

## Evaluation of Public Involvement in the Formulation of Local Government Work Plans in Langkat Regency

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### ABSTRACT

Community participation in the preparation of the Local Government Work Plan (RKPD) is an important aspect in realizing transparent and accountable governance. This research aims to involve the level of community involvement in the preparation of the RKPD in Langkat Regency and identify the obstacles and opportunities faced in this participatory process. The method used is a qualitative approach with interview, observation, and documentation study techniques to obtain comprehensive data. The results of the study show that despite the existence of formal mechanisms such as the Development Planning Conference (Musrenbang), public involvement is still relatively low due to limited access to information, low transparency, lack of use of digital technology, and low capacity of apparatus in facilitating participatory discussions. In addition, people tend to be passive in making proposals because they feel that their aspirations are rarely accommodated in the final policy. Therefore, this study recommends increasing socialization and education, the use of digital technology in Musrenbang, increasing the capacity of apparatus, and strengthening civil society in the planning process. With these steps, it is hoped that public participation in the preparation of the RKPD can be more optimal, so that the resulting policies are more in line with the needs of the community.

**Keywords:** *Community Participation, Development Planning, RKPD*

## Introduction

Community participation in regional development planning is a crucial element in realizing democratic governance that is responsive to the needs of citizens. Active community involvement not only increases accountability and transparency, but also ensures that programs and policies formulated are in line with local aspirations and needs (Linda et al., 2024; Nuraini, 2024). In Indonesia, the legal framework that supports community participation in development planning has been regulated in Law Number 25 of 2004 concerning the National Development Planning System, which emphasizes a participatory approach at every stage of planning, from the village to the national level (Haloho & Sugiarto, 2024; Nasution Hasyim & Sugiarto, 2024). However, its implementation in various regions still faces challenges, such as low community participation in development planning deliberations (Musrenbang) and lack of awareness of the importance of involvement in the process.

Previous research has shown that community participation in development planning still needs to be improved. For example, a study in Paya Tampak Village, Pangkalan Susu District, Langkat Regency, revealed that the development planning process is not even across the entire village community, so there is a lack of understanding of the alignment between plans and community problems and needs (Azmi, 2023). Similarly, research in Karang Gading Village, Secanggang District, Lalat Regency, shows that community participation in the village Musrenbang is still low, with community attendance amounting to 54% of the invitations given, and participation in the form of program proposals and suggestions or criticisms of the programs offered is also still minimal (Hadawiya, 2021).

A similar phenomenon was also found in research in Lalat Regency, where the role of the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) in the regional development process is very dominant, but the implementation of participatory planning still needs to be improved to ensure more optimal community involvement (Simanjuntak & Silitonga, 2020). This shows that although the legal framework has supported public participation, its implementation still faces various obstacles.

In the context of Lalat Regency, evaluation of community involvement in the preparation of local government work plans is important to ensure that the planning process is truly participatory and inclusive. This research needs to be conducted to analyze the extent of community participation involved in the preparation of local government work plans in Langkat Regency, identify the factors that affect such participation, and provide recommendations to increase community involvement in the regional development planning process. Thus, this research is expected to provide benefits in increasing the effectiveness of regional development planning through more optimal community participation.

## Literature Review

### A. The Concept of Community Participation in Development Planning

Community participation is the active involvement of residents in the decision-making process that impacts their lives. According to Arnstein (1969) in the Community Participation Ladder, participation has levels from the lowest, namely manipulation, to the highest, namely *citizen* control. In the context of regional development planning, participation means community involvement in Development Planning Deliberations (Musrenbang), both in providing proposals, discussions, and decision-making.

Community participation in development planning has various forms, such as consultation, collaboration, and empowerment (Putnam, 2000 in Nuraini, 2017, 2021; Nuraini et al., 2023). Fung (2006) also explained that the success of community participation is influenced by access

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to information, community capacity in understanding development issues, and the existence of mechanisms that support effective public involvement.

### B. Local Government Work Plan (RKPD) and Its Preparation Mechanism

The Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) is an annual planning document prepared by the local government as the basis for the preparation of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). Based on Law Number 25 of 2004 concerning the National Development Planning System, the preparation of the RKPD must go through participatory stages, which includes Musrenbang at the village, sub-district, and district/city levels.

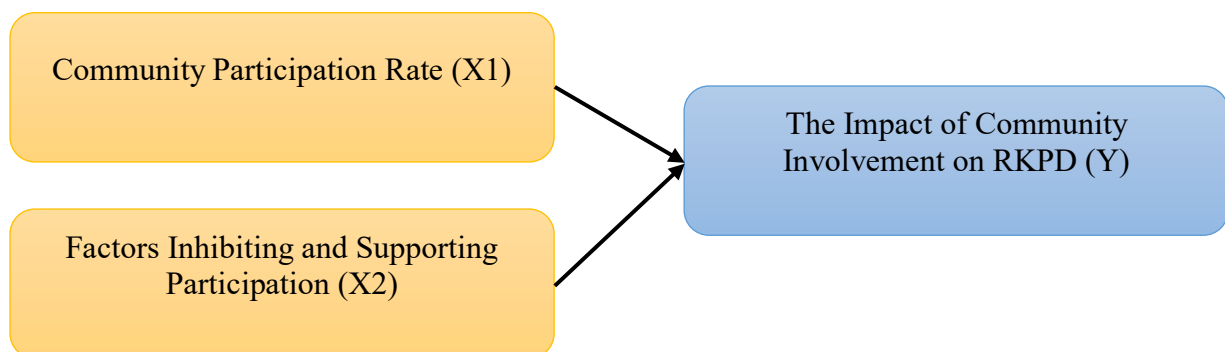
According to Saragih (2021), RKPDs prepared with a participatory approach have a greater chance of reflecting the real needs of the community compared to top-down planning. However, in practice, Setiawan (2020) found that the implementation of Musrenbang often faces challenges such as the dominance of local elites, ensuring the representation of vulnerable groups, and low access to information for the community.

### C. Factors Affecting Community Participation in Musrenbang

Some of the main factors that affect the level of community participation in Musrenbang according to Hidayat (2019) include:

1. Information transparency – Open access to information related to the schedule, mechanism, and results of the Musrenbang greatly affects community interaction.
2. Public awareness and understanding – Low political literacy and understanding of the importance of planning leads to minimal development participation (Gunawan, 2020).
3. The capacity of government apparatus – Apparatus that has competence in facilitating public participation can improve the quality of discussion and citizen involvement (Dewi, 2021).
4. Utilization of digital technology – Digitalization of Musrenbang, such as the implementation of e-Musrenbang, can increase public participation through wider access (Ardiansyah, 2022).

### Conceptual Framework



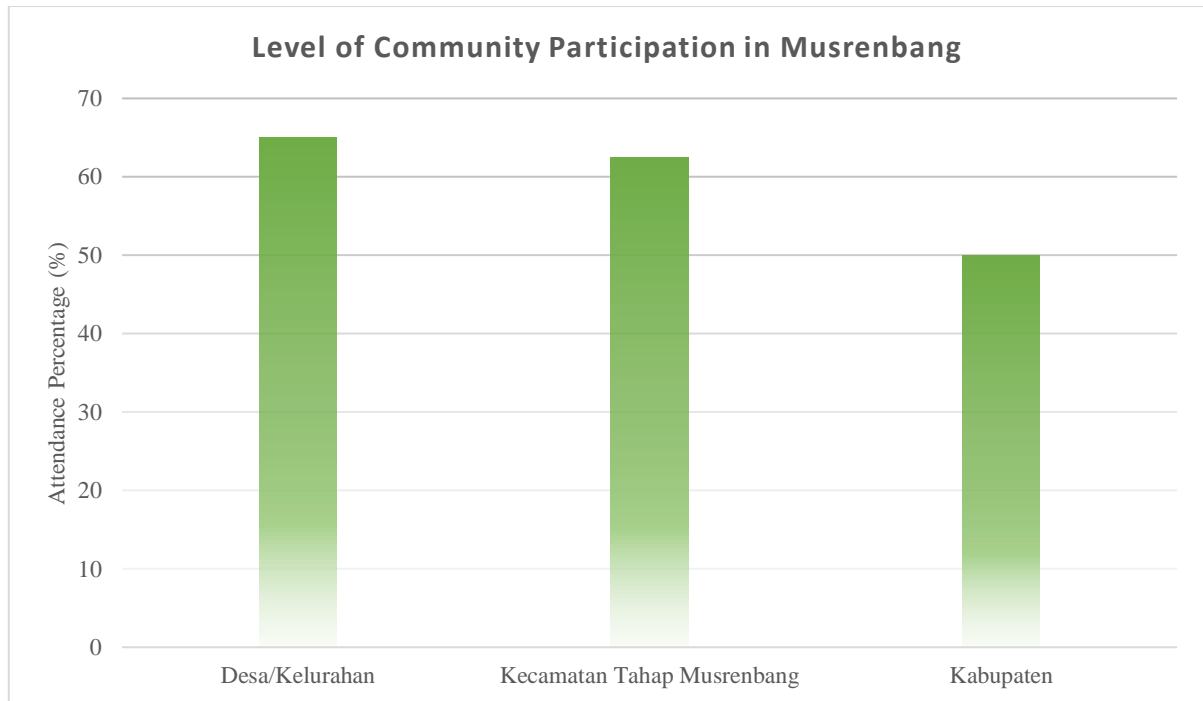
**Figure 1.** Research Conceptual Framework

Source : Created by the author

## Results and Discussion

### A. Overview of Langkat Regency

Langkat Regency is located in North Sumatra Province and has a variety of natural resource potential and cultural diversity. The local government structure consists of several sub-districts and villages/sub-districts, each of which has its own unique characteristics. In the context of development planning, Langkat Regency implements the Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbang) mechanism as a forum for community participation in the preparation of the RKPD. The following is a bar diagram that illustrates the level of community attendance at each stage. The following is the scope of the research results:



**Figure 2.** Bar Chart of Community Attendance Levels at Each Stage

Source: Created by the author

### B. Analysis of Community Participation Based on Survey Results

To understand the extent of community involvement in the Musrenbang process, a survey was conducted on participants who attended each stage of planning. Based on the data obtained, the level of community participation in various stages of Musrenbang in Langkat Regency can be seen in the table above.

The survey results show that:

1. In the Village/Village Musrenbang, the attendance rate reached 65%, which shows that the community still has good enough awareness to be involved in the early stages of planning.
2. At the Sub-district Musrenbang, attendance decreased to 62.5%, which indicates that not all people can follow the further process due to limited access and time.
3. In the Regency Musrenbang, the attendance rate is only 50%, indicating that the community is increasingly less involved when the decision-making process enters the management stage at a higher level.

From the results of this survey, it appears that community involvement decreases along with the increase in the level of Musrenbang, which can be caused by several factors, such as low access to information, perception that decisions have been made by the government, or low trust in the effectiveness of their participation.

### C. Factors Affecting Community Participation

Based on the results of interviews with various stakeholders and survey results, several factors were found that affected community participation in Musrenbang, which could be selected as inhibiting and supporting factors.

### D. Inhibiting Factors

1. Lack of Socialization by the Government  
Most people do not know the Musrenbang schedule or do not understand the procedure for participation in development planning.
2. Lack of Public Trust in the Government  
Many residents feel that their proposals will not be prioritized in the RKPD, so they are reluctant to participate.
3. Limited Time and Transportation Access  
Especially for village people who are far from the location of the sub-district and district Musrenbang.
4. Dominance of Representatives of Village Apparatus or Local Elite  
In some cases, Musrenbang is dominated by village heads and regional officials, so proposals from the general public are less heard.

### E. Supporting Factors

1. Support from Community Leaders and NGOs  
The existence of active community leaders and NGOs that care about regional development helps increase citizen participation.
2. Increasing Digital Access and Social Media  
Several sub-districts have begun to use social media and bold applications to disseminate information related to Musrenbang.
3. Government Involvement in Participatory Education Programs  
Several villages have socialized programs related to the importance of participation in Musrenbang through discussion forums and informal meetings.

### F. Implications for the Formulation of the RKPD

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that community participation in regional development planning in Langkat Regency still needs to be increased so that the preparation of the RKPD is more inclusive and reflects the needs of the community.

Some of the impacts found in this study are:

1. Limited Participation Hinders Responsive Policy Formulation  
With low public participation, the policies drafted risk not fully reflecting the real needs of citizens.
2. Need for Innovation in Public Participation Mechanisms  
The use of information technology such as the e-Musrenbang system can increase the reach of wider community participation.
3. The Importance of Synergy Between Government, Community, and the Private Sector

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Involving more parties in planning will help create more inclusive and sustainable development policies.

## Discussion

The results of the study show that community involvement in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) in Langkat Regency still faces various challenges, even though there is a Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbang) mechanism from the village to the district level. Based on data analysis, it was found that community participation was more active at the Village Musrenbang level, but it was decreasing at the sub-district and district levels. This low level of involvement is influenced by low socialization, low public awareness of the importance of development planning, and the dominance of the bureaucracy and local elites in the decision-making process.

The main factor that hinders public participation is the lack of transparency in the dissemination of information related to the schedule and mechanism of the Musrenbang. In addition, limited public access to formal forums and low political literacy are also obstacles in increasing their involvement. The survey results showed that only about 35% of respondents knew the stages of Musrenbang in detail, while the rest felt that they did not get enough information about their involvement opportunities. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of follow-up from the government to the aspirations that have been carried out by the community, thus causing distrust in the effectiveness of Musrenbang in determining regional development policies.

However, this study also found that there are supporting factors that can encourage community participation in development planning. The existence of community leaders and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) plays an important role in mediating the aspirations of residents so that they can be included in the regional planning agenda. The use of digital technology such as social media and the e-Musrenbang application is also a potential solution to reach a wider community and increase transparency in the planning process. In addition, participatory education carried out by local communities has been proven to be able to increase public awareness of the importance of their involvement in regional development.

The results of this study are in line with several previous studies that show that transparency of information and good facilities from the government can increase community participation in development planning. For example, Ardiansyah (2020) found that intensifying socialization and active involvement of local governments in supporting Musrenbang can increase citizen involvement in policy formulation. Chandra and Wijaya (2021) also revealed that the use of e-Musrenbang technology can increase the effectiveness of participatory planning. Other findings from Indrawati (2021) show that the presence of community leaders can be the main driving factor in ensuring that the community's voice is accommodated in the RKPD. In addition, Gunawan (2020) proves that the application of digital mechanisms in regional development planning increases transparency and policy accountability. Ernawati (2022) also emphasized that the transparency and openness of local governments are the main factors in building public trust in the Musrenbang process.

However, there are several studies that have different findings or contradict the results of this study. Fauzan (2017), for example, stated that community participation in Musrenbang does not always have a significant impact on development policies because of the authority given to the community in the decision-making process. Hidayat (2019) also found that in some cases, public participation is only symbolic without any real impact on the priority policies taken by local governments. In addition, Junaidi (2018) emphasized that political factors and

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the interests of certain groups are often more dominant than the pure aspirations of the community in Musrenbang.

From the results of this discussion, it can be concluded that Musrenbang has become an important instrument in regional development planning, the challenge in increasing community participation remains significant. Therefore, a more inclusive approach is needed by increasing information transparency, strengthening participatory education, and utilizing digital technology to ensure wider community involvement in the process of preparing the RKPD in Langkat Regency.

## Conclusions

Based on the results of the research, community involvement in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) in Langkat Regency still faces obstacles even though there has been a participatory mechanism such as Musrenbang. The main factors that affect the level of public participation include limited access to information, lack of transparency, lack of use of digital technology in Musrenbang, and low capacity of apparatus in facilitating participatory discussions. The results of the study show that most people are aware of the importance of involvement in development planning, but the implementation is still formalistic and not fully inclusive. Therefore, a concrete strategy is needed to increase the effectiveness of public participation in the preparation of the RKPD so that it is more transparent and accountable. In order for community participation in regional development planning to be more optimal, several recommendations can be implemented:

1. Increase Socialization and Education – Local governments need to expand socialization regarding the importance of public participation in the preparation of RKPD through various media, including digital media, discussion forums, and community meetings.
2. Utilization of Digital Technology – The development of a more interactive e-Musrenbang platform can expand access to convey the aspirations of the community and unite the results of planning and implementation of development programs.
3. Capacity Building of Apparatus – Government apparatus needs to receive training in public participation facilitation techniques in order to be able to better absorb and accommodate public input.
4. Increase Transparency and Accountability – The government needs to open access to information related to the stages of regional planning and budgeting and provide effective feedback mechanisms to ensure that the aspirations of the community are truly considered in the policies taken.
5. Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Local Leaders – Involving civil society organizations, academics, and community leaders in the Musrenbang process can be a strategy to bridge communication between the government and the community and increase the effectiveness of planning based on the real needs of the community.

With the implementation of this recommendation, it is hoped that community involvement in the preparation of the RKPD in Langkat Regency can increase, so that the resulting policies are more in line with the needs and aspirations of the local community.

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