

# Implementation of the Tourism Village Concept in the Development of Rural Areas in Southeast Aceh Regency

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the development of local potential-based tourism villages in Aceh Besar Regency, using a case study of Gampong Nusa, Lhoknga District. The main focus is to explore how local potential—both natural, cultural, and social—can be optimally integrated into sustainable tourism development based on community empowerment. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach, involving field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results show that the success of Gampong Nusa tourism village development is determined by the synergy between the government, the community, and the private sector in managing local potential, such as handicrafts, culinary specialties, and cultural attractions. In addition, the existence of regional regulations such as Qanun No. 7 of 2015 and Perbup No. 35 of 2020 serve as important foundations in supporting the direction of local tourism policy and promotion. This study concludes that strengthening village institutions, training tourism human resources, and digital-based promotion are important strategies to support the sustainability of tourism villages. This study provides theoretical and practical contributions to the development of community-based tourism that is adaptive to local wisdom and the dynamics of regional development.

**Keywords:** Tourist Village, Local Potential, Tourism Development, Community Empowerment, Aceh Besar

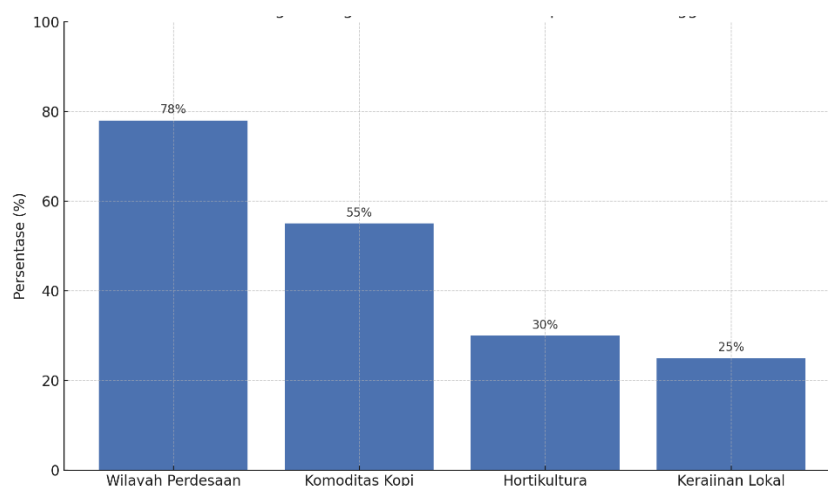
## Introduction

Village tourism has become a development strategy adopted by various developing countries to encourage local economic growth and cultural preservation. In Indonesia, the concept of village tourism has received serious attention since the issuance of various national regulations, such as Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism and Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration Number 13 of 2020 concerning Priority Use of Village Funds, which encourage the creative and sustainable development of village potential.

Southeast Aceh Regency has significant potential for developing tourism villages, as the region is dominated by rural landscapes rich in natural resources, culture, and preserved local wisdom. According to 2023 data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Southeast Aceh Regency, approximately 78% of the regency's area is rural, with superior commodities such as Arabica coffee, horticultural crops, and local crafts from the Alas tribe representing the local cultural identity. However, this potential has not been fully developed into a structured and highly competitive tourism product.

Efforts to develop tourism villages in Southeast Aceh still face challenges, including limited basic infrastructure, low tourism human resource capacity, and minimal collaboration between local stakeholders. Furthermore, the lack of adequate tourism potential-based planning documents has prevented many villages from identifying their local strengths for tourism attraction development.

Several regions in Aceh, such as Aceh Besar, have already implemented the concept of a structured tourism village. Gampong Nusa in Lhoknga District, for example, has successfully combined local potential with a community-based tourism development strategy, supported by regulations such as Qanun No. 7 of 2015 concerning the Regency Tourism Development Master Plan and Regent Regulation No. 35 of 2020 concerning Superior Tourism Products. This success can serve as a reference for developing tourism villages in other regencies, including Southeast Aceh.



**Figure 1. Tourism Village Development Potential in Southeast Aceh Regency**

Therefore, this study aims to examine the application of the tourism village concept within the framework of rural area development in Southeast Aceh Regency. This research not only explores local potential for development as a tourist attraction but also examines the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation, with the hope of providing contextual and applicable policy recommendations.

## Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to comprehensively explore the application of the tourism village concept in the context of rural development in Southeast Aceh Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand social phenomena in depth through direct interaction with the subjects and context under study.

The research focused on several potential villages in Southeast Aceh Regency, each with geographic, cultural, and economic characteristics conducive to tourism development. Village selection was conducted purposively, based on criteria such as natural and cultural potential, community enthusiasm, and local policy support. Data collection techniques include:

1. In-depth interviews with key informants, such as village heads, local tourism actors, traditional leaders, and officials from the Tourism Office and the Village Community Empowerment Office of Southeast Aceh Regency.
2. Participatory observation at the tourist village location, to directly observe the condition of infrastructure, tourist activities, and social interactions of the community.
3. Documentation studies on regional regulations (such as RPJMD, Perbup, and Qanun), village activity reports, and data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) regarding regional demographics and potential.

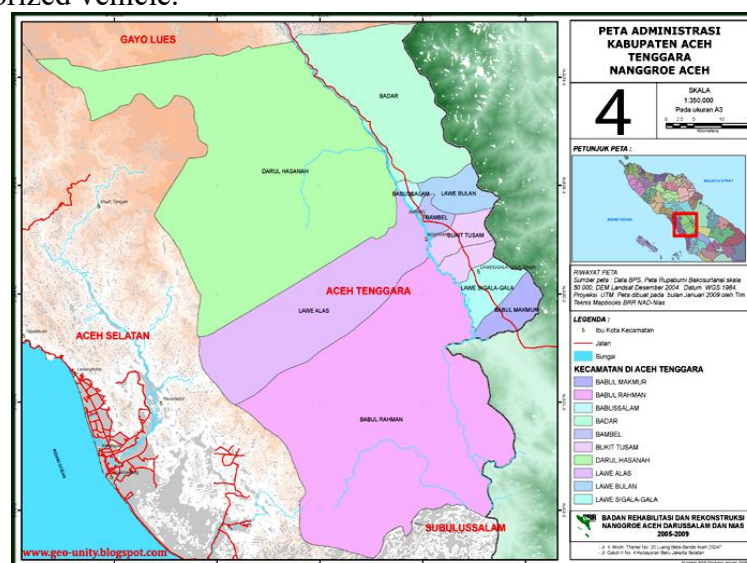
Data analysis techniques were carried out interactively and continuously according to the Miles and Huberman model (1994 in Nuraini Azizah & Muharrani, 2024; Moleong 2000 in Nuraini, 2017; Yin 2000 in Nuraini, 2019;), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification (Yin 2000 in Nuraini 2024a, Nuraini, 2024b; Nuraini et al., 2024). Data validity was tested through triangulation techniques of sources, methods, and time to ensure the validity of the information obtained (Moleong 2000, in Hutabarat & Nuraini, 2025; Yin 2000 in Simangunsong & Nuraini, 2025; Harahap, Sugiarto & Nuraini, 2025; Fahmi & Nuraini, 2025; Nasution & Nuraini, 2024).

With this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a complete and in-depth picture of the dynamics of the implementation of tourism villages and their relevance in accelerating the development of sustainable rural areas in Southeast Aceh Regency.

## Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Ketambe Tourism Village

Ketambe Tourism Village is located in Ketambe District, Southeast Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, covering an area of approximately 20.00 km<sup>2</sup>. The distance from the center of Kutacane City to Ketambe Village is approximately 17 km, with a travel time of approximately 30 minutes by motorized vehicle.



**Figure 2. Geographical Location of Ketambe Tourism Village (Source: Google Maps, Research Processed, 2024)**

Ketambe Village is located in the highlands within the Gunung Leuser National Park (TNGL). Situated at an elevation of approximately 350–600 meters above sea level, the village is surrounded by tropical rainforest rich in biodiversity. Several hamlets are located within the area, including Ketambe, Lawe Gurah, and Kuning. Ketambe serves as the management center for a tourist village renowned for its ecotourism and orangutan conservation efforts.

#### **4.2 Existing Condition of Tourist Villages in Southeast Aceh Regency**

Southeast Aceh Regency is one of the regions in Aceh Province with rich and diverse natural tourism potential, primarily dominated by natural attractions in the mountains, rivers, and tropical forests. Based on Southeast Aceh Regent Decree No. 052/252/2021, seven villages have been designated as tourist villages with natural tourism as their main characteristic: Ketambe, Bandar Indah, Kuning Abadi, Lawe Beringin Gayo, Barung Datuk Saudane, Salang Alas, and Peseluk Pasimbe.

The main attractions of tourist villages in Southeast Aceh are largely natural attractions. For example, Ketambe Village is known for its Gunung Leuser National Park, which supports activities such as trekking, wildlife observation (especially orangutans), and educational ecotourism. Other villages offer panoramic views of hills, natural rivers with potential for whitewater rafting, and pristine rural settings. However, most of these attractions are still in their early stages of development.

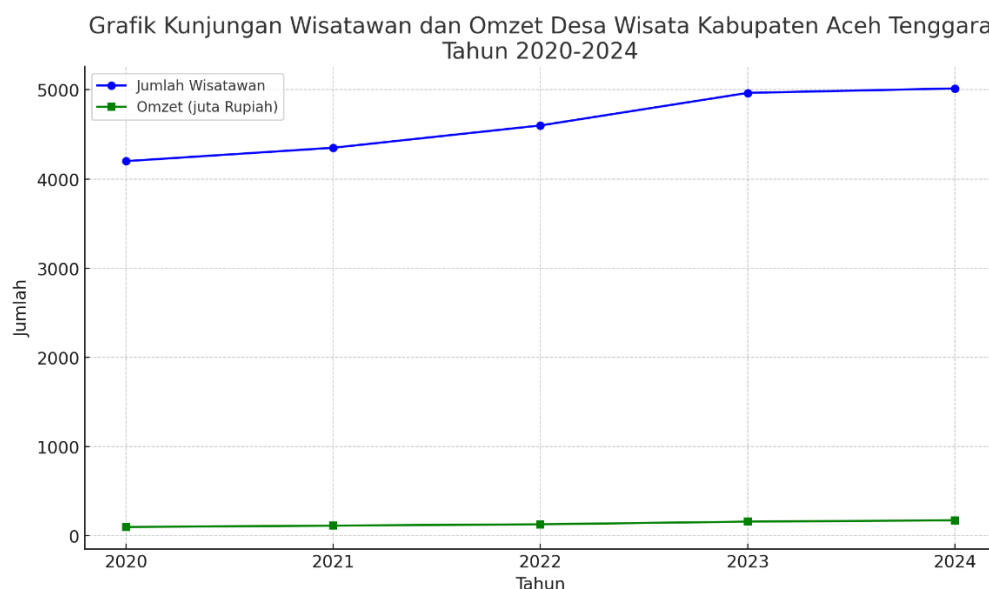
Cultural attractions in these villages are starting to flourish, such as traditional kenduri (feast feasts), traditional Alas arts performances, and community religious activities. However, artificial tourism and educational tourism activities remain underdeveloped. The agrotourism potential derived from local agricultural activities such as coffee, cocoa, and vegetable plantations has also not been developed into an attractive educational tourist attraction.

In terms of amenities, tourism infrastructure and facilities are still limited. Facilities such as accommodation, restaurants, public restrooms, places of worship, and souvenir shops are not yet adequately available in all tourist villages. Some villages, such as Ketambe, have homestays and information centers, but these are not evenly distributed across the region. Healthcare facilities and waste management systems are also not yet integrated into the village tourism system.

In terms of accessibility, a number of tourist villages are accessible by four-wheeled vehicles, but the quality of roads and directional signs remains inadequate. Public transportation to tourist villages is almost non-existent, forcing tourists to rely on private or rental vehicles. This presents a challenge in itself in increasing tourist visits.

In terms of ancillary services, tourism management is currently largely under the control of village governments and has not been fully delegated to community-based tourism institutions such as the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis). The Tourism Office's efforts to establish local trader cooperatives are one initiative to encourage community participation and strengthen local tourism-based economic structures.

Tourist visits to Southeast Aceh Regency continue to increase. Data from the Tourism Office shows a rise in tourist numbers from 4,965 in 2023 to 5,015 in 2024. While the increase in tourist numbers is still relatively small, it indicates a positive trend that can be further developed. However, there has not been a significant shift from quantity to quality of visits, such as the implementation of live-in concepts or experience-based tourism packages (see Figure 4).



**Figure 3. Graph of Tourist Visits and Tourism Village Turnover in Southeast Aceh Regency in 2020-2024**

It's worth noting that the implementation of tourism villages in Southeast Aceh still faces significant challenges, including low public awareness as tourism subjects, minimal promotion and branding of tourism villages, and weak coordination between local governments, relevant agencies, and local tourism operators. The concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is an appropriate approach to address these challenges, where communities become key actors in tourism development, not merely objects.

The implementation of CBT, coupled with the development of agrotourism and ecotourism, will encourage the integration of environmental conservation, local culture, and community economic development. This will create a significant multiplier effect for sustainable rural development.

#### 4.3 Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Development in Southeast Aceh Regency

Stage 1: Assessing Community Needs and Readiness: Communities in rural areas of Southeast Aceh Regency primarily need improved economic well-being. Dependence on the agricultural sector underpins economic diversification efforts, one of which is through tourism. The increasing number of tourists since 2020 has raised public awareness of the tourism potential around them. The local government is facilitating the identification of tourism potential, particularly nature-based tourism, such as forest and river tourism, and the Gunung Leuser National Park area. This potential provides opportunities for communities to generate additional income.

**Table 1. Indicators of Community Needs and Readiness in Developing Tourism Villages in Southeast Aceh Regency**

Aspect	Needs Indicator	Readiness Indicators	Information
Economy	Limited local employment opportunities	Public interest is high for alternative income from tourism	Found through village deliberations and interviews with community leaders
HR	Lack of tourism training	Several communities have participated in training from the Tourism Office	Basic training such as tourism awareness, homestay, local guide

Aspect	Needs Indicator	Readiness Indicators	Information
Institutional	There is no specific tourism structure yet	The formation of Pokdarwis has begun to be active in several villages.	Formed through village decree
Infrastructure	Tourist facilities (toilets, paths, information) are inadequate	Access roads to tourist villages are quite good in several locations.	Basic infrastructure is supportive, but tourism facilities need to be strengthened.
Socio-cultural	Concerns about the impact of foreign cultures	People have pride in local traditions	The potential for cultural attractions is high if packaged well.
Environment	The threat of waste and environmental damage from tourism activities	Conservation awareness is starting to grow, especially in villages near the TNGL area.	Ketambe Village has carried out environmental conservation and management
Technology and Information	Minimal use of technology in promotion	The younger generation is starting to actively use social media to promote their village.	Digital promotion readiness begins to be built through training

From the table above, it can be concluded that the region has significant potential for developing a community-based tourism sector, although several challenges remain to be addressed. Some of these conclusions include:

1. Economic Potential: The community has a high interest in developing alternative income through the tourism sector, although limited local employment opportunities are an initial challenge.
2. Human Resources Development: There is a lack of tourism training, but some community members have begun attending basic training from the Tourism Office, which shows their readiness to manage this sector.
3. Institutions: The formation of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) which have begun to be active in several villages indicates that there are formal efforts to support the tourism sector, although the overall institutional structure is still in the development stage.
4. Infrastructure: Road access to the tourist village is quite good, but tourist facilities such as toilets, paths, and information are still inadequate and need to be improved to support tourist comfort.
5. Culture and Social: Communities take pride in local traditions and have the potential to develop interesting cultural attractions, although there are concerns about the impact of outside cultures.
6. Environment: Despite threats to the environment, particularly related to waste and environmental degradation, conservation awareness is growing, particularly in villages near the TNGL area, and several villages have initiated conservation measures that can serve as examples.
7. Technology: The use of technology in tourism promotion is still limited, but the younger generation is starting to utilize social media to promote villages, and digital training has been conducted to improve community skills in tourism promotion.

Overall, despite challenges in some aspects, community preparedness, cultural potential, and conservation measures indicate that this area is on the right track to developing sustainable tourism.

In Phase 2: Educating and Preparing the Community, the Southeast Aceh Regency Tourism Office has initiated a mentoring program since 2021, providing training in tourism awareness, the seven charms, and homestay management. The village government is also partnering with academics and NGOs to provide training on managing tourist attractions and developing tourism packages based on local potential. Village women and youth are the primary targets for this capacity building.

Phase 3: Identification and Strengthening of Local Champions in Southeast Aceh emerged from youth leaders and village officials who actively promote tourism as a solution for community empowerment. In Ketambe Village, for example, the local youth leader pioneered the development of ecotourism based on conservation forests. In other villages, the village head played a key role in the formation of tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) that manage and develop local tourist attractions.

In Phase 4 of Community Organization Development, the Southeast Aceh Regency Government is encouraging the formation of tourism groups (Pokdarwis) in seven tourist villages. These Pokdarwis are comprised of youth, housewives, and farmers who are trained to manage local tourism. In addition to Pokdarwis, a tourism cooperative has been established to foster the development of small businesses that provide local food, souvenirs, and tour guide services.

Phase 5: Partnership Development: Partnerships with various parties are being established, including collaborations with universities for training and research, and CSR support from local companies for the development of tourism facilities such as information boards and trekking trails. The Provincial Tourism Office also provides support in the form of promotion and facilitation of cultural festival activities.

Stage 6: Environmental Management and Preservation: Conservation efforts are carried out in parallel with tourism development, such as forest and river preservation and the construction of environmentally friendly waste disposal facilities. Some villages implement visitor control measures to maintain environmental carrying capacity, for example by limiting visitors to whitewater rafting areas.

Stage 7: Planning and Developing Quality Tourism Products: Tourism products are developed in stages, from nature tourism such as trekking, river tubing, and camping to the processing of agricultural products such as coffee and chocolate as educational attractions. Ketambe Village, for example, is developing a "live-in" tourism package where tourists stay with local families to experience traditional life.

Stage 8: Identifying Market Segments and Promotional Strategies. The targeted market segments are local tourists, students, and nature lovers. The promotional strategy utilizes social media, digital brochures, and collaborations with domestic travel agents. Promotion is also conducted through participation in provincial and national tourism events.

Stage 9: Sustainability Evaluation and Monitoring: Village tourism management is evaluated periodically through village deliberation forums. Several villages have begun developing indicators for the success of community-based tourism by measuring tourist satisfaction, community participation, and local economic contribution. Village governments schedule monthly evaluations for reporting and continuous improvement.

Fulfillment of CBT Principles in the Development of Southeast Aceh Tourism Villages  
Previously, we discussed the stages of CBT development and the efforts made to ensure its sustainability. This sub-chapter will examine the implementation of CBT principles in the stages of tourism development. According to Ardika (2018), the following are the principles of CBT development:

1. Community involvement and empowerment: Implemented through the formation of Pokdarwis and village cooperatives.
2. Improving human welfare and dignity: Achieved through the creation of new jobs in the tourism sector.

3. Respect for local culture: Traditional Alas cultural attractions are packaged in art performances for tourists.
4. Environmental conservation: Tourism activities are aligned with environmental conservation.
5. Increasing host-tourist interaction: Done through live-in packages and Sapta Pesona training.
6. Profit sharing mechanism: Management of tourism businesses is carried out by cooperatives with a transparent system.
7. Financial independence: Strengthened by independent efforts and support from CSR partners.
8. Urbanization prevention: Local employment prevents youth migration to cities.
9. Pentahelix partnership: Achieved through the involvement of government, academia, private sector, community, and media.
10. Authority recognition: Tourist villages are officially designated by the district government.
11. Strengthening local and regional economic relations: Promotion of local products through village events and markets.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

### Conclusion

The application of the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) concept to the development of tourism villages in Southeast Aceh Regency has proven relevant and strategic for promoting rural development. Of the nine stages of CBT development, most have been implemented gradually and non-linearly, according to the readiness of each village. Most of the 11 CBT principles, such as community participation, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and local economic empowerment, have been implemented. Villages such as Ketambe and Bandar Indah have shown significant progress, but institutional strengthening, improved service quality, and infrastructure and promotional support are still needed. This approach contributes to community well-being while preserving local potential.

### Suggestion

It is recommended that local governments provide ongoing support through regulations, funding, and technical assistance to optimize the implementation of CBT in tourism villages. Strengthening local institutions through management and entrepreneurship training is necessary to empower communities to become key stakeholders in tourism. Collaboration between government, academics, business actors, and local communities is also crucial for creating a sustainable management model. Furthermore, digital-based promotion must be enhanced to reach a wider market, and further research is needed to evaluate the social, cultural, and economic impacts of tourism village development.

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