

The role of village institutions based on open government partnerships in nature conservation: a case study in a village in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of village institutions in an effort to preserve nature in Sukamaju Village, Cihaurbeuti District, Ciamis Regency, as nature conservation has become an increasingly important issue in the context of sustainable development at this time. Village institutions have the potential to play a role in maintaining natural sustainability and promoting a balance between the use of natural resources and the needs of rural communities. The study employed a qualitative research method by means of data collection in the form of in-depth interviews, observation, and document study. The study resulted in the finding that village institutions in Sukamaju Village play a significant role in nature conservation. Several institutional forms are involved, such as farmer groups, youth organizations, community information groups, forest village community institutions, and tourism awareness groups. The roles of village institutions include managing natural resources in a sustainable manner, monitoring activities that damage the environment, educating and socializing the importance of nature conservation to the community, as well as developing programs and activities that support natural sustainability. This study also identified several challenges faced by village institutions in carrying out their roles. These challenges include limited human resources, limited funds, conflicts of interest between the use of natural resources and the economic needs of the community, as well as the lack of awareness and participation of the community in nature conservation. In this context, this study provides recommendations for strengthening the role of village institutions in nature conservation, including by increasing institutional capacity, supporting the development of sustainable environment-based economic activities, increasing community participation, and building cooperation with related parties such as local governments, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations. In addition, the Sukamaju Village Government is expected to be able to initiate climate village-based programs.

Keywords: Community Participation, Nature Conservation, Sustainability, Village Institutions

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INTRODUCTION

The natural environment is a valuable asset that we need to protect and preserve. In the midst of increasingly worrying challenges of climate change and environmental damage, efforts to preserve nature are very important. In this context, village institutions have great potential to maintain natural sustainability and promote the preservation of natural resources. Village institutions are social structures and local organizations that have the most important role in the life of village communities. They consist of various groups, organizations, and institutions that work together in organizing and managing various aspects of life in the village. Village institutions have unique and varied characteristics, depending on the social, cultural, and geographical context of each village (Abidin et al., 2022). Environmental damage

remains an urgent problem and has a material impact, especially in the Ciamis Regency area, as explained in the following table 1.

Table 1. Data of Disaster Affected Houses 2020

| No | Types of Disaster | Data of Damaged Houses | | | Amount |
|-------|-------------------|------------------------|----------|-------|--------|
| | | Major | Moderate | Minor | |
| 1. | Flood | - | - | 9 | 9 |
| 2. | Landslide | 13 | 43 | 105 | 161 |
| 3. | Storm | 79 | 120 | 654 | 853 |
| 4. | Lightning | - | - | - | - |
| 5. | Land shift | 11 | 19 | 196 | 226 |
| 6. | Wildfire | 28 | 16 | 17 | 61 |
| 7. | Earthquake | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| Total | | 135 | 198 | 981 | 1314 |

(Source: Regional Disaster Management Agency of Ciamis Regency, 2020)

The table shows that the potential for disasters can occur along with people's behavior patterns that ignore natural preservation. This is what happened to the flood disaster in the Sukamaju Village area, Cihaurbeuti District, Ciamis Regency in 2022. This was caused by the overflow of the Cibaruyan River and had an impact on damage around the river flow. Therefore, the role of village institutions in nature conservation is very important, because they have direct access to and in-depth knowledge about the local environment and natural resources around it (Sonia & Sarwoprasodjo, 2020).

Villagers who live around the natural environment have a direct interest in utilizing natural resources to meet their daily needs. Therefore, the presence of village institutions can play an active role in maintaining natural sustainability and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources (Prathama et al., 2020). One example of the important role of village institutions in nature conservation is in forest and land management.

Forests and land in Sukamaju Village are managed by the Maju Lestari Forest Village Community Organization. Forest management for economic activities that are integrated with forest conservation is possible (Subairi & Suharso, 2021). In many areas in Indonesia, forests and land are vital natural resources, for economic, ecological, and social needs (Adnan & Purnomo, 2023). Village institutions have the ability to manage forests and land in a sustainable manner through various policies, arrangements, and practices implemented at the local level. They can develop forest and land management plans that consider sustainability, protect biodiversity, and promote the welfare of rural communities (Rahayu, 2017).

In addition, village institutions can also play a role in managing water resources, renewable energy, and efforts to reduce waste and pollution. With their local knowledge and wisdom, village communities can develop efficient water management systems, utilize renewable energy sources, and reduce the negative impacts of waste and pollution. Through village institutions, communities can work together to implement environmentally friendly and sustainable practices (Thene, 2016).

On the other hand, although village institutions have great potential in conserving nature, they also face various challenges and constraints in carrying out their roles. One of the main challenges is the lack of adequate human, financial, and infrastructure resources. Many villages in Indonesia still face limitations in terms of knowledge, skills, and access to the technology needed to implement nature conservation efforts. In addition, social, economic, and political differences between villages can also affect the institutional capacity of villages to carry out their duties and responsibilities (Amalia & Syawie, 2021).

To overcome this challenge, strong support from the government, non-governmental organizations, and other related institutions is needed. This support can be in the form of financial assistance, training, capacity building, and recognition of the important role of village institutions in nature

conservation. The government also needs to create policies that support and facilitate village institutions in carrying out nature conservation efforts and involve them actively in making decisions related to natural resource management.

Sukamaju Village Institution

Sukamaju Village, Cihaurbeuti District is a village located on the slopes or foothills of Mount Sawal, which is included in the North Ciamis area, where the majority of the livelihood of the population from the past until now is farming activities. The difference is that in the past farming activities were carried out with very simple equipment, and there was no modern equipment like now. Thus, sometimes people only produce agricultural products that grow naturally from mountain soil. From 1900 until now, they have been cultivating crops by growing their plants and the produce can be sold. So that this can increase income for the benefit of the village community itself.

Village institutions have an important role in various aspects of village community life, especially in social, economic, and environmental development. They can contribute to democratic decision-making, sustainable management of natural resources, meeting the basic needs of society, improving quality of life, and community empowerment (Nugroho, 2018). Village institutions that play a role in environmental preservation in the Sukamaju Village area, Cihaurbeuti District, Ciamis Regency include (1) Maju Lestari Forest Village Community Institutions; (2) Cibaruyan Community Information Group; and (3) Karya Youth Organization. These three institutions are active institutions in efforts to increase public understanding regarding the importance of environmental preservation. Because the village community has a tendency to be apathetic towards existing policies and conditions, these institutions are active in efforts to increase public awareness of managing the environment.

Village institutions are social and organizational structures that play a role in regulating, managing, and advancing community life at the village level. They act as an entity that connects village communities with the government, agencies, and other institutions. Village institutions consist of various groups, organizations, and institutions that work together to achieve common goals in the development and empowerment of village communities (Wijaya, 2010). Empowerment of environment-based village communities is an approach that aims to strengthen the participation of village communities in managing natural resources and the environment around them. This approach recognizes that village people have local knowledge, wisdom, and a strong connection with their surroundings.

Empowerment of environment-based village communities aims to encourage them to be actively involved in decision-making, resource management, and sustainable use of the environment. Therefore, this is a reference to the approach of the research conducted. Communities that are wise and prudent in managing natural resources will certainly produce an economic pattern for rural communities that is environmentally sound. Because environmental sustainability is very important in maintaining the socio-economic stability of village communities.

Nature Preservation Pattern

Nature conservation in rural areas is an important effort in maintaining the sustainability of ecosystems and human life. Rural areas often have abundant natural resources including forests, rivers, and agricultural land. Unfortunately, the social, economic, and technological changes that occur in rural areas can place enormous pressure on the natural environment. To preserve nature in rural areas, a sustainable and community-based conservation pattern is needed.

Sustainable forest management is a part of a specific and comprehensive nature conservation effort. Forests have an important role in maintaining environmental quality and ecosystem sustainability (Suban Angin & Sunimbar, 2020). Forest conservation patterns in rural areas can be carried out through

sustainable forest management. Such as reforestation, management of sustainable timber use, forest fire control, and protection of endemic species.

In addition to sustainable forest management, agriculture is an important sector in rural areas but can have a negative impact on the environment if not done properly. Sustainable agriculture involves the use of environmentally friendly agricultural techniques, such as the use of organic fertilizers, integrated pest control, crop rotation, and efficient use of irrigation (Cahyono & Yuliani, 2019). Water is a very important resource in rural areas. Water conservation patterns involve sustainable management of water resources, such as water conservation, planting forests in water catchment areas, managing irrigation canals, and using water-saving technologies (Andini et al., 2019).

Domestic and agricultural waste management is one of the environmental problems in rural areas. Nature conservation patterns involve good waste management, such as processing organic waste into compost, using environmentally friendly waste treatment systems, and reducing the use of hazardous chemicals (Pinardi et al., 2019). Nature conservation in rural areas must also include empowering local communities. Rural communities can be empowered through environmental education, training in natural resource management skills, and strengthening community groups in environmental management.

METHODS

In this study a systematic approach was used to collect data, analyze information, and produce valid and reliable findings or conclusions. Research methods help direct the steps needed to answer research questions or achieve stated research objectives. This method uses a descriptive and interpretive approach in collecting and analyzing data (Gumilang, 2016). Data is collected in the form of words, narratives, or pictures. This method is suitable for research that wants to understand the perception, experience, or social context of a phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sukamaju Village, Cihaurbeuti District, Ciamis Regency has various economic and tourism potentials that can be developed. The natural wealth and potential of Natural Resources certainly support Sukamaju Village to become a tourism village that is oriented towards the development of natural and artificial tourism. One manifestation of the consistency and focus of the Sukamaju Village Government is the establishment of a tourist village with the name Overtime Kahuripan. It aims to increase the welfare of rural communities in the field of tourism.

The development of tourist villages is a significant phenomenon in the tourism sector, where villages around the world develop their tourism potential to attract visitors and promote their unique culture, traditions, and natural environment. Tourism villages aim to provide tourists with an authentic experience, while at the same time empowering local communities and increasing their economic welfare (Nugraha, 2021).

In this context, environmental preservation has a very important role in the development of tourism villages. Environmental preservation means maintaining the sustainability and preservation of natural resources and ecosystems around tourist villages. This is important to ensure that the tourism activities carried out do not damage or harm the environment, but on the contrary, provide long-term benefits for both the environment and local communities.

One of the approaches applied in developing a sustainable tourism village is an ecological or ecotourism-based approach. This approach considers environmental aspects in the planning and management of tourist villages and encourages environmentally friendly activities, such as the use of renewable energy, good waste management, conservation of flora and fauna, and environmental education for visitors and local communities.

Role of Village Institutions

Environmental preservation in the context of sustainable village development can provide several significant benefits. The development of a tourist village in Sukamaju Village as one of the drivers of the community's economy makes tourism objects and tourism attractions an economic potential developed by the Sukamaju Village Government. Here is one of the tourist objects in Sukamaju Village:



Figure 1. Sampalan Asri Hill

The most visited tourist object in Sukamaju Village is Sampalan Asri Hill. The positive impact of the presence of these tourist objects is an increase in people's welfare, but in the concept of managing tourist objects that uphold conservation values, several things need to be considered. Conservation of Natural Resources is one of the steps in environmental sustainability because it protects natural resources, such as forests, rivers, and biodiversity. Thus, these natural resources can be maintained and can be enjoyed by future generations. This must also be realized by all the general public, that the development of the tourism industry must be accompanied by environmental conservation (Komang et al., 2022).

Ecosystem Restoration in environmental preservation can help restore damaged or degraded ecosystems. For example, by carrying out forest restoration activities or reclamation of eroded land, tourism villages can play a role in restoring biodiversity and ecosystem function (Susilawati, 2008). The Sukamaju Village Institution has played the role of agent of control and played an important role in maintaining forest conservation by carrying out all village government program activities and empowering the community. This is stated in the village regulations.

Environmental education which emphasizes that all elements of the village community must care about the environment can also provide opportunities to increase awareness and knowledge of local communities and visitors about the importance of environmental preservation. Through education and participatory activities, visitors can learn about environmental values and how to maintain their sustainability. These activities have not been carried out intensively by the Village Government and Village Institutions in Sukamaju Village. In order that initiation is needed to increase knowledge and programs that support conservation activities, sustainable economic development, and environmental preservation in rural areas can have a positive impact on local economic development. Through wise management, tourist villages can offer environmentally friendly products and services.

Participation in the Sukamaju Village Community

Village community participation in efforts to preserve the environment is an important aspect of sustainable rural development. In this context, community participation means that they play an active role in the process of making decisions, implementing, and maintaining activities related to environmental preservation in the village. Through active participation, village communities can contribute to

maintaining ecosystem balance, conserving natural resources, and improving the quality of their environment.

Sustainable rural development emphasizes efforts to maintain economic, social, and ecological sustainability in the village environment. Village community participation is the key to success in achieving this goal. In this context, several forms of community participation can be carried out. Participation in Environmental Planning Rural communities can be involved in environmental planning processes, such as the preparation of spatial plans, natural resource management plans, and environmental conservation action plans. They can provide input, aspirations, and local knowledge that are important for formulating sustainable policies. This can be seen in the Village Deliberations conducted by the Village Government, the Village Consultative Body, and the people of Sukamaju Village, Cihaurbeuti District, Ciamis Regency. This activity is also a form of the Open Government Partnership.

Active participation in the Implementation of Environmental Programs Village communities can be seen in the implementation of environmental programs, such as tree planting, waste management, afforestation, water management, and animal and wildlife protection programs. Through this participation, village communities can be directly involved in environmental preservation activities around them. Participation in Environmental Education and Awareness Environmental education and awareness is an important aspect of sustainable rural development. Villagers can be involved in environmental education and awareness programs, such as environmental counseling, sustainable skills training, and environmental awareness campaigns. Community participation in this matter will increase their understanding and knowledge about the importance of environmental preservation (Cahya Trinanda, 2017).

Participation in Natural Resource Management Village communities also includes unique local knowledge about the environment and natural resources around them. In sustainable rural development, community participation in managing natural resources is key (Yuliani & Herminasari, 2017). They can be involved in the control, management, and wise use of natural resources, such as forests, rivers, and agricultural land. Village community participation in environmental conservation efforts has significant benefits. Community Understanding and Ownership and Community participation in environmental conservation will increase their understanding and awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. They will feel they have a role and responsibility in maintaining environmental sustainability in their village.

More Sustainable Use of Resources Through active participation means that villagers can engage in more sustainable use of natural resources. They can adopt organic farming practices, efficient water management, and the use of renewable energy. This will have a positive impact on the environment and also improve people's welfare. Community Empowerment and Community participation in environmental conservation efforts will increase their understanding. The village community will have an active involvement in decision-making and implementation of environmental programs. This will increase their capacity and ability to manage the environment and natural resources. Preservation of Local Culture and Village community participation in environmental preservation can also strengthen the preservation of local culture. Many environmental preservation practices are closely related to the cultural values and traditions of the village community. By involving the community in environmental preservation, these cultural values can be preserved and passed on to future generations.

Environmental Preservation Efforts

Environmental preservation efforts carried out by village institutions are an important part of sustainable rural development. Through village institutions, various programs and activities can be initiated and implemented to maintain and improve environmental conditions in village areas. Following are some examples of environmental preservation efforts that have been carried out by village institutions in Sukamaju Village specifically and comprehensively:

Natural resource management

Village institutions have made efforts to manage natural resources sustainably, for example, by regulating the use and use of agricultural land, forests, and rivers wisely. This is stated in the form of village regulations.

Ecosystem Preservation and Biodiversity

Village institutions have collaborated with related parties to protect and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity in village areas, especially those in Mount Sawal. The collaboration is stated in the form of a cooperation agreement.

Development of Ecotourism and Tourism Villages

Village institutions have promoted the development of sustainable ecotourism and tourism villages. By developing natural and cultural potential in the village, Sukamaju Village institutions have created an alternative environment-based economy. This program can involve village communities in responsible tourism management and preserving cultural heritage. Environmental preservation efforts carried out by village institutions are expected to create villages that are environmentally friendly, and sustainable, and provide economic and social benefits for village communities (Hadi & Tejomurti, 2018). With the active involvement of the community and support from the local government, environmental preservation in rural areas can be realized sustainably.

CONCLUSION

Village institutions existing in Sukamaju Village, Cihaurbeuti District have played an active role in efforts to preserve the environment. Ecosystem balance and economic sustainability is one of the areas that has become a reference for several programs by the Sukamaju Village Government to improve the community's economy based on natural resource conservation. There are several things that the Sukamaju Village Government can do, namely Village Institutional Waste Management where the Village can organize an effective and environmentally friendly waste management program. This includes segregating waste, composting, and reducing the use of plastic. By involving the community in this program, village institutions can create awareness of the importance of reducing, recycling, and making good use of waste.

Water Management by Village Institutions can play a role in managing sustainable water. They can develop water management systems, such as setting up efficient agricultural irrigation, building ponds for collecting rainwater or providing a safe source of clean water for rural communities. Environmental Education and Awareness Village institutions can organize environmental education and awareness programs for village communities. This aims to increase understanding and knowledge about the importance of environmental preservation. These programs may include counseling, ongoing skills training, and environmental campaigns.

Limitations and Future Direction

The results of research related to community participation in environmental preservation must of course be carried out on an ongoing basis. The steps that can be taken for further research are related to the climate village program and the identification of energy resources, which can be utilized for sustainable development in rural areas.

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Statement and Declarations

We, the authors of this article, hereby state several things regarding our contribution, the availability of data and materials, and the absence of conflicts of interest that might affect the contents of this article. This declaration aims to maintain the integrity and quality of the articles we produce. I.N. the main author has played an active role in the formulation of ideas, research, writing, and preparation of this article. A.K.W. has made significant contributions in the form of research, data analysis, and discussion to enrich the contents of this article. I.N. and A.K.W. have participated in the review and revision stages of this article to ensure accuracy and suitability for writing. The data and materials used in this research are available accurately and can be accounted for. The references and sources of information used have been referenced in the reference list, enabling appropriate verification and reproduction. The authors do not have a conflict of interest that could affect the objectivity and correctness of the research results presented. There are no parties who have influence or interest that can influence the research results and conclusions presented in this article. This article is an original work and has never been published before. The copyright of this article is wholly owned by the author and this article does not violate the copyright or other intellectual property rights. By stating this declaration, we hope that this article can be considered as a qualified contribution.

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