

# The Relevance of the Implementation of the Merdeka Program (Developing Villages for Community Welfare): Case Study of 19 Assisted Villages in Sumbawa Regency

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**Abstract:-** This study aims to determine the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program to village development as an effort to improve welfare and quality of life. The research was conducted in 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency. The variables that will be raised in this study include the level of relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program, namely: 1). Village characteristics and rankings before and after the implementation of the independence program, and 2). The level of achievement of the main programs of the Merdeka Program, namely OVOP, Cultural Village, Tourism Village, Digital Village and Administrative Neat Village on village development in 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency, then the research method uses surveys while the sample is taken by purposive sampling. Based on the survey results, it is shown that the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program has resulted in developing, developed and independent villages in 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency. Even villages that were previously said to be very backward after the merdeka program, the status of the village resulted in an independent village. The level of achievement of the main program of the merdeka program for development in 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency has reached good or even very good.

**Keywords:-** Merdeka Program, Village Community Welfare.

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the problems that become a challenge for village development is the low welfare and low quality of life. Many government programs have been carried out to encourage village development and usually the programs that are rolled out are still in the generation of providing physical assistance to the community. Both in the form of irrigation facilities, construction of clean water facilities and so on. In fact, when the program ends, the output of the program does not work or even disappears. In addition to the problems above, there are other issues that are more important, namely a very sectoral development paradigm. Each institution or ministry has a program for the village

according to its affairs, regardless of the regional dimension and synchronization with other sectors.

Tarigan argues that development programs should be a combination of a sector approach and a regional approach [13]. Similarly, Lewis stated that the development of a region will stagnate if only one sector is developed [8]. This means that the success of development is an effort to integrate various sectors in a certain area. This integration requires integrated management and cooperation between the stakeholders involved. So that building a village is a multi- dimensional process and involves all stakeholders who work together. Village development is a process of responding to the three village environments (natural, cultural and socio- economic) in an appropriate way [2].

The causes that affect this are: 1). Inaccuracy between community needs and assistance provided, 2). The program package is not equipped with supporting skills, 3). There are no planned monitoring activities, 4). There is no program continuity. Basically, to improve village development, an integrated effort of involvement by all elements in the region is needed, not only the natural potential of the village. As stated by Sitompul [11], community development and rural area development involve various social, economic, cultural, and technological factors that interact with each other in the development process. Because every development offers change, the impact on one region with another may be different, because the character of one region is different from another. By involving those who influence village development, it is hoped that village development goals will be achieved both in the short and long term. As stated by Adisasmita [1], the objectives of village development can be seen in terms of the short and long term. In the short term, it is to increase effectiveness and efficiency in economic activities and the utilization of human and natural resources, then for the long term, it is to improve the welfare of rural communities directly through increasing job opportunities, business opportunities and income based on the approach to community development, business development and human development. and

indirectly is laying a solid foundation for national development.

To support the successful implementation of village development, a sustainable program is needed that brings rural communities to improve their welfare and quality of life. One of the appropriate programs to support village development is the merdeka program and one component of the merdeka program is village development. The program is a derivative program of the merdeka campus learning policy based on the policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The campus that first implemented the merdeka program in West Nusa Tenggara Province was the Sumbawa University of Technology in 2020 with the theme of building villages as an effort to improve welfare and quality of life. The indicators used in achieving this success are mapping targets and focusing on the potential of the assisted villages through the achievement of One village one product, Tourism Village, Cultural Village, Digital Village and Administrative Neat Village.

The implementation of the merdeka program is in collaboration with the village government, the district government. Sumbawa, Regency DPRD. Sumbawa and Sumbawa University of Technology. Then it focused on the 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency which had previously been socialized and coordinated. The program has been running for 6 months or a semester, therefore, for this reason, it is necessary to retrace the success of the achievement of the indicators used. This is important to do because of several things including: 1). This merdeka program will become a sustainability program in the next semester, so input from the previous achievements is needed, 2). Because in this merdeka program it raises about village development and this is simultaneously a program for the Sumbawa Regency local government regarding the village development index, which is expected to be a meaningful finding for the next village program, 3). The success of the Merdeka Program in the 19 assisted villages will increase the motivation of other villages in Sumbawa Regency to be invited to participate in village development by involving the village government, village communities, local governments, DPRD, practitioners and academics.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research method uses survey research which aims to determine the characteristics and expectations of the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program to village development in 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency so that it can be used as evaluation material. As Robert Groves, a leading [5] expert on surveys, puts it, "surveys produce information that is statistically in nature". Survey is the basic form of quantitative. Survey research asks several respondents about their beliefs, opinions, characteristics, and behaviors that have occurred or are currently occurring. The same thing was said by Singarimbun, Masri, Sofian Effendi [10] that survey research can be used for: 1) exploratory (explorative); 2)

descriptive; 3) explanation (explanatory or confirmatory), namely explaining the causal relationship and testing the hypothesis; 4) evaluation; 5) predict or predict certain events in the future; 6) operational research, and 7) development of social indicators.

Sources of data used in this study were collected from respondents using a questionnaire. While the sample was taken by purposive sampling, according to Sugiyono [12] purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations. This particular consideration, for example the person who is considered to know best about what we expect or maybe he is the ruler so that it will make it easier for researchers to explore the object / situation under study. The sample consisted of village heads, village officials, community leaders and youth organizations in 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency. The variables that will be raised in this study include the level of relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program, namely: 1). Village characteristics and rankings before and after the implementation of the merdeka program, and 2). The level of achievement of the main programs of the Merdeka Program, namely OVOP, Cultural Village, Tourism Village, Digital Village and Administrative Neat Village for village development in 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency.

To describe the level of conformity between the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program and the level of transformation of developing villages, it is classified into 4 (four) categories of villages, namely underdeveloped villages, developing villages, developed villages and independent villages. Then for the level of achievement of the main programs of the Merdeka Program, namely OVOP, Cultural Villages, Tourism Villages, Digital Villages and Neat Administrative Villages for village development in 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency. Classified into 4 (four) categories, namely Very poor, sufficient, good and very good

The steps taken in analyzing survey research data following Masri, Singarimbun [10], include: (1) entering data into a data processing card (data file), (2) creating a frequency table or cross table, (3) editing data. Then to display the data used tabulation and visualization in the form of graphs.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. *The Relevance of the Implementation of the Merdeka Program with Village Characteristics and Ranks.*

To determine the level of characteristics and transformation of developing villages in the merdeka program, 4 main indicators and several derivative indicators are used, which are shown in table 3.1 as follows:

No.	Main Indicators	Derivative Indicator
1	Village Economy	Number of SMEs
		Community Income
		Digitizing The Village
		BUMDES Productivity
		Village Product Marketing
2.	Socio-cultural	Number of Community
		Socio-Cultural Innovation
		Human Resources
		Libraries and literacy support
3.	Village Potential	Total Village Potential
		Village Potential
		Total Product and Village
		Village Potential
4.	Village Administration	Use of Technology in Village
		Number of human resources
		Village Administration
		Data Accuracy and

Figure 3.1. Village Indicators Building an Merdeka Program

Based on the 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency, there are two villages that have the status or character of being left behind and very underdeveloped, namely Perung Village and Usar Village. Based on the results of the survey findings in the field, this is caused by the village potential is not maximal, the innovation in managing the village potential has not been carried out, then other factors are socio-cultural, namely human resources who do not understand the use of media, there is no village library to support literacy and from an economic perspective, the number of SMEs is relatively lack of, low marketing of village products, low income of rural communities and in terms of village administration, namely the village administration database is still low and the use of technology in village administration is low. For the 14 assisted villages that have the character of developing villages through the implementation of this merdeka program, their villages will be developed so that they can improve the welfare and quality of life of the local community.

Based on the initial survey prior to the implementation of the merdeka program, it was found that 3 of the 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency had indicated progress, including the villages of Tarusa, Leseng and Luar Village. This is because the 3 villages have 3 advantages that are maintained, namely:

- 1). In terms of the socio-cultural potential of the village, the three villages have media-savvy human resources, the availability of libraries and literacy support, the existence of socio-cultural innovations and the existence of sustainable community activities such as non-formal education for dropouts and the illiterate.

- 2). Economic potential. The existence of superior products accompanied by innovative product management that is managed sustainably by the village government along with BUMDES and the community.
- 3). The village economy, the presence of a significant number of MSMEs is accompanied by high productivity and marketing of village products supported by the local village government. The description of village rankings and their characteristics can be explained in the processed data below.

Figure 3.2 Village Ranks and Village Characteristics Pre-Merdeka Program.

Peringkat Desa Pra Pelaksanaan Program Merdeka				
No	Nama Desa	Skoring Desa	Peringkat Des	Karakteristik Desa
1	Lamenta	52	Cukup	Berkembang
2	Pulau Kaung	53	Cukup	Berkembang
3	Teluk Santong	44	Cukup	Berkembang
4	Tarusa	5	Baik	Maju
5	Usar	20	Sangat Kurang	Sangat Tertinggal
6	Lesang	62	Baik	Maju
7	Perung	40	Kurang	Tertinggal
8	Luar	5	Baik	Maju
9	Bungin	55	Cukup	Berkembang
10	Lito	50	Cukup	Berkembang
11	Marga Karya	41	Cukup	Berkembang
12	Selante	41	Cukup	Berkembang
13	Jotang	47	Cukup	Berkembang
14	Labuhan Burung	53	Cukup	Berkembang
15	Batu Tering	56	Cukup	Berkembang
16	Semamung	40	Cukup	Berkembang
17	Boal	57	Cukup	Berkembang
18	Sebasang	45	Cukup	Berkembang
19	Batu Bulan	45	Cukup	Berkembang

After a temporary survey on village conditions and village characteristics on village development prior to the implementation of the merdeka program, there are still many things that need to be addressed. At least the village is in the characteristics of a developing village to support the success of sustainable village development. Thus, development is a process that occurs gradually and continuously in order to realize better things along with the time dimension.

As for knowing the changes in the village during the post- merdeka program, an in-depth questionnaire was conducted on pre-determined respondents. From the survey results after the implementation of the merdeka program, it showed a significant improvement in the conditions of the 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency, both in terms of village economy, village potential, socio-culture and village administration. This can be described in table 3.3 as follows

Table 3.3 Village Ranks and Village Characteristics Post-Independence Program

Peringkat Desa Pasca Pelaksanaan Program Merdeka				
No	Nama Desa	Skoring Desa	Peringkat Des	Karakteristik Desa
1	Lamenta	60	Cukup	Berkembang
2	Pulau Kaung	66	Baik	Maju
3	Teluk Santong	66	Baik	Maju
4	Tarusa	73	Baik	Maju
5	Usar	84	Sangat Baik	Mandiri
6	Leseng	66	Baik	Maju
7	Perung	67	Baik	Maju
8	Luar	69	Baik	Maju
9	Bungin	52	Cukup	Berkembang
10	Lito	70	Sangat Baik	Mandiri
11	Marga Karya	48	Cukup	Berkembang
12	Selante	58	Cukup	Berkembang
13	Jotang	49	Cukup	Berkembang
14	Labuhan Burung	72	Baik	Maju
15	Batu Tering	63	Baik	Maju
16	Semamung	62	Cukup	Maju
17	Boal	62	Cukup	Maju
18	Sebasang	57	Cukup	Berkembang
19	Batu Bulan	47	Cukup	Berkembang



After the implementation of the merdeka program, village characteristics and village rankings underwent significant changes. From the results of the survey conducted in the field, it was explained that 7 villages were still in a developing condition, 10 villages experienced developed villages and 2 villages were independent. There are two villages that were previously said to be underdeveloped villages and very underdeveloped villages then through the implementation of this merdeka program the two villages underwent very significant changes, the villages are: 1). Usar Village, before the implementation of the merdeka program the condition of the village was very concerned about being in a very underdeveloped village then after the implementation of the merdeka program the condition of the village turned upside down with the condition of an independent village, 2). Perung village, not much different from the condition of usar village, the condition of the village of Perung before the implementation of the merdeka program the condition was in an underdeveloped village, then after the implementation of the merdeka program the condition of the village significantly changed into a developed village.

The villages that were previously in developing conditions have now become developed villages such as Pulau Kaung Village, Teluk Santong Village, Lito Village, Labuhan Burung Village, Batu Tering Village, Semamung and Boal Villages. Villages that are still developing both before and after the implementation of the independence program are: Lamenta Village, Bungin Village, Marga Karya Village, Selante Village, Jontang Village, Sebasang Village and Batu Bulan Village. There is one village that before the implementation of the independence program with developing conditions then changed significantly after the independence program, namely Lito Village. Changes in the conditions or characteristics of the 19 assisted villages before and after the implementation of the merdeka program were caused as follows:

- a) The level of the active role of community participation that affects the results of the implementation of the merdeka program so that the goals achieved can be maximized together. The same thing is also said by Sastropetro [9], that participation is a form of mental involvement / thoughts and emotions or feelings of a person in a group situation that encourages him to contribute to the group in an effort to achieve goals and take responsibility for the business concerned.
- b) Sustainable community empowerment as long as the merdeka program is implemented. this aims to strengthen the improvement of existing human resources accompanied by integrating the natural potential in the village for village economic development. This is as stated by Zubaedi [14] that community empowerment is a concept of economic development that encapsulates social values. This concept reflects a new development paradigm that is people-centered, participatory, empowering, and sustainable. The concept of empowerment is broader than just an effort to meet basic needs or just a mechanism to prevent further impoverishment processes.
- c) Village resources are the main capital owned to create a competitive advantage that is owned by each fostered

village in Sumbawa Regency. Even to launch the implementation of the merdeka program, financial capital is also needed. This can be seen from the disbursement of the Regional Intentional Fund from the local government of Sumbawa Regency worth Rp. 777,945,8000. So it can be said that to strengthen competitive advantage in the implementation of this independence program, social capital, human capital in the assisted villages and financial assistance from the Sumbawa Regency local government are needed. As stated by DeMassis [3] that more specifically based on the theory of resource based view, competitive advantage is determined by social capital, human capital, and financial capital.

d) The concept of Local Economic Development (LED) was introduced to 19 fostered villages. This can be seen from the one village one product activity in the context of developing the local economy and introducing product innovations with appropriate technology. Because basically the principle purpose of Local Economic Development (LED) is to stimulate job opportunities in sectors that can improve people's welfare, using existing human, natural and institutional resources. As stated by Rodriguez-Pose et.al (2005) means that Local Economic Development (LED) is a process in which local governments and/or community-based organizations manage existing resources and partner with the private sector to create new jobs and stimulate economic activity in the area.

e) The existence of innovation development in 19 assisted villages during the merdeka program was implemented. The purpose of innovation is carried out with the aim of maximizing village resources in increasing village productivity. As stated by Oerlemans et al., [6] that innovation is a heterogeneous process and includes the flow or mobilization of internal and external resources involving three important aspects, namely: actors, resources, and activities. It will interact with each other and influence these innovations, so that it will increase the productivity of independent villages. There are also actors in it that will interact with each other and influence the innovation, so that it will increase the productivity of independent villages.

The implementation of the merdeka program in Sumbawa Regency in 19 assisted villages has brought significant changes to the development of these villages. These changes, both from a social and economic perspective, have been felt by all levels of society, whether they are already in business or not. If the implementation of the merdeka program takes place in a sustainable manner accompanied by paying attention to indicators of developing villages, villages in Sumbawa Regency without exception also villages throughout Indonesia will experience independence and will not become a burden for national development.

Therefore, in this reform era, efforts will be made to shift from a growth paradigm to a development paradigm that is based on equity with the economic strength of the people from the village to be given the same opportunities as big businesses. Thus between rural and urban areas will

gradually reduce the inequality of development. So the empowerment of rural communities through the independence program needs to be carried out continuously. This will enable rural communities to develop and strengthen their competitiveness and potential.

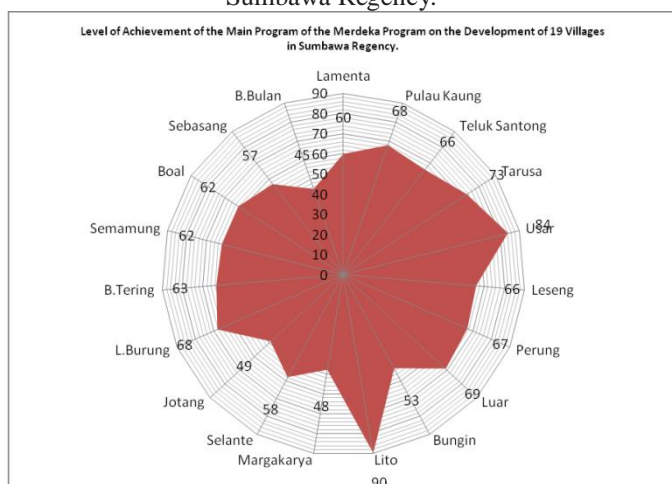
Empowerment of rural communities must also be able to provide clear protection to the community. Protection measures are intended to prevent unbalanced competition due to the enactment of market mechanisms and exploitation of the strong against the weak.

In closing for the section on the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program with village ranking characteristics, it can be concluded that for the success of building quality and independent villages, the main factor is the strong coordination between local governments and layers of society both as practitioners and academics as well as community support capacity in participating in village development. together. As stated by Edy [4], the benchmark for the success of developing underdeveloped regions in the context of national development is based on 3D or three forces, namely: 1) structural power; 2) community power; and 3) cross-sectoral coordination which includes inter-sectoral, inter-regional, and special development programs. In the implementation, the three powers must be carried out in an integrated, directed, and systematic way. In the end, providing greater space and opportunity for the people to participate in development can synergize with efforts to tackle unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

*B. The Relevance of the Achievement Level of the Main Merdeka Program to Village Development.*

The level of achievement of the main program of the merdeka program for village development in 19 assisted villages in the Regency is classified into 4 (four) categories, namely Very poor, sufficient, good and very good. The results of the field survey show that the main achievements of the independence program can be shown in table 3.4 as follows:

Table 3.4 Level of Achievement of the Main Program of the Merdeka Program on the Development of 19 Villages in Sumbawa Regency.



In table 3.4 it can be concluded that the average change in the development of the 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency was quite good, even very good, such as Lito Village which achieved very good changes of 90% and Usar Village 84%.

Then 15 other villages experienced changes either through the main program of the merdeka program reaching > 50%, 3 villages still need to be considered for village development for the next period of the merdeka program such as Margakarya Village, Jotang Village, and Batu Bulan Village which reached <50%. But on average the changes in development in the 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency have reached good or even very good. The main programs of the Merdeka Program such as OVOP, Tourism Village, Cultural Village, Digital Village and Administrative Neat Village have had a significant impact on the development of the 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency. The village's superior product is innovated through OVOP and the product becomes a village icon and advances village culture to improve tourist village destinations, not only that, population data is also regulated through the Digital Village Program to make village administration neat. All of the main programs of the merdeka program above as a whole have answered village problems so far in Sumbawa Regency. For the assisted villages that are still less influential on the main program of the merdeka program, this is due to the low level of community participation and the human resources are still unfamiliar with technology and this will be an input for the next merdeka program.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the survey analysis, the relevance of the implementation of the merdeka program in the 19 assisted villages in Sumbawa Regency showed significant changes. These changes can be seen in changes in village characteristics, which were originally from underdeveloped villages, very lagging behind resulting in developing, advanced and independent villages. One of the reasons for this success is the level of active community participation, the potential of the assisted villages and human resources that can be directed to advance the community. Then other changes can be seen from the success of the main programs of the merdeka program such as one village one product, tourist village, cultural village, digital village and administratively neat village which have had a positive impact on the development of 19 fostered villages in Sumbawa Regency. The village which has not changed significantly from the existence of the main program of the merdeka program is part of the input and evaluation for the merdeka program in the next period.

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