustainability of the training outcomes. Mentoring was conducted through internet-based monitoring to ensure the effective implementation of the policies formulated for village officials. Obstacles to policy formulation for poverty alleviation programs in Dewa Tana Village, Central Sumba, were generally multisectoral and structural in nature. The main obstacles often encompass geographic, socio-cultural, and institutional aspects. Obstacles identified included governance issues, lack of political impetus, mismatches between official and customary mechanisms, lack of stakeholder engagement, and information gaps between decision-makers and beneficiaries.

These findings support research by Ascher (2023), Sulisa et al. (2025), dan Adebajo et al. (2024), which found that uncertainty in policy formulation and implementation can trigger program deviations or the diversion of benefits to people experiencing poverty. Programs become easily manipulated by officials or elite groups, a major challenge seen in developing countries like Indonesia, which face obstacles such as corruption, minimal coordination, and elite dominance in policymaking.

The evaluation phase resulted in an agreement to collaborate between academics (resource persons) and Dewa Tana village officials to formulate effective poverty alleviation policies based on research data. This synergy combines theoretical or analytical academic knowledge with field understanding in accordance with demographic and socioeconomic data. Collaboration in the form of PkM can increase recognition and trust from the community. Academics act as a database and conduct studies, while village officials act as parties that facilitate and make recommendations on academic policies for the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes). When community involvement in the entire program cycle (planning, implementation, and evaluation) is facilitated, heard, and recognized, trust in the process, actors, and results is more easily accepted and implemented.

CONCLUSION

Obstacles to formulating poverty alleviation policies in Dewa Tana Village, Central Sumba, are generally multisectoral and structural. The main obstacles often encompass geographic, socio-cultural, and institutional aspects. Limited human resource quality is evident in limited knowledge, technical skills, managerial, and entrepreneurial abilities.

This activity has made a positive contribution to increasing participants' knowledge and capacity in formulating economic empowerment policies. However, the implementation of the activity still faced several limitations, including time constraints, costs, and the availability of resource persons. The relatively short duration of the material delivery meant that not all material could be discussed in depth, and also limited participants' opportunities to conduct policy simulations. The limited budget also limited the number of participants who could be involved and the quality of the learning media used. Furthermore, the limited number of resource persons led to suboptimal mentoring during the discussions. It is recommended that the activity be further developed through larger-scale follow-up funding, such as at the sub-district level, to achieve a broader impact.

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