



The Sustainability of Community Empowerment as Development Strategies: The Experience of Indonesia

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Abstract

Empowerment is a development initiative used to strengthen the social, cultural, and economic values of a community. Over the years, Indonesia has experienced various poverty alleviation and development programs such as the IDT (Presidential Instruction for Disadvantaged Villages), PPK (Kecamatan Development Project), PNPM (National Program for Community Empowerment) and the formation of Village Laws. Empowerment strategies are one of the processes used for local economic development in Indonesia. Community empowerment is a perfect evolution for local development in Indonesia; therefore, communities need to adequately participate in the process to achieve the required agenda. This study reviews the experiences associated with development implementation in Indonesian communities. The outcome of this paper is to provide a complete overview of the concepts, theories, approaches, and implementation practices of community empowerment as a development strategy in Indonesia. It also evaluates and assesses the meaning of sustainability of empowerment in each development agenda.

Keywords: *Empowerment; Development Strategy; Indonesian Experience*

Introduction

The term "empowerment" originated from the verb "empower," which emerged during the mid-seventeenth century in United Kingdom and was defined as the formal authority or power granted by a superior figure. However, in the nineteenth century, it was redefined as the conditions and actions in legitimating an authority to provide power (Soler et al. 2014). Therefore, from the nineteenth century, there is a close relationship between empowerment and power. The configuration of the concept of empowerment in civil society emerged in the 60s and several orientations were detected during its usage in accordance with the discourse approach in the field of pedagogical, psychological, sociological, economic studies, etc. According to Rowlands (1997), understanding the concept of empowerment is dependent on the interpretation of power in accordance with the personal, political, and economic concepts of the society. Empowerment conveys a psychological sense of personal control associated with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights. It is a multilevel institution that applies to individuals, organizations and the environment (Rappaport, 1987). Therefore, empowerment is also

defined as a process used by people, organizations, and communities to gain control of their affairs. There are some significant differences between individual and community empowerment, although in practice they are closely related because most of their existing programs function interchangeably. Maton (2008), an empowerment scene generally reduces community and individual marginalization, and increases their rights. This social scale is necessary and, concretely ensures that people are responsible for their life. Soler et al. (2014) stated that the term "empowerment" is associated with the impact created in private agencies of the society.

According to Gutierrez (1995), empowerment is the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power, for individuals, families, and communities to improve their financial and economic status. Social work, community psychology, and health sectors are some of the means used to overcome the problems of helpless populations and to mediate the role played by creating and perpetuating social problems Swift & Levin, (1987); Rappaport (1987) and Gutierrez (1990). Empowerment has been described as a new mean of developing programs, policies and services. Although various literature studies on social work describe empowerment as a method used to combine various levels of intervention, some focused on individual or interpersonal empowerment (Parsons (1991), Pinderhughes (1990), Simon (1990), Solomon (1976), and Staples (1990). Empowerment is also interpreted as a power delegation or the act of providing assistance to those in need. According to Simon (1990) empowerment is an activity of reflection and a process that is initiated and maintained by subjects seeking power or self-determination. Meanwhile, other processes are used to provide climate, relationships, resources and procedural tools, Empowerment tends to provide, the required climate, relationships, resources, and procedural tools to improve the lives of people living in a community due to its ability to interact with the social and physical environment. Therefore, it is an effort used to enforce a process, activity, and other meanings that are not in accordance with the delegation of power or strength in the community. It is part of the development process towards learning the western culture. To appropriately understand the concept of empowerment, it is necessary to have an idea of the related contextual background. Furthermore, according to Pranarka and Vidhyandika (1996), the concept of empowerment contains two tendencies. The first emphasizes on the process of trying to transfer some of the strength, power, and ability to the community. This process is known as primary tendency of the meaning of empowerment. Meanwhile, the secondary tendency emphasizes on the process of stimulating, encouraging, and motivating individuals to have the ability to determine their life choices through a process.

According to Notoatmojo (2007), efforts are needed to acculturate the concept of empowerment in accordance with the mind and culture of Indonesia. The development of peoples' mind in line with Western culture starts with the process of eliminating human dignity (dehumanization). This process is largely influenced by economic and technological processes used as the basis of goal actualization. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) stated that power is a rational concept carried out by individuals or groups of people to fulfill their needs. These needs are associated with their willingness to make choices over existing sanctions or to lose money. Ironically, power tends to manipulate knowledge systems, politics, law, ideology and religion. The desire to build a more humane society and produce an alternative system requires a powerless empowerment process. According to Prijono and Pranarka, (1996), empowerment becomes meaningful when it becomes part and function of culture, as such as the actualization and co-actualization of human existence. As a socio-cultural concept in community based development, it strengthens economic and socio-cultural values of the society. Indonesia, has a high degree of cultural civilization due to the acculturation of its people, therefore, it needs to optimize the concept of empowerment in line with its culture and as an alternative to human and economic development, at the local and broader levels.

Research Methods

The research design for this study is an extensive literature review, which involves inductive analysis and organization of literature that focuses on the empowerment of this concept society. Article

sources include everything found from various databases including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Proquest and literature sources that support the study, both online and online. The research method we use is a literature review by analyzing various empowerment journals as research subjects, while the empowerment journal and development strategy will be the object of study. After analyzing these things, we made a comparative study by comparing the analysis of research subject journals and how the concepts and theories and sustainability of empowerment as a development strategy in Indonesia ?, and then making conclusions about the sustainability of empowerment as a development strategy. In addition, we also make a clear analysis of the future and the challenges of empowerment in Indonesia that will occur if applied in the future.

Results and Discussion

a. Theory of Community Empowerment

The empowerment theory focuses on how confidence contributes to individual, community, and social change. This is because to engage in social action, individuals need to develop a sense of critical awareness (Gutierrez (1989), Pecukonis & Wenocur (1994), Swift & Levin (1987) and Zimmerman & Rappaport (1988). Meanwhile, according to Swift & Levine (1987), the empowerment theory includes the process, results, actions, activities, and structures required to empower, and produce predetermined goals. The empowerment process and outcomes vary in their outward form because no standard has the ability to fully capture its meaning in all contexts (Rappaport, (1984) and Zimmerman (1995, 2000).

Empowerment is a specific context and population that takes different forms for people. Therefore, the difference between the empowerment process and the outcome is very important to clearly define the theory. The empowerment process is the act of obtaining the required resources, and understanding one's social environment. This process helps people to develop skills, thereby, becoming problem solvers and independent decision makers. It comprises of organizational or community involvement at the individual level, joint leadership and decision making at the organizational level, and accessible government, media and other community resources at the community level. Furthermore, there are three empowerment dimensions, namely: self, mutual and social empowerment (Pigg, 2002). Table I summarizes the empowerment processes and outcomes for individuals, organizational and community levels. Zimmerman (2000) provided a theoretical framework for analyzing the process and outcomes of empowerment.

Table 1.
Comparison of Empowering Processes and Empowered Outcome across Levels Analysis

Levels of Analysis	Process (“empowering”)	Outcame (“empowered”)
Individual	Learning decision-making skill Managing resources Working with other	Sense of control Critical awareness Participatory behaviors
Organizational	Opportunities to participate in decision-making Shared responsibilities Shared leadership	Effectively compete for resources Networking with other organizations Policy influence
Community	Access to resource Open government structure Tolerance for diversity	Organizational coalitions Pluralistic leadership Residents’ participatory skills

Source: Zimmerman (2000: 47), Hand book of Community Psychology, edited by Julian Rappaport and Edward Seidman. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York.

One of the most important and defining characteristics of empowerment is that it is assumed to operate at multiple ecological levels. Perkis (2010) stated that at the individual level, people participate in a variety of grassroots community organizations; therefore, they develop greater perceived control over political issues and activities used to develop important resource mobilization skills. In the next level, groups and organizations that engage in meaningful collective decision and shared leadership processes, tend to achieve various organizational and network development outcomes to enhance policy leverage. Finally, communities and networks of people and organizations also engage in collective action in order to access resources, which results in greater political impacts and civic improvement through coalition building, enhanced pluralism and diversity, and access to resources. The operationalization of empowerment, studies the consequences of citizens' efforts to gain greater control in their communities. It is also the intervention effects designed to empower participants with differing outcomes at all levels of analysis. The outcomes associated with organizational networks, effective resource acquisition, and policy leverage is due to community-level empowerment, and these include evidence of pluralism, the existence of an organizational coalition, and accessible community resources. Furthermore, empowerment is multidimensional and occurs in sociological, psychological, economic, political, and other dimensions (Rich et al. (1995), Hur (2006), and Maton (2008).

The bias of thought on the concept of community empowerment often arises in debates of development policy makers. Therefore, there is a tendency to think that the rational dimension is more important than the institutional, while the economic dimension is more important than the rational. There is an assumption that the development approach that comes from leaders is more perfect than the experience and aspirations at the grass root level. This is because community development at the grass root levels requires more material assistance than technical and managerial skills. Also, it is assumed that the technology introduced by leaders is always more effective than those by the community. People in the lower classes have no idea of ways to improve their knowledge. This is similar to the belief that people are poor due to lack of knowledge and laziness. Therefore, the handling needs to be paternalistic. Therefore, the problem of poverty is seen as a social effort (charity) directed to improve and not strengthen the economy. Geoghegan and Powell (2009) stated that community empowerment is one of the most widely used terms in politicians in less developed, developing and developed countries. This concept is often linked to all forms of international financial assistance to win voters during domestic political elections. Furthermore, the process of sharing and debating common interests by citizens and politicians is also known as the origin of community empowerment. Sarjiyanto (2017) stated that empowerment is a process to facilitate and encourage the community to position themselves proportionally in order to achieve long-term sustainability. Community empowerment is closely related to sustainable development which is a major prerequisite and can be likened to a carriage capable of providing dynamic economic, social and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, Sarjiyanto et al., (2017) stated that economically, there are three important resources that are developed in the empowerment model, namely (1) human power, which comprises of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of education, scientific insights, skills and managerial abilities. (2) Environmental power which consists of the potentials developed in accordance with the geographical and natural conditions that exist in the area. (3) Economic power, which is the ability to produce added value for higher economy. Empowerment is also conducted by raising important issues regarding network mobilization to improve skills, develop capacity and empower communities (Nelson, Prilleltensky & McGillivray (2001) and Prilleltensky (2001).

Community empowerment is a new concept and theory in the approach of economic development that encapsulates social values. This approach reflects the paradigm of development centered on people, participation, empowerment and sustainability (Chambers, 1995). According to Friedman (1992), development requires inclusive democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equality and intergenerational equality. Community empowerment is an effort to develop the potential and power of the community by encouraging, motivating and raising awareness. Korten (1995) stated that the concept of community-based development is associated with creativity and initiative, which are the most important development resources. Community-Based-Development through the empowerment approach raises public participation awareness. Community empowerment includes the strengthening of individual

community members, their institutions and combines ideas with development. Therefore, it depends on the interactions between people and joint action, also called "collective agents" by sociologists (Flora & Flora, 1993).

b. Sustainability of Community Empowerment as A Development Strategy in Indonesia

The development strategy in Indonesia is associated with choosing the right approach. This means that development is in line with new options, diversification, problems-solving techniques and change (Christenson et.al., 1989). Development involves change, improvement, and vitality - directed efforts to increase participation, flexibility, equality, attitudes, institutional functions, and quality of life. According to Shaffer (1989), it is the creation of wealth, and things that are valued by people. Raharjo (2011) stated that in the early 1980s, there were two issues associated with development. The first is economic conglomeration which was the idea oriented towards empowering the economy to large-scale and capital-intensive conglomerate economies. The second was in the 1970s-1980s, due to the change in development strategy and management that signaled a systemic shift from a centralized planning system to a liberal system. In the 90s, a development strategy based on community empowerment as an approach to poverty alleviation was marked by the formation of the IDT (Presidential Instruction for Disadvantaged Villages) by Mubyarto. The essence of IDT in Indonesia includes three basic terms. Firstly, it triggers the national movement to reduce poverty by caring for the elderly and poor. Secondly, it is an equalized and sharpening strategy aimed at helping the poor and disadvantaged villages. This was initially and programmatically centered on peoples' needs. Thirdly, it is an effort to increase the economic activities and structural changes of people. IDT is a development strategy, adopted for the poor population in disadvantaged villages. According to Raharjo (2011), the ideas of people's economy which are the basis of IDT implementation are were obtained from Ginandjar Kartasasmita and Mubyarto. Furthermore, this development strategy was corrected by Haryono Suyono, through the sociological-economic approach. However, all the initiators of this concept suggested the existence of business loans as monetary stimulus. Initially, social funds were used as emergency programs used to quickly to send funds to poor communities. These funds were multi-sectarian and gave communities the opportunity to specify their subproject priorities. This was the start of several new experiments in community-based development using social funds with government as legitimate institutions consultation, as shown in figure 1.

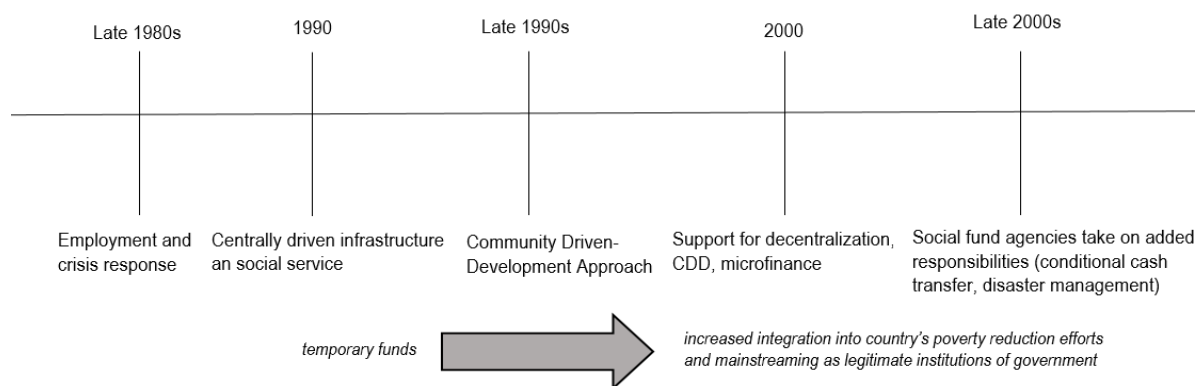


Figure 1. Evolution of Social Fund Objectives and Activities, 1987 to Present

Source: De Silva & Sum 2008

The success of IDT as a poverty alleviation and economic development program in, encourages government efforts to overcome these problems by increasing productivity and reducing expenses through the provision of basic needs. The outlined policy steps are creating opportunities, community empowerment, capacity building, and social protection. Therefore, in mid-1998, the Indonesian government, through the assistance of the World Bank, developed the PPK program (Kecamatan Development Project/KDP) which consists of three development phases. According to Davis (2003), the Kecamatan Development Project (KDP) was initiated in late 1990s, a few months before the overthrow of

the authoritarian Suharto regime. KDP 1 and 2 were designed to promote village empowerment and reduce official corruption as key element in eradicating poverty, by (a) making block grand directly to sub-districts instead of channeling money through line agencies and (b) providing intense social and technical facilitation to build village-level capacity and promote participation, transparency and accountability in communities. KDP's innovative funding mechanism is based on simple set of rules for community-level disbursement, which has successfully replicated in thousands of villages through many government programs. It has also influenced the design of poverty alleviation and empowerment programs in a number of other countries. The third phase of the project, (KDP 3) was designed in 2003, when the country was undergoing a deep decentralization. It, therefore, shifted its focus from poverty reduction to government, with the aim of achieving the following: (a) building local government capacity to support Community Driven Development (CDD) and (b) support the development of permanent inter village bodies to implement multi-village project, mediate dispute, and provide a strong higher level of government. The implementation of community self-help in the KDP project is not new, to Indonesia and other countries. This self-help system has recently received increasing attention, from the World Bank. The Kecamatan Development Project (KDP), implemented since August 1998, is an example of how the World Bank has changed the strategy and policy of providing assistance that previously entrusted the implementation of development to government officials from the central to the regional level (Edstrom, 2002). McLaughlin, Satu & Hoppe (2007) determined the KDP influence on local government practice and community empowerment in Indonesia. They compared different development programs within the same communities' and these were dependent on the location and local culture, of Indonesia which is very large and diverse. Studies need to be carried out to train the leaders and villagers in more long-term development planning; therefore, the majority vote is not ruled against smaller and more marginal groups. Therefore, compared with other development programs in the villages, KDP was well implemented, more accountable, and less corrupt, although women were still mostly marginalized. However, the overall projects decreased poverty.

In September 2006, the government of Indonesia started a new nationwide program to accelerate poverty alleviation using the Community Driven Development (CDD) and PNPM-Mandiri approaches (National Program for Community Empowerment). According to Binswanger et al., (2010), PNPM cover is going to cover all rural sub-districts by 2009. Baseline data were gathered in 2007 to evaluate the impact of this program on household welfare, poverty, and access to service and employment agents in matched sub-districts. PNPM is likely to strengthen 10,700 poor community organizations, and improve access to basic infrastructures and other services. After the end of PNPM in Indonesia, Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages was created. This law specifically provides state freedom and recognizes development. The implementation of Village Law has become the momentum for the implementation of a national scale community empowerment approach to improve the welfare and development of regions in rural areas through village autonomy. The Asian Development Bank (2016) stated that the regulation of villages in Indonesia according to the law, fulfills the concept of community development which provides control over planning and investment decisions for groups and local governments. This is known as Community Driven-Development concept (CDD), and this comprises of five characteristics, namely: 1) Community focus, 2) Participatory planning and design, 3) Community control over resources, 3) Community involvement in implementation, and 5) Community-based Monitoring and Evaluation. The implementation of the Village Law makes Community Driven-Development in Indonesia sustainable and clear with institutional certainty. Furthermore, the Asian Development Bank (2016) stated that the Community Driven-Development Law in Indonesia has become a good example and a reference for the implementation of CDD in developing member countries. Empowerment-based development strategies in Indonesia experience an evolutionary process, by planning, implementing and evaluating the development process. Before now, community involvement in development was in line with the study of Binswanger et al. (2010), regarding Local and Community Driven Development by most developing countries from centralistic system with minimum community involvement in the 50s. Presently, the timeline for the evolution of community involvement is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Evolution of the Community-Based Development Model Approach

Indicator	1950s	1960s	1970-80s	1990s	2000	2005s - Now
Development approach	Centralized, Decentralized	Sectoral, technology led, green revolution, irrigation development	Special area or target group, ADP, IRDP, NGOs and private sector	CBD, Community Base Development Social funds	CDD, Community Driven Development	LCDD, Local and Community Driven Development
Community Involment	Minimal →	Consultation →	Participation →	-----→ Empowerment		

Source: Binswanger *et al.* (2010)

Note: ADP, Area Development Program; IRDP, Integrated Rural Development Program; NGO, Non-governmental Organization; CBD Community Based Development; CDD, Community Driven Development; Community Development.

The prolonged experience of the community empowerment processes and the various development strategies aids the government to increase productivity, creativity and participation. A better welfare and quality of life will be realized through cumulative efforts. Crook and Manor (1998) stated that regional autonomy and the Village Law are basic capital that supports the empowerment process in Indonesia. Therefore, decentralization tends to produce good result when there is strong government ownership that is appropriate, with administrative & fiscal arrangements, capable of conducting sufficient and reliable local elections, with the community's ability to choose projects. Community participation and decentralization were often independently introduced in a country, even though they clearly need to be integrated in order to improve sustainability and maximize synergies (Binswanger et al. 2010: 48).

c. The Future of Community Empowerment in Indonesia

There are four main expectations achieved through the sustainability of community empowerment as a development model in Indonesia. Firstly, the implemented programs need to be able to reduce the number of poor people in Indonesia. Secondly, it needs to encourage the birth of inclusive development through the creation of marginalized groups, in disadvantaged areas. Thirdly, it needs to realize public services, by strengthening transparent and accountable community service delivery systems in their respective work areas. Fourthly, it needs to strengthen the local capacity by increasing the social capital of various institutions. In the transition period after the end of PNPM (National Program for Community Empowerment) program, a Road Map Action Plan was developed to maintain the implemented programs. This road map consists of three sustainability achievements, which are created to empower communities by increasing their participation, towards independent development, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of civilized society. Therefore, the parties involved in the development process need to transform the empowerment program into a social movement. The main objective of community empowerment is to strengthen the power of the poor and weak groups. Therefore, to complete the understanding of empowerment, it is necessary to determine the concept of the weak group and the powerlessness experienced. Some groups categorized as weak or helpless include the following: gender, ethnicity, the elderly, children and adolescents, people with disabilities, gays, lesbians, isolated communities, and those with family problems. According to Berger & Nenhaus (1977), liaison structures that allow weak groups to express their aspirations and show their ability to the wider social environment are now relatively weak. The emergence of industrialization which created specialization of work has weakened institutions that play a role as a liaison structure with the wider community. Social organizations, religious and family institutions traditionally provide informal support and assistance. Therefore, aside from being able to improve the quality of life of a group of people, the economic system is manifested in various forms of development which often marginalizes certain groups in the society. This powerlessness is caused by several factors such as lack of economic security, poor experience in the political arena, limited access to information, inadequate financial support, poor training, as well as physical and emotional tension.

Seeman (1967), Learner (1986) and Seligman (1995), stated that the powerlessness experienced by a group of people is a result of the internalization process from their interaction with the community. According to Suharto (1997), people are considered weak and powerless, by others. Seeman (1985) called this situation alienation, while, Maier & Seligman (1976) termed it “learned helplessness,” and Learner (1986) called it “surplus powerlessness.” Learner (1986) further stated that the concept of ‘powerlessness’ is the formation of a set of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual thoughts that prevent the actualization of existing possibilities. According to Kieffer (1984), this perceived powerlessness is the result of the formation of continuous interaction between individuals and their environment which includes a combination of self-blame, feelings of mistrust, alienation from social sources with feelings of inadequacy in political struggle. Powerlessness also emerges from internal and external factors. It also comes from negative self-assessment and interactions with the environment, as well as the blockades and obstacles from a larger region. For the success of the community empowerment program, the institutional aspect is the next important carrying capacity (Vijayakumar, 2018). It requires institutions that are strong (Jurkowski, Lawson, Green Mills, Wilner, & Davison 2014), entrenched (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014), and able to represent (Constantino et al., 2012) community empowerment programs that are able to synergize all government and non-government stakeholders. The most important goal in the implementation of community-based development is power (Eger, Miller, & Scarles, 2018). This is viewed from the material and physical aspects, institutional, economic.

Conclusion

Development in Indonesia is currently in a new paradigm with a resurgence in decentralization and local democracy due to the formation of the Village Law. However, decentralization and local democracy are the most humane and appropriate solutions for governance and development. They normatively encourage the growth of local community independence, create potentials and innovation, bring public services closer, increase transparency and accountability of local government and strengthen the active participation of communities in each development agenda. According to Mustopadidjaja AR (2002), the implementation of government and development is inseparable from the paradigm, system, and political process. Therefore, it is a development model that integrates paradigms. The government plays a role in the development process through paradigm, theory, model and strategy. The new paradigm developed through village autonomy is a fundamental perspective that contains theories, concepts, assumptions, methodologies or approaches used in responding and solving problems that arises. Community development is considered a future development paradigm suitable for Indonesia. In this process, the initiative, planning and implementation process is carried out by the community, with external support. Currently, this process has undergone a multi-aspect enrichment as a development paradigm and model. Community development with a long historical background and a set of instruments has succeeded in improving the regional and national levels. It provides control over decisions and resources to the local government. This process involves collaboration between the community, local government, technical agencies and the private sector. Furthermore, this is also in line with strengthening the participatory approach and decentralization efforts of developing countries and opens up greater space for civil society and the private sector. The empowerment process promotes human resources participation, organization, and social life. Society development simultaneously focuses on the problem solving process, social action, economy, culture and environment situation (Sarjiyanto et al, 2017).

It also provides a theoretical foundation and guidance on how to adapt the approach to the specific institutional and political arrangements of different countries, diagnostic tools and step-by-step instructions for examining national contexts, adaptation policies, and expansion programs for rural and urban development. According to Binswanger et al. (2010), community development over a period of 65 years uses the trial and implementation process to build credibility. There are lots of evidence associated with community empowerment such as organic, pragmatic, and sociological approach, which has freed millions of people from poverty by releasing their potential. In addition, through Village Deliberation, community participation has effectively designed and implemented. This includes the current impact of

the Covid-19 pandemic, with villages authorized to channel Direct Cash Assistance sourced from their fund, to prioritize mutual cooperation. Local initiatives are ideas and wills associated with leadership, networking and social solidarity. Therefore, strong local initiatives are the foundation for village independence to deal with various problems. Priyono (2013) stated that village independence plays a large role in implementing development by practicing the values of community empowerment in overcoming the socio-economic spread and impacts of Covid-19.

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