

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VILLAGE FUND POLICY IN SIGI REGENCY, CENTRAL SULAWESI PROVINCE

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand and analyze the implementation of the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. The research method employed is purposive sampling, which involves selecting nine respondents, comprising three government officials and six village representatives. The sample area consisted of three villages, which served as research locations. The research instruments included interview guidelines, data collection through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The analysis technique used is qualitative descriptive. The results of this study indicate that the real conditions in the field suggest that the implementation of the Village Fund in Sigi Regency, based on the three villages that received the funds, is more focused on village infrastructure programs rather than community empowerment programs. Human resources are minimal and lack experience in managing village funds. The role of the Village Representative Body (BPD), which is the government's partner, is underutilized. In conclusion, the implementation of the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency is effective in terms of the interests affected, the degree of desired change, decision-making locations, and the type of benefits.

**Keywords:** Policy Content; Policy Context; Village Fund Policy

### INTRODUCTION

The Village Fund (Dana Desa) policy is clearly outlined in Law No. 6 of 2014. This law provides villages with the opportunity to rise and develop independently, thereby achieving welfare and improving the quality of life for rural communities. The Village Fund policy aims to enhance village self-reliance and strengthen village autonomy. One of the key urgencies of the Village Fund is to position villages as the foundation of decentralization. This policy serves as a vital instrument to promote community participation. It provides a platform for the community and village governance stakeholders—such as the Village Government (Pemdes) and the Village Representative Body (BPD)—to establish a government that is responsive to the needs and interests of the people.

This policy is important for three reasons: *First*. Most of Indonesia's population lives in rural areas. *Second*. Rural communities are organized as self-governing legal entities. *Third*. Decentralization at the village level will enhance the village's functions in accordance with the needs of its community. According to Government Regulation No. 22 of 2015, which amends Government Regulation No. 60 of 2014 on Village Funds sourced from the State Budget, Article 11 states that the allocation of Village Funds for each regency/municipality is calculated based on the number of villages within the respective regency/municipality.

The Village Fund is allocated fairly based on the following criteria:

1. Basic allocation.
2. Allocation calculated by considering the population size, poverty rate, land area, and the level of geographical difficulty of each village within the respective regency/municipality.
3. The level of geographical difficulty refers to the construction cost index.
4. Demographic and related data refer to sources provided by the relevant ministry and/or the agency responsible for government affairs in the field of statistics.

Pursuant to Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 113 of 2014 on Village Finance and Sigi Regent Regulation No. 9 of 2021 on the Procedures for the Distribution and Determination of Village Fund Details, village finances shall be managed based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation, and shall be implemented in an orderly and fiscally disciplined manner.

Transparency is a principle of openness that allows the community to access and obtain comprehensive information regarding village finances. In this context, transparency is demonstrated through open Village Deliberation Meetings (Musdes), which involve community representatives, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and various community groups in determining the priority use of Village Funds in Sigi Regency. Accountability is reflected in the monitoring and supervision carried out by the Sigi Regency Government. Such oversight is conducted to ensure that the implementation of Village Fund programs aligns with the established performance targets and objectives. Participation refers to the community's involvement in decision-making processes during the preparation and determination of the Village Budget (APBDesa). This ensures that villagers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the budgeting process. Examples of community participation include cooperation (*gotong royong*) and self-help initiatives (*swadaya masyarakat*) in the implementation of physical development projects. Orderliness and budget discipline mean that financial management must be carried out in a timely, efficient, and purposeful manner, supported by verifiable administrative documentation, and implemented in accordance with applicable regulations.

Following up on Law No. 3 of 2024, which amends Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, and Minister of Finance Regulation No. 49 of 2016 regarding the procedures for allocation, distribution, use, monitoring, and evaluation of village funds, the Sigi Regency Government has established a policy by issuing Sigi Regent Regulation No. 9 of 2021 on the procedures for the distribution and determination of village fund details. This policy is expected to enhance the financial capacity of villages, thereby improving the implementation of village development, particularly in areas such as basic infrastructure, community development, and village community empowerment. Furthermore, with the implementation of the Village Fund policy, it is expected to reduce poverty and unemployment rates in Sigi Regency significantly. The Village Fund is integrated into the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget, thus making a tangible contribution to the financial capacity of villages.

Sigi Regency now has 176 villages, which are integral to the implementation of the national Village Fund policy. This policy must be implemented to support governance activities and community empowerment, as an effort to alleviate poverty in the villages. In principle, the implementation of the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency focuses on four main areas: governance administration, development implementation, community guidance, and community empowerment. These activities, which directly involve the community, require funding to carry out their duties in governance, development, and social affairs. However, since the policy was enacted in Sigi Regency, its implementation has not met public expectations. Empirical evidence suggests that some village heads have been arrested by law enforcement for misusing Village Funds, including fictitious activities, price markups, inflated quantities, fictitious expenditures, a lack of accountability reports, and the use of funds for personal or group interests. This indicates a need for improvement and increased professionalism among village officials.

Furthermore, in the context of the Village Fund, the implementation has not fully met the community's expectations, or in other words, there is still public doubt regarding the policy's execution based on data obtained during field observations. The Sigi Regency Inspectorate found allegations of budget misappropriation, and its inspection team discovered instances of misuse of the Village Fund. Therefore, the Sigi Regency Government needs to anticipate this situation and provide policy solutions to village officials and the community, serving as a lesson to comply with the policies issued by the Sigi Regency Government.

Therefore, the Village Fund policy is more appropriately studied using a top-down approach. According to Merille S. Grindlee (1980), the top-down approach in policy analysis is most suitable when the primary focus is on how policies are designed, implemented, and controlled by authorities with the proper mandate, in this case, the central or regional government. The top-down approach is also relevant because the focus of the study can be directed toward assessing the level of compliance, coordination, and effectiveness of implementers in carrying out policies formulated by policymakers at the central level. Through this approach, researchers can evaluate the extent to which the Village Fund Policy has been implemented in accordance with its original design and objectives, as well as identify potential bureaucratic obstacles that may arise at the local level.

The Village Fund policy, which is centralized and regulated by laws and government regulations, demonstrates a hierarchical decision-making process from the top down, where the central or regional government sets the rules, allocates funds, and establishes supervision mechanisms that the villages must carry out. Moreover, the top-down approach enables a more in-depth analysis of the policy formulation process, including legal and administrative instruments, as well as the obstacles and challenges that arise during the policy's implementation. This is crucial to ensure that the Village Fund policy can be executed consistently and in accordance with its objectives, such as enhancing village financial capacity and developing village infrastructure. This phenomenon motivates the author to explore, particularly the implementation of the Village Fund policy, which has a direct impact on the quality of life in the community.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to describe and summarize various conditions, situations, and ways in which social phenomena occur. It seeks to bring these realities to light as characteristics, traits, signs, or depictions of specific conditions or phenomena. The rationale for using a qualitative approach lies in its ability to uncover hidden aspects behind the phenomena observed in policy implementation. Qualitative research essentially involves observing individuals in their natural environment, integrating with them, and attempting to understand their language and interpretations of the surrounding world (Nasution, 2006).

The use of a qualitative approach in this study provides in-depth and accurate information that supports the interpretation process of the data collected. Qualitative research is used to analyze and describe phenomena related to the object of study, the implementation of the Village Fund Policy in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. Through qualitative methods, the researcher can identify research subjects and gain an understanding of the experiences of communities in their daily lives as they relate to the Village Fund policy in the region.

By employing a qualitative approach, the researcher seeks to comprehend the hidden aspects of the phenomenon that may be challenging to recognize or interpret, while providing detailed explanations that cannot be fully conveyed through quantitative methods. This approach, particularly through a phenomenological method, is expected to generate reformulations and conceptualizations related to the implementation of the Village Fund Policy in Sigi Regency, thereby bridging both the perspectives of the subjects (the community) and that of the researcher. As such, the study aims to develop hypothetical propositions (models) through the interaction of attributes and properties used to construct categories and explain the phenomenon under investigation.

### Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources. *First*, primary sources are those that directly provide data to the researcher. *Second*, secondary sources refer to data obtained indirectly, such as from documents or third parties.

In terms of data collection methods, the researcher employed the following techniques:

1. Observation. Used to obtain empirical information and a real-time picture of the object of study through direct observation. The researcher observed the implementation of the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency.
2. Literature Review (Study of Documents). This involves reviewing books, theories, and concepts related to the research problem, as well as studying documents and materials relevant to the Village Fund policy.

3. In-Depth Interviews. Data and information were collected through direct, purposively selected interviews. This technique is used to gather more profound insights into the object and focus of the study. The interviews were guided by an interview protocol that included open-ended questions, allowing informants the freedom to express their views. Supporting tools such as notebooks and recording devices (tape recorders and handycams) were also used to document observations and interviews.
4. Documentation. This included examining written materials such as reference books and official documents related to the research objectives.

Data was analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach, in line with the type of research conducted. Through this method, the researcher sought to provide explanations and uncover meaning from the data, placing the research subject as a meaningful contributor to the factual conditions being studied. Data analysis followed the steps outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consist of:

1. Data condensation – selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data.
2. Data display – organizing and presenting the data to enable conclusion drawing.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification – interpreting the findings and checking for validity.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation of the Village Fund Policy in Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi Province**

#### **Policy Content**

#### **1. Affected Interests)**

The content of the policy reflects the interests that are directly or indirectly affected by the implementation of the Village Fund policy. In the context of Sigi Regency, the Village Fund policy has a significant influence on several stakeholder groups, including village governments, Village Consultative Bodies (BPD), community members, and other local institutions.

The primary objective of the policy—to improve the welfare of rural communities through development and empowerment—directly touches the daily lives of residents. The policy affects how resources are allocated, how decisions are made at the village level, and how community needs are addressed. Thus, the Village Fund policy plays a critical role in shifting power dynamics, promoting community participation, and fostering local autonomy in development planning and execution.

Based on field research findings, the implementation of the Village Fund policy, which was disbursed in Sigi Regency, has not yet been effective in addressing the affected interests. This is evident in the policy's content, which still faces issues, particularly the fact that the Village Fund policy has not fully accommodated the interests of various community groups. Most of the funded activities have focused on infrastructure development, such as the

construction of village roads, village offices, and sports fields. The following is an explanation in tabular form.

**Table 1.** Field Findings on the Effectiveness of Village Fund Policy Implementation in Sigi Regency

| Analytical Dimension<br>(Grindle, 1980) | Observed Findings (Field<br>Data, Sigi Regency)  | Interpretation  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Content of Policy</b>                | Policy priorities emphasize physical infrastructure development (roads, offices, sports fields). | Indicates a limited policy scope that prioritizes visible physical outputs over social and economic empowerment |

What is desired is that the Village Fund program should serve the broader interests of the community, not only by supporting infrastructure development but also by prioritizing community empowerment programs. The current emphasis on physical infrastructure overlooks the essential goal of the Village Fund, which is to enhance the well-being and self-sufficiency of the community through empowerment initiatives.

Based on the research findings, this was confirmed by the Office of Community and Village Empowerment, which revealed differing perceptions regarding the purpose of the Village Fund program. Some view it primarily as a means to develop infrastructure and public service facilities. In contrast, others see it as a tool to empower and improve the local economy in the village.

This difference in perception regarding the program's objectives has led to a greater focus on village infrastructure development, rather than on community empowerment or economic development initiatives.

Based on research findings in the three villages studied, the implementation of the Village Fund policy has been predominantly focused on the village development sector, particularly on infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, and retaining walls (talud). In contrast, the allocation for community empowerment programs remains relatively minor, such as for the development of village-owned enterprises (BUMDes). This was conveyed by a community member, Mr. Rudi, who stated during an interview: "With the national Village Fund program disbursed by the central government, most of it has been directed toward village infrastructure development. Meanwhile, community empowerment programs—such as poverty alleviation through capital investment for local economic development—have not been fully implemented."

In connection with the above, it can be concluded that the central government's Village Fund program is fundamentally designed to address rural challenges by supporting both infrastructure development and community empowerment initiatives. Furthermore, in practice, these two program components should be implemented concurrently, as both are equally critical in fostering rural economic growth. Continuous innovation and optimization, particularly in the rural economic sector, are crucial to ensuring sustainable development and delivering long-term benefits to the community.

## **2. Type of benefits**

In relation to the benefits derived from implementing the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency, the factor analyzed using Grindle's theory focuses on identifying and explaining the benefits perceived by the target beneficiaries of the policy implementation. This aspect aims to evaluate the extent to which the policy has yielded tangible benefits for the intended community groups and whether the outcomes align with the original objectives of the Village Fund program.

The significant benefits felt by the community have led to broad acceptance of the Village Fund policy, without visible resistance to its implementation. These perceived benefits include the development of infrastructure as well as various facilities and amenities in the village.

When the community experiences real benefits from policy implementation, it tends to generate support for the policy itself. This support contributes to smoother implementation, free from resistance by individuals or targeted groups. As stated by Mrs. Siti Hadijah, S.Hut, Head of Village Structuring and Development Division, during an interview: "The benefits of the Village Fund implementation in Sigi Regency, particularly in the village infrastructure programs, have not fully met the actual needs. Ideally, the Village Fund should improve productivity and enhance the quality of life in villages—for example, through the construction of village markets, irrigation channels, bridges, and rural roads."

In another important aspect, village officials must also pay greater attention to community empowerment programs, which are considered highly beneficial and essential for advancing rural development. Such programs are seen as crucial in building competitive and self-reliant communities.

To measure the success of implementing the Village Fund policy, Regent Regulation of Sigi Regency Number 7 of 2017, concerning the procedures for distributing and determining Village Fund allocations, serves as the primary reference. This regulation outlines the objectives of the Village Fund as follows: improved community welfare, enhanced basic public services, increased community capacity and capability, advancement of the village economy, and reduction of poverty and unemployment rates.

### **Improved community welfare.**

Regarding the use of Village Funds to improve community welfare, the informants provided similar statements as expressed by Mr. Rahmat Saleh, who expressed his gratitude for the existence of the Village Fund. He stated: "Alhamdulillah, Sibedi Village is a newly established village, and we truly feel the benefits of the Village Fund, especially in terms of infrastructure development within the village." The Village Fund has significantly aided the Village Government in financing village infrastructure projects, particularly for the construction of the village office and village roads, to enhance the community's welfare.

Based on the interview above, the use of Village Funds has been primarily directed toward village infrastructure development, which has supported increased production and improved access to agricultural areas—such as the construction of village roads, bridges, and farm roads.

### **Enhanced basic public services**

Interview results with informants regarding the use of Village Funds to improve basic services revealed consistent information. As stated by Mr. Rahmat Saleh: “To my knowledge, Village Funds have been used for infrastructure facilities, including the construction, rehabilitation, upgrading, and reinforcement of settlement access roads, village road infrastructure, and village public facilities.”

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the Village Funds have been utilized for the construction, rehabilitation, upgrading, and reinforcement of settlement roads, village road infrastructure, village public facilities, and for community empowerment programs.

### **Increased capacity and capability of the community**

Since receiving Village Funds sourced from the State Budget (APBN), village development has been more focused on infrastructure, public facilities, and village utilities. Based on an interview with Mr. Rahmat Saleh, he stated: “Since I took office as Village Head, development in the village has been directed primarily toward infrastructure projects, particularly road construction. This is because road access is the most urgent need for the community—to prevent flooding and to open access to agricultural and plantation production areas. The implementation of these projects is carried out through community-based self-management.”

### **Advancement of the village economy**

The development of village economic potential and resources should ideally be encouraged as a means to improve community income and economic conditions. However, based on the author’s interviews with informants or respondents, it was found that the use of village funds for economic development in Sibedi Village has not been optimal. Mr. Rahmat Saleh, who said:

*"So far, efforts to develop the economy have been made, but there have been obstacles. All business capital has been provided, but the businesses did not take off. Therefore, we plan to allocate business capital again next year to the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDES), along with training programs for small-scale industries."*

Similarly, the Chairman of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), Mr. Amin, stated: *"Village infrastructure development indirectly facilitates the local economy, but it would be better if there were specific programs for community empowerment, particularly in economic development"*.



Based on the interviews above, it can be concluded that the village fund program has primarily focused on infrastructure development, while the community empowerment sector has not been optimized. This is evidenced by the persistent challenges in providing business capital to the BUMDES.

### **Reduction of poverty and unemployment rates**

One of the main objectives of the Village Fund program is to reduce poverty and unemployment in rural areas. To assess the effectiveness of this objective, the author interviewed with the Village Head, Mr. Rahmat Saleh, who stated: *"Through the Village Fund, all work programs are implemented using a self-management approach involving the residents of Sibedi Village. As a result, unemployment and poverty can naturally be addressed, as villagers earn additional income through wages from various types of work."*

A similar statement was conveyed by the Chairman of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), Mr. Amin, who said:

*"As the Chairman of the BPD, I believe that Village Fund activities should indeed involve the employment of residents in village development projects".*

This statement was further confirmed by the Head of the Village Structuring and Development Division, Ms. Siti Hadijah, S. HUT, who said:

*"Various programs and activities funded by the Village Fund are carried out by the community through a self-managed approach, thereby naturally reducing unemployment and increasing income for the villagers themselves".*

Based on the statements from the informants, it can be concluded that the policy objectives of the Village Fund in reducing poverty and unemployment have been achieved, as every job and activity in the village involves the local community, who, in turn, receive additional income from these employment opportunities.

### **Policy Context**

#### **1. The power, interests, and strategies of the actors involved**

Indicators of power, interests, and strategies of the relevant actors are one of the components in Grindle's policy implementation theory, which is categorized within the policy context. This theory focuses on the realist perspective that policy implementation is ultimately a process involving multiple actors. These actors include the Head of the Department of Village Community Empowerment (PMD), the Village Head, and the Village Consultative Body (BPD).

Regarding the power of actors involved in the implementation of the Village Fund policy, based on an interview with a community leader, Mr. Rudi, he stated:

*"The Department of Community and Village Empowerment must encourage the community to play an active role in the implementation of the Village Fund, starting*

from the village deliberation in each village, so that all village needs can be accommodated during the deliberation process."

In relation to the above, based on field research findings, it is established that village development fundamentally requires several key strategies: a participatory approach, building synergy among actors for the implementation of the Village Law, efforts to develop the local economy, and accelerating the distribution and utilization of village funds to stimulate the real economic sector of the village.

## **2. Institution and Regime Characteristics)**

Indicators of institutional characteristics and regimes can be understood in the context of achieving organizational goals, as well as in the reality where officials face challenges concerning the interaction between programs and program administration.

Regarding technical implementation, the party responsible is the technical executor, namely the Department of Community Empowerment (BPMD). Institutional characteristics and authority correspond to the duties and functions of each relevant village apparatus in carrying out their responsibilities in managing the village fund. Each village official certainly has their own role in implementing the village fund policy.

Based on an interview with the Head of the Village Governance Division, Mr. Ruli Yanto E. Sipanawa, S. Sos, M. AP, stated:

*"Institutional issues are indeed important because they serve as prerequisites for village governments to receive assistance from any source. For example, Village Funds cannot be received without being accompanied by the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM-Desa) and the Village Government Work Plan (RKP-Desa). The preparation of these two work plans must follow established mechanisms, starting at the hamlet level with Hamlet Deliberations (Musyawarah Dusun), followed by Village Deliberations (Musyawarah Desa), and so forth. Registered and institutionalized individuals or entities also attend each planning stage. Not just anyone or any institution can participate in the planning activities, and not everyone is required to take part".*

The use of Village Funds is regulated explicitly in Government Regulation Number 60 of 2014 concerning Village Funds. Article 20 states that the use of Village Funds must be in accordance with the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM-Desa) and the Village Government Work Plan (RKP-Desa). Both plans must be institutionalized as regulatory frameworks bind them. The above explanation indicates that institutional aspects are not only important but also mandatory.

## **3. Compliance and responsiveness" (Institution and Regime Characteristics)**

Indicators of compliance and responsiveness are other aspects of policy implementation, which, in Grindle's conceptual framework, are categorized within the

context of policy implementation. Ideally, public institutions—such as the bureaucracy—must be responsive to the needs of the stakeholders who are expected to benefit from the policy, as part of the effort to provide the best possible service.

This is in line with the statement made during an interview with Section Head Mr. Muhamad Iqbal Faisal, S.STP, M.Si, who said:

*"The implementation of the Village Fund policy is a policy of the Sigi Regency Government that must be responsive to the needs of the beneficiaries, namely the people of Sigi. Their role as the main target of policy implementation is crucial for ensuring the smooth execution of all planned activities".*

Compliance and responsiveness in the implementation of a policy—both from the officials responsible for the policy and from the community as its target beneficiaries—are crucial for ensuring the smooth execution of planned activities, thereby enabling the achievement of the intended objectives.

In relation to the compliance and responsiveness of the government bureaucracy in the implementation of the Village Fund, this can be observed through the consistent enforcement of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, as well as the Regent Regulation concerning the procedures for the allocation and determination of Village Funds, including sanctions for violations of the law and the Regent Regulation. Meanwhile, the compliance and responsiveness of community groups in implementing the Village Fund are reflected in their participatory engagement in village deliberations (*musyawarah desa*).

Based on an interview with the Head of the Department of Community and Village Empowerment, Mr. Mohamad Ambar Mahmud, S.STP, M.Si, he stated:

*"The compliance and responsiveness of village officials regarding the Village Fund must be optimal. This is evident in how they identify the actual needs of the village and implement policies that directly contribute to the community's welfare. Our department holds the main duties and functions of formulating technical policies and facilitating the implementation of community empowerment and village governance programs, including the technical execution of Village Fund policies in Sigi Regency as mandated by law and the Regent's regulations.*

In line with the above, field observations indicate that the Department of Community and Village Empowerment plays a crucial role in supporting the Regent in exercising regional authority and fulfilling delegated duties, particularly in formulating policies related to village structuring and enhancing the capacity of village governance. This aligns with Smet (2004:250), who emphasized that compliance involves a person's adherence to regulations or recommended behaviors.

From this perspective, the department prioritizes two key aspects related to its primary duties and functions in village governance. The Village Fund policy, as one of the flagship policies of the Sigi Regency Government, falls under the responsibility of the Department of Community and Village Empowerment. Therefore, every decision related to

the activities under this policy is the responsibility of the local government, supported by teams established at the regency, sub-district, and village levels.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and in addressing the issues surrounding the implementation of the Village Fund policy in the administration of development in Sigi Regency, the analysis refers to Grindle's theory, which includes two major dimensions: policy content and policy context. The implementation of the Village Fund policy in Sigi Regency has been effective in terms of the following aspects: the interests affected, the degree of change desired, the location of decision-making, and the type of benefits delivered. However, the implementation has not been fully effective in terms of program activities and the resources involved. The program activities have tended to focus more on village infrastructure development than on community empowerment. As for the human resources involved—particularly village officials and members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD)—many possess only junior or senior high school education and, in most cases, lack the experience required to manage village funds effectively. Based on empirical findings, this research presents a novel insight: that the implementation of policy based on Merilee S. Grindle's model or theory could be significantly enhanced by incorporating the human resource aspect. In other words, the inclusion of both soft skills and hard skills as resource components would make the implementation of the Village Fund policy considerably more effective.

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