



STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE: DYNAMICS OF CITIZEN GROUP ENGAGEMENT IN VILLAGE BUDGET POLICY FORMULATION IN DUA BOCCOE VILLAGE

Muslimin

Univeristas Cahaya Prima, Bone Regency, Indonesia

Email: ismailmr.1997@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received May, 2025

Accepted June, 2025

Keywords:

*budgeting;
governance;
participation;
Planning;
village*

Community participation is a fundamental element of good governance and sustainable rural development. This community engagement program aimed to strengthen citizens' participation in village planning and budgeting processes in Desa Dua Boccoe through participatory approaches, capacity-building activities, and continuous facilitation. The program involved community members, village officials, lecturers, and university students in collaborative learning and advocacy processes. Data were collected through field observations, focus group discussions, interviews, and participatory evaluations. The results indicate that the establishment of the Dua Boccoe Mandiri Group significantly enhanced citizens' understanding of village planning mechanisms and increased their involvement in deliberative forums. Training activities improved villagers' abilities to formulate development proposals and monitor budget implementation, while fostering greater transparency and responsiveness among village authorities. Nevertheless, several structural challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited telecommunications access, and uneven public information dissemination, continue to constrain broader participation. The findings demonstrate that community empowerment through education, facilitation, and collaborative governance can transform passive citizens into active stakeholders in local development. The experience of Desa Dua Boccoe highlights the importance of strengthening both human resource capacities and supporting infrastructure to achieve inclusive, transparent, and sustainable village governance. This model may serve as a reference for other rural communities facing similar challenges in promoting participatory democracy and community-based development.



This is an open access article uses Open Journal Systems 3.5.0.0

Published by <https://ojs.ucp.ac.id>

INTRODUCTION

Good governance emphasizes transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and broad citizen participation in public decision-making processes. Public participation is considered a fundamental principle of democratic governance because it enables communities to influence policies that directly affect their lives and ensures that government actions reflect local needs and priorities (United Nations, 2020; Fung, 2015). In the context of village governance, decentralization and village autonomy provide opportunities for citizens to engage actively in planning and budgeting processes through village deliberations, public consultations, and other participatory mechanisms. Such participation contributes to improving public services, strengthening accountability, and fostering trust between citizens and government

institutions (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). Consequently, participatory governance has become an essential component of sustainable rural development and democratic local administration.

In Indonesia, the enactment of village autonomy has provided broader authority for villages to formulate development priorities and manage public resources. Village governments are expected to implement participatory planning mechanisms that involve various social groups and ensure inclusive representation. According to Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015), citizen participation not only enhances policy legitimacy but also promotes collective learning and strengthens social capital within communities. In Desa Dua Boccoe, participatory forums theoretically provide citizens with opportunities to express aspirations regarding development priorities and budget allocations. Through village meetings and consultative mechanisms, communities are expected to contribute to decision-making processes and ensure that village budgets address public needs. However, the effectiveness of such mechanisms depends significantly on the capacity and readiness of citizens to engage actively in governance processes.

Despite the existence of participatory institutions, community involvement in budgeting and planning processes in Desa Dua Boccoe remains relatively limited. One of the major constraints concerns the low level of human resource capacity among community members. Many citizens possess limited knowledge regarding planning mechanisms, budget formulation procedures, and policy priorities. This lack of public literacy often discourages citizens from expressing their aspirations effectively and reduces their ability to influence decision-making processes. Similar findings have been reported by Quick and Bryson (2016), who argue that meaningful participation requires adequate knowledge, communication skills, and institutional support. Without sufficient understanding of policy documents and administrative procedures, participation tends to become symbolic rather than substantive. Consequently, only a small number of active individuals or groups are able to shape policy outcomes, while the majority of citizens remain passive observers.

Another challenge relates to the limited efforts of village authorities in providing training and capacity-building programs. Educational workshops, public policy literacy programs, and budget advocacy training are rarely conducted, leaving citizens with insufficient competencies to participate confidently in formal planning processes. According to Innes and Booher (2018), collaborative governance requires continuous learning and capacity enhancement to ensure equal participation among stakeholders. In Desa Dua Boccoe, inadequate dissemination of information and limited access to planning documents further contribute to unequal participation. Consequently, citizens with stronger social networks and closer relationships with village officials tend to dominate discussions and influence policy priorities. Such conditions create disparities in representation and weaken the inclusiveness of participatory governance.

The situation reflects a significant gap between the theoretical principles of good governance and their practical implementation. Participatory governance should not merely provide procedural opportunities for citizens to attend meetings but should also empower communities to engage effectively in decision-making processes. Therefore, strengthening community capacity through education, training, and structured assistance becomes essential. Capacity-building programs can improve citizens' abilities to understand planning documents, formulate proposals, and communicate their aspirations systematically. Such efforts are expected to transform public participation from symbolic involvement into a substantive mechanism capable of influencing village policies and promoting social justice (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2016).

The urgency of improving public participation in Desa Dua Boccoe becomes even more evident when considering the village's geographical and infrastructural conditions. Accessibility remains one of the major barriers preventing citizens from participating actively in planning and budgeting activities. Inadequate road infrastructure limits mobility, particularly for residents living in remote hamlets. Difficult transportation conditions often

reduce attendance at village meetings and restrict the representation of marginalized groups in policy discussions. This phenomenon corresponds with findings by OECD (2019), which emphasize that spatial inequalities and inadequate infrastructure frequently hinder inclusive governance and limit equal access to public services.

Digital accessibility represents another significant challenge. Unequal telecommunication networks and limited internet connectivity have created information gaps among residents. Citizens living near the village center are more likely to access information regarding planning forums and government programs, whereas those residing in remote areas often experience difficulties obtaining relevant information. The digital divide thus affects the ability of communities to monitor policies and provide feedback. According to the World Bank (2021), disparities in digital infrastructure contribute to unequal participation and hinder the development of inclusive governance systems. In addition, limited public lighting infrastructure in several parts of the village restricts social activities and reduces citizens' willingness to participate in community meetings, especially during evening hours.

These conditions indicate that the challenges of participation in Desa Dua Boccoe extend beyond issues of awareness and human resource capacity. Participation is also influenced by physical accessibility, communication infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities. Consequently, improving roads, expanding telecommunication networks, and enhancing public facilities are strategic interventions necessary for strengthening participatory governance. Such initiatives are expected to ensure broader community representation and promote equitable access to decision-making processes. Strengthening both social and physical infrastructure is therefore essential for establishing an inclusive and sustainable governance system that reflects the aspirations and needs of all citizens in Desa Dua Boccoe.

Overall, the development of participatory governance in Desa Dua Boccoe requires comprehensive efforts involving community empowerment, institutional strengthening, and infrastructure improvement. Participation should be understood not merely as attendance in formal meetings but as an active process through which citizens contribute meaningfully to policy formulation and public resource allocation. Through capacity building, improved accessibility, and stronger institutional support, village governance can become more transparent, accountable, and responsive. Ultimately, strengthening citizen participation represents a strategic pathway toward achieving democratic governance and sustainable rural development in Desa Dua Boccoe.

METHOD

This community service activity in Dua Boccoe Village adopted a participatory approach that emphasizes the active involvement of community members throughout all stages of implementation, ranging from problem identification to evaluation and follow-up actions. Participatory approaches are widely recognized as effective mechanisms for strengthening community empowerment and promoting inclusive governance because they position citizens not merely as beneficiaries but also as actors involved in decision-making processes (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Cornwall, 2016). Initial activities involved field observations and needs assessments to understand the socio-economic and infrastructural conditions of the village, including road accessibility, telecommunication networks, and public lighting facilities. Such assessments are essential for ensuring that interventions correspond to local needs and contextual realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the relatively low capacity of community members in planning and budgeting processes, the program emphasized capacity building through educational workshops and practical training. These activities covered village development planning mechanisms, village budgeting procedures, policy advocacy, public monitoring techniques, and digital literacy to facilitate access to planning documents and government information systems. Capacity-building programs are considered fundamental for enhancing citizen competence and promoting meaningful participation in

governance processes (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Innes & Booher, 2018). Throughout the implementation, lecturers and university students served as facilitators and mentors who assisted residents in preparing development proposals, analyzing Village Budget (APBDes) allocations, and understanding mechanisms for monitoring public programs. Assistance was provided through group discussions, household visits, community meetings, and interactive learning sessions, thereby creating opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaborative learning among participants (Quick & Bryson, 2016).

The implementation strategy also employed a collaborative governance framework involving multiple stakeholders, including village governments, village officials, community organizations, local NGOs, academics, university students, and citizen groups. Collaborative approaches have been shown to improve the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of community development programs by fostering shared responsibility and collective problem-solving (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014). Community participation was strengthened through public forums and deliberative discussions, enabling residents to articulate priorities and contribute to policy recommendations. To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, participatory evaluation techniques were employed, including citizen satisfaction surveys, focus group discussions, reflective meetings, and documentation of advocacy activities. Participatory evaluation enables communities to assess outcomes collectively and generate recommendations for improving future programs (Patton, 2015). Documentation and field notes were also utilized to capture changes in community awareness, participation patterns, and institutional relationships. Through this approach, the program sought not only to enhance citizens' capacities but also to cultivate a participatory culture and strengthen democratic governance at the village level. Consequently, the community service activities were designed to produce sustainable impacts by empowering citizens to become active participants in planning, budgeting, and monitoring village development programs, thereby contributing to transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance in Dua Boccoe Village (United Nations, 2020; OECD, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this community engagement program demonstrate that participatory approaches combined with community capacity building can significantly strengthen citizens' involvement in village planning and budgeting processes. The establishment of the Dua Boccoe Mandiri Group represents one of the most important outcomes, serving as a collaborative platform where villagers from diverse backgrounds—including farmers, entrepreneurs, teachers, students, and community activists—can discuss development priorities and formulate collective aspirations. Such diversity contributes to a more inclusive decision-making process and supports the principles of participatory governance. According to Nabatchi and Leighninger (2015), broad citizen participation enhances democratic quality and enables public policies to better reflect community needs. Similarly, collaborative governance emphasizes the importance of interactions among multiple stakeholders in addressing public issues and improving policy outcomes (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015).

The capacity-building activities implemented through workshops and training sessions were found to improve villagers' understanding of village planning mechanisms and budget allocation processes. Prior to the program, many residents had limited knowledge regarding the preparation of development proposals and the interpretation of village budget documents. Following the intervention, community members demonstrated greater competence in identifying priority issues and presenting realistic development proposals. These findings support the argument of Innes and Booher (2018), who emphasize that social learning and collective capacity development are essential foundations for effective participatory governance. Academic facilitators, particularly lecturers and university

students, played a critical role in transferring knowledge and strengthening citizens' practical abilities to engage in development planning processes.

Another important finding concerns the changing relationship between villagers and local government officials. Initially, public participation tended to be procedural and dominated by a limited number of actors. However, continuous dialogue and advocacy promoted through this program encouraged village authorities to become more receptive to citizens' inputs. Several community proposals, including improvements in street lighting, clean water facilities, and agricultural equipment, were incorporated into village development priorities. This finding confirms Fung's (2015) argument that citizen participation enhances transparency, accountability, and policy legitimacy. Public participation, therefore, evolved from a symbolic activity into a substantive mechanism that influences local policy formulation and implementation.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the program contributed to the emergence of a more participatory civic culture within Desa Dua Boccoe. Residents who had previously been reluctant to express their opinions became increasingly active in village forums and public discussions. Through facilitative approaches, participants developed communication, negotiation, and analytical skills that enabled them to engage more confidently with public institutions. Cornwall (2016) argues that meaningful participation should empower citizens and transform power relations between governments and communities. The experience in Dua Boccoe indicates that empowerment processes can foster critical awareness and strengthen democratic practices at the village level.

Despite these achievements, several structural constraints continue to limit the effectiveness of community participation. Inadequate road infrastructure, geographical barriers, limited public lighting, and unequal access to telecommunications have reduced villagers' opportunities to attend meetings and obtain information regarding village development agendas. Such findings suggest that participation is influenced not only by human resource capacity but also by physical and digital accessibility. The OECD (2019) highlights that infrastructure inequality and information gaps remain significant barriers to inclusive governance and citizen engagement in rural areas. Consequently, strengthening community participation requires parallel investments in infrastructure development and digital connectivity.

The study also identified different motivations underlying citizens' involvement. Some participants were primarily oriented toward community empowerment and collective learning, while others focused on economic benefits or on monitoring public policies and preventing misuse of village resources. Rather than creating conflict, these different orientations enriched deliberative processes and enabled the integration of diverse perspectives into decision-making. This observation supports Dryzek's (2016) theory of deliberative democracy, which emphasizes that pluralism and diversity contribute to the quality and legitimacy of public decisions.

Overall, the results indicate that the integration of participatory approaches, community education, and academic facilitation can generate meaningful changes in local governance structures. The emergence of the Dua Boccoe Mandiri Group illustrates the potential for building an active and empowered community capable of advocating for public interests and monitoring village budgets. Although participatory institutions are still evolving, the foundations for democratic, transparent, and inclusive governance have begun to take shape. These findings reinforce previous studies suggesting that community empowerment and continuous assistance are effective strategies for strengthening local democracy and promoting sustainable development (United Nations, 2020; Ansell & Torfing, 2016). Therefore, the experience of Desa Dua Boccoe may serve as a valuable model for other rural communities facing similar challenges related to limited human resources and inadequate infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

This community engagement program demonstrates that participatory approaches supported by capacity building and academic facilitation can significantly enhance citizens' involvement in village planning and budgeting processes. The establishment of the Dua Boccoe Mandiri Group provided a platform for collective learning, dialogue, and advocacy, enabling villagers to participate more actively in decision-making and development planning. Training and mentoring activities improved residents' understanding of village governance, strengthened their ability to formulate proposals, and encouraged greater accountability and transparency within local government institutions.

The findings also reveal that meaningful participation extends beyond individual awareness and competence, as it is strongly influenced by structural factors such as infrastructure quality, digital connectivity, and access to information. Although several challenges remain, particularly in remote areas, the program succeeded in fostering a more participatory culture and strengthening relationships between citizens and village authorities. Therefore, sustainable community empowerment, continuous assistance, and improvements in physical and digital infrastructure are essential to building democratic, inclusive, and responsive village governance. The experience of Desa Dua Boccoe offers valuable lessons for other rural communities seeking to strengthen local democracy and promote equitable and sustainable development.

REFERENCES

- Ansell, C., & Torfing, J. (2016). *Handbook on theories of governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Bloomberg, L. (2014). Public value governance: Moving beyond traditional public administration and the new public management. *Public Administration Review*, 74(4), 445–456.
- Cornwall, A. (2016). Unpacking participation: Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*, 51(2), 269–283.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2016). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics, contestations*. Oxford University Press.
- Emerson, K., & Nabatchi, T. (2015). *Collaborative governance regimes*. Georgetown University Press.
- Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 513–522.
- Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2018). *Planning with complexity: An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Nabatchi, T., & Leighninger, M. (2015). *Public participation for 21st century democracy*. Jossey-Bass.
- OECD. (2019). *Making decentralisation work: A handbook for policy-makers*. OECD Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

Quick, K. S., & Bryson, J. M. (2016). Theories of public participation in governance. In C. Ansell & J. Torfing (Eds.), *Handbook on theories of governance* (pp. 158-169). Edward Elgar Publishing.

United Nations. (2020). *World public sector report 2020: Institutions for the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.