

# Implementation of Village Fund Policy in The Development of Tourist Villages to Encourage Village Independence

Sugito<sup>1</sup>, Ika Sartika MT<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri (IPDN), Indonesia. Email: [DIP.13.815@ipdn.ac.id](mailto:DIP.13.815@ipdn.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>, [ika\\_sartika@ipdn.ac.id](mailto:ika_sartika@ipdn.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: November 04, 2024

Revised: October 16, 2024

Accepted: October 17, 2025

## DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grdis.v5i4.808>

## ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Village Fund policy since 2015 has significantly contributed to rural economic development and increased village independence in Indonesia. With a total allocation of Rp 539 trillion distributed to approximately 74,960 villages by 2023, the Village Fund enables villages to finance development based on local potential, particularly in the tourism sector. Data shows an increase in fund allocation per village from approximately Rp 280 million in 2015 to Rp 1.1–1.3 billion in 2023, with an average absorption rate of 99%. This program has proven effective in reducing the poverty rate in villages from 14.21% in 2015 to 12.22% in 2023, which is higher than the decline in urban areas. In addition, the number of independent villages has increased significantly, from 174 villages in 2015 to 11,456 villages in 2023, while the number of underdeveloped villages has decreased drastically from 33,592 to 7,154 villages. This increase reflects the effectiveness of the Village Fund in promoting independence through local economic development, particularly through the arts, culture, and nature-based tourism sector. However, challenges remain, including transparent management and the development of original village revenue sources to ensure future economic sustainability. Therefore, the Village Fund serves not only as a fiscal instrument but also as a catalyst for strengthening inclusive and sustainable village development.

**Keywords:** Village Funds, Village Independence, Poverty, Tourism Village Development, Sustainable Development.

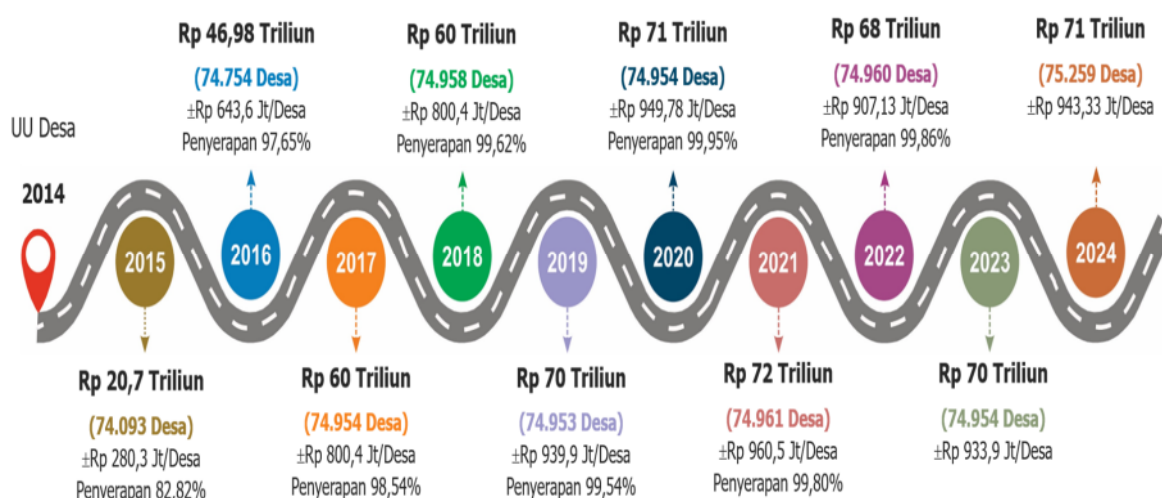
## I. Introduction

Villages play a fundamental role in national development, with rural-based development serving as the foundation for strengthening the economy, eradicating poverty, and reducing regional disparities for national stability. Under regional autonomy, villages are not merely administrative entities; they are government subsystems with the authority to regulate and manage the interests of their communities (Ermaya, 2016). Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages recognizes villages as legal community units with the right to recognize their origins and traditional rights, allowing villages to manage government affairs based on local initiatives within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Recognition, according to Honneth (1996), encompasses respect for equal status and appreciation for diversity. Fraser (1996) adds that recognition must be accompanied by socio-economic justice through redistribution to address structural injustice. Villages, although the lowest entities in the government hierarchy, function as community-based units with collective rights to their natural resources, as stipulated in the Village Law, which affirms the right of village communities to manage resources for their well-being.



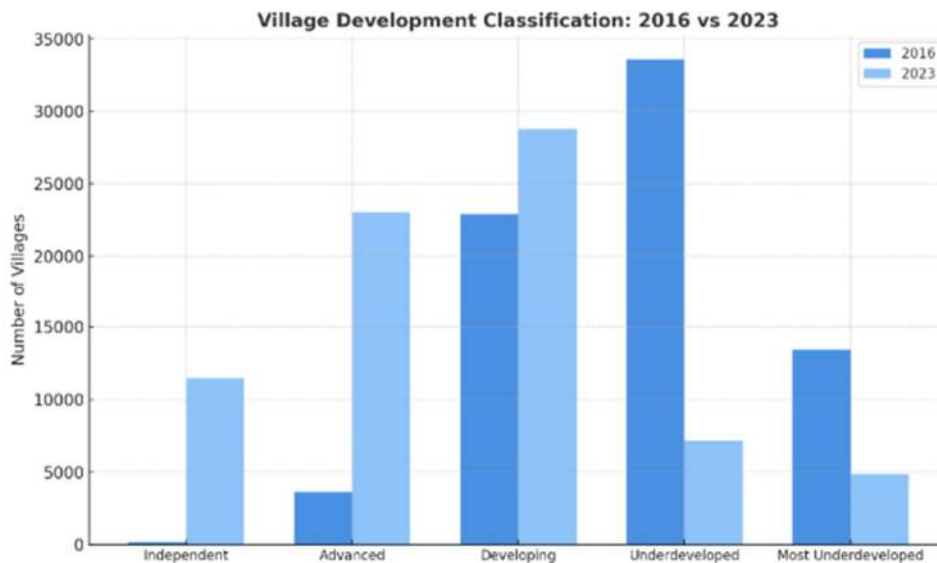
Law No. 6 of 2014 strengthened village autonomy, shifting villages from administrative roles to independent entities in local development, including natural resource management and community empowerment. The goal is to reduce the urban-rural gap and ensure equitable development. Furthermore, villages have the authority to manage resources sustainably and develop the local economy through the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), agriculture, tourism, and creative industries sectors. According to Article 78 of the Village Law, village development aims to improve community welfare by meeting basic needs, building infrastructure, developing the local economy, and sustainably utilizing natural resources. Village development includes improving access to basic needs such as food, clean water, education, and healthcare, as well as strengthening infrastructure such as roads and sanitation to support the economy and quality of life of rural communities.

Village Funds, which are part of the State Budget (APBN), are allocated to support village governance, development, development, and community empowerment. They are managed according to the principles of recognition and subsidiarity, where villages have autonomy in addressing local issues, while higher-level government intervention is only necessary. Through this autonomy, villages are expected to become independent, responsible government units capable of optimizing their potential to achieve equitable and sustainable development in accordance with the national vision. Through village funds, village governments can allocate funds within their authority to improve the welfare of their communities. From 2015 to 2023, through the Village Fund (DD) policy instrument, Rp 539 trillion in DD funds has been allocated and distributed to approximately 74,960 villages. This amount increased rapidly from approximately Rp 280 million (2015) to Rp 1.1 billion-Rp 1.3 billion per village (2023), with an average absorption rate of 99 percent. By 2024, village funds will have reached Rp 71 trillion (Figure 1).



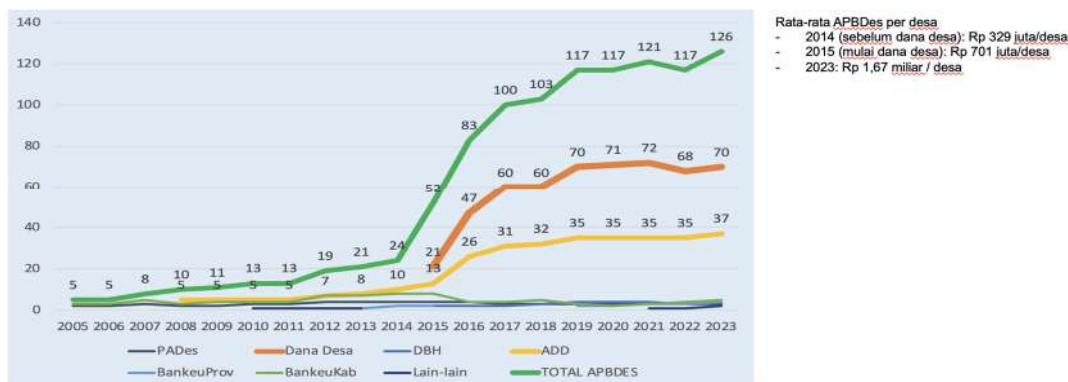
**Figure 1. Village Fund Policy**

As explained above, Village Funds are used to develop village potential. Village Funds should be positioned to stimulate the development of village potential so that villages can generate new financial resources while simultaneously addressing challenges such as unemployment, poverty, education, and so on. Village development has demonstrated a positive impact in reducing poverty rates. This decline is greater than in urban areas. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS), rural poverty decreased by 1.99 percentage points from 14.21 percent (2015) to 12.22 percent (2023). Meanwhile, urban poverty decreased by 1.00 percentage points from 8.29 percent to 7.29 percent. Similarly, village development has seen significant growth. According to updated Village Development Index data from 2015 to 2023, the number of independent villages rose from 174 to 11,456, and advanced villages from 3,608 to 23,035. Conversely, the number of underdeveloped villages dropped dramatically from 33,592 to 7,154.



**Figure 2. Development of Village Independence**

OKJudging from the achievements in the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDes), it has also seen significant growth since 2015, despite the shocks experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. While in 2015 it was only around 5 trillion rupiah, by 2023 it had reached 124 trillion rupiah. However, upon closer examination, the APBDes structure is predominantly dominated by Village Funds and Village Fund Allocations. Only a very small portion comes from original village revenue.



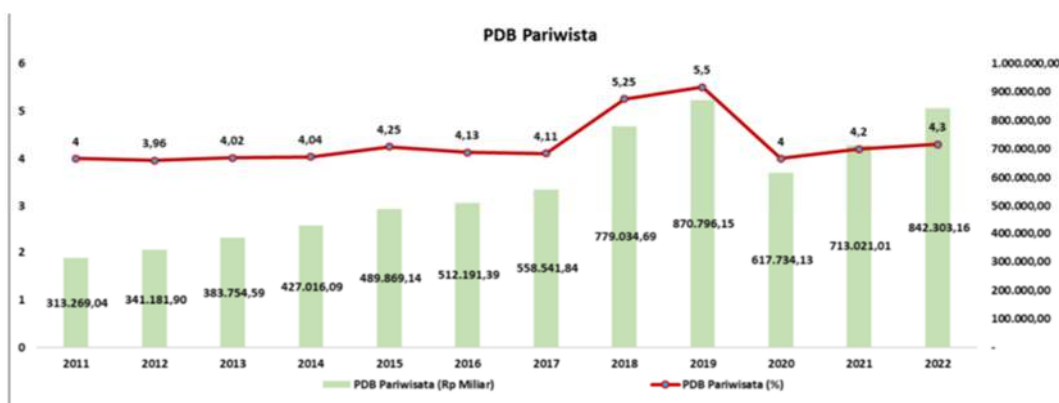
**Figure 3. Village Revenue Budget (APBDes) Achievements**

Villages are continuously encouraged to explore their potential to achieve independence. Village independence refers to a village's ability to manage resources and meet the needs of its residents without significant reliance on external assistance, either from the central or regional government. This independence can be achieved through active community participation in local economic development, community empowerment, infrastructure improvement, and optimal utilization of local potential. Aspects such as good governance, access to basic services like education and health, and community involvement in decision-making and program implementation are important indicators in measuring the level of independence. In social science studies, independence is often understood as an attitude of independence and the ability to manage oneself sustainably. Verhagen (1996) describes independence as a state in which an individual or community group no longer relies on third parties to meet their needs. According to Bell and Morse (2008),

community independence is reflected in three main characteristics: self-capacity (independence in meeting needs and solving problems), collective responsibility, and the ability to think and act sustainably.

In the village context, Nursetiawan (2018) identified three main sectors to support independence: economic potential, social potential, and human resource potential. Villages need to be able to manage local resources, build sustainable economic enterprises, and achieve financial independence. Wisely utilizing local natural resources, tourism, and cultural potential will drive economic progress and strengthen village identity. Examples of success are seen in the development of tourism villages, local craft production, and the diversification of agricultural products. Encouraging village independence by strengthening economic, social, and human resource potential is a crucial step towards achieving sustainable prosperity. Economically, villages can develop MSMEs through Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), sustainable agriculture, village tourism, and agricultural product diversification. Social potential can be enhanced by strengthening mutual cooperation and inclusion in development, while human resource development can be achieved through ongoing training and support for village residents' creativity.

The tourism sector, as recognized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), plays a vital role in economic development and social welfare, contributing 5.5% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 (BPS, 2019). Tourism creates employment opportunities, reduces poverty, and boosts economic growth both locally and globally, making it a strategic sector within the national development agenda. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 210 countries worldwide, including Indonesia, has disrupted and altered various aspects of social life, including the tourism sector. In 2020, the tourism sector contributed only 4.0% to Indonesia's GDP. Indonesia is a country rich in tourism potential, especially in rural areas. The natural beauty and human resources, along with the diversity of Indonesian culture and religion, make Indonesia have good potential in the tourism sector (Bungin, 2015). Tourism potential in Indonesia consists of several types of tourism, such as: beaches, mountains, seas or lakes, forests, rivers, waterfalls, village culture, culinary, and arts or traditions. Based on data from the Ministry of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (2023), as many as 9,964 villages in Indonesia have arts and traditions tourism, 7,019 villages have sea or lake tourism potential, 6,605 villages have village culture, and 6,563 villages have mountain tourism.



**Figure 4. Contribution of the tourism sector to the country's GDP**



**Figure 5. Village tourism potential**

Villages currently face various economic challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, and limited access to decent employment. One way to support the local economy is through village tourism. Village tourism allows villagers to expand their livelihood options and increase their income through various activities, such as tourism development, homestays, providing local food and beverages, and selling handicrafts. Village development through tourism villages seems to be a momentum that should be optimized. Villages are given authority and recognized to regulate, making them subjects of development. On the other hand, authority is also accompanied by fiscal decentralization in the form of village funds, so villages do not develop their villages empty-handed. The next challenge arises with the growth of tourism villages, which also have the potential to improve social welfare in the community through active village involvement, infrastructure development, and income distribution, ultimately making the village independent. The condition of an independent village is an ideal hope, with a village that is economically strong, while still maintaining sustainable development that takes into account environmental, social, and economic aspects. Therefore, the author believes that an in-depth study is needed regarding how village funds are used to develop the potential of tourism villages to encourage village independence.

## II. Research Method

### 2.1. Research Approach

This research begins with a policy analysis of the use of village funds in developing tourism villages. At this stage, the research aims to understand how village funds are managed and implemented in tourism village development. This approach is based on the concept of "village development," which positions villages as the primary subject of development. Villages have full authority, from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation, carried out independently based on local initiatives, community initiatives, and the village government. This paradigm underlies the approach in analyzing policy implementation, which adopts the implementation model proposed by Smith (1973), which encompasses the interaction between policy implementers, target groups, and the policy environment in implementing ideal policies.

Furthermore, this study aims to analyze the factors influencing the development of tourism villages through in-depth interviews with selected respondents, using a content analysis approach. The final stage of the research aims to formulate a conceptual model of village fund policy oriented towards the development of tourism villages to achieve village independence. Village independence, in this context, emphasizes local capacity and emancipation, namely the ability and collective initiative of villages to independently develop their potential and resources.

## 2.2. Types of research

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. This approach was chosen to explore data in depth, providing a rich and meaningful picture of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative descriptive research serves to describe an event or experience from the informant's subjective perspective (Kim et al., 2017). Lincoln et al. (2017) added that reality is dynamic and perceived differently according to context. Therefore, this study aims to understand the experiences of informants within a specific context. Data collection techniques used included literature review, structured interviews, observation, and documentation.

## 2.3. Location and Time of Research

The research was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province, chosen because it is one of the ten provinces with the largest number of independent tourist villages. The regencies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province also serve as buffer zones for the Borobudur National Super Priority Destination (DSP). The research process, including preparation, data collection, coding, analysis, and writing up of the results, is expected to take approximately six months.

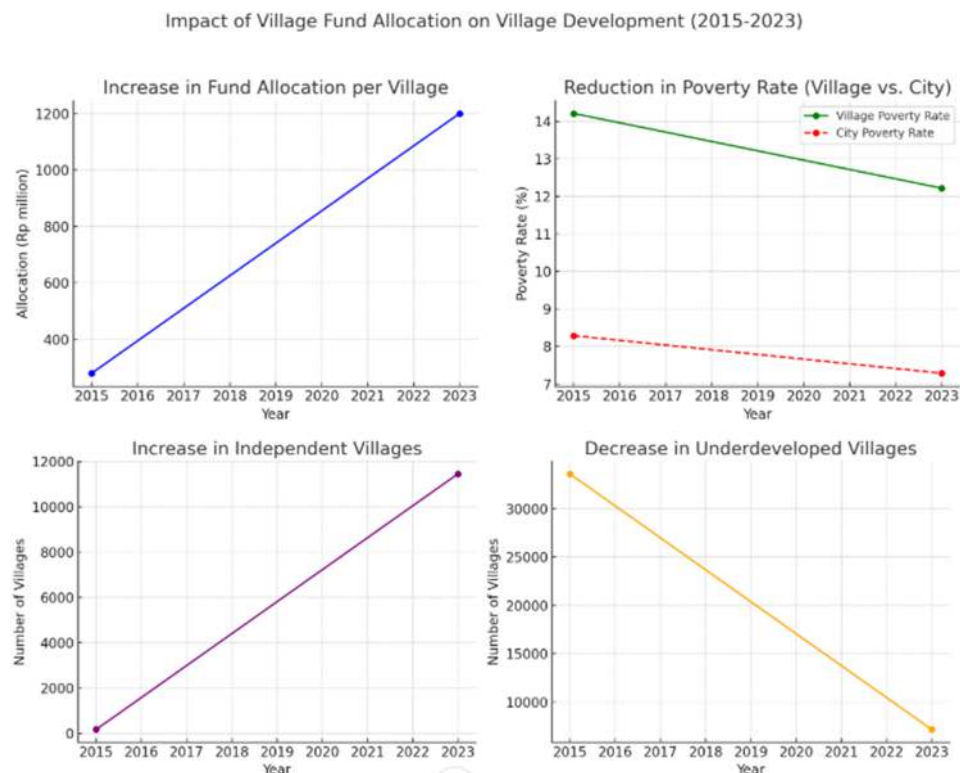
## 2.4. Data collection technique

Data collection in this study was conducted through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, literature reviews, and documentation (Doyle et al., 2019). The initial stage began with a literature review using the framework proposed by Hussein et al. (2017) to familiarize themselves with the theories and regulations related to the research topic, including village fund policies, tourism village development, and the concept of village independence.

# III. Results and Discussion

## 3.1. Results

The data obtained shows that the implementation of the Village Fund policy has contributed significantly to the development of tourist villages and increased village independence. In the 2015-2023 period, the Village Fund allocation distributed reached IDR 539 trillion for approximately 74,960 villages, with an increase from approximately IDR 280 million in 2015 to IDR 1.1–1.3 billion per village in 2023, with an average absorption of 99% (Ministry of Villages, 2023). The poverty rate in villages also decreased from 14.21% in 2015 to 12.22% in 2023, indicating a faster decline compared to urban areas which fell from 8.29% to 7.29% in the same period. Villages that have successfully increased their independence status have also experienced growth, with the number of independent villages increasing from 174 in 2015 to 11,456 in 2023, while the number of underdeveloped villages decreased from 33,592 to 7,154 (Ministry of Villages, 2023). Diverse tourism potential, such as arts, culture, and natural beauty, is spread across various villages, with 9,964 villages developing arts and traditions, and 7,019 villages developing water-based tourism such as lakes or the sea.



**Figure 6. Impact of Village Allocation on Village Development (2015-2023)**

The graph above illustrates various aspects of the impact of Village Fund allocation on village development during the 2015-2023 period:

- a. Increased Fund Allocation per Village: The fund allocation per village increased significantly from around IDR 280 million in 2015 to around IDR 1.1–1.3 billion in 2023.
- b. Decrease in Poverty Rate: The poverty rate in rural areas decreased faster than in urban areas, from 14.21% in 2015 to 12.22% in 2023, while in urban areas it decreased from 8.29% to 7.29%.
- c. Growth of Independent Villages: The number of independent villages increased from 174 villages in 2015 to 11,456 villages in 2023.
- d. Decrease in Underdeveloped Villages: The number of underdeveloped villages decreased from 33,592 villages in 2015 to 7,154 villages in 2023.

These graphs show the contribution of Village Funds in increasing village independence, reducing poverty, and supporting sustainable development.

### 3.2. Discussion

The implementation of Village Funds in the development of tourist villages has shown positive impacts on the economic and social aspects, as well as strengthening the capacity of villages to achieve independence. As the government unit closest to the community, villages have a strategic position to manage resources independently in accordance with the concept of recognition proposed by Honneth (1996), namely respecting the similarities and uniqueness of villages, and ensuring social justice (Fraser, 1996). With the Village Fund, villages can optimize local tourism potential through the development of facilities and infrastructure that increase accessibility and tourist appeal. This tourism-based village development approach is also relevant to the principles of fiscal decentralization, which support local economic development and encourage communities to play an active role in the village economy. Tourism-based development provides new job opportunities, reduces unemployment, and increases community income, consistent with Belle and

Morse's (2008) argument that independence is reflected in the community's self-capacity and collective responsibility.

However, challenges remain in effectively optimizing Village Funds, particularly in establishing transparent and accountable governance. The dominance of village revenues derived from Village Funds indicates a high level of dependency, which can limit long-term economic sustainability (Nursetiawan, 2018). To achieve sustainable independence, it is crucial for villages to increase their original sources of income and develop productive economic enterprises through Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). Furthermore, the development of tourism villages must consider environmental sustainability. As Munasinghe (1992) points out, a sustainable approach to natural resource management is necessary to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the benefits of the present. Therefore, the success of Village Funds in fostering village independence is measured not only by economic aspects, but also by their long-term impact on the environment and the quality of life of local communities. Overall, the Village Fund policy has brought positive changes to the development of tourism villages and increased village independence. However, to ensure its sustainable impact, a management strategy focused on local economic development, strengthened governance, and environmental preservation is needed, so that villages can transform into independent and responsible government units in the long term.

#### IV. Conclusion

From the analysis of Village Fund policies and implementation in the development of tourism villages, it can be concluded that Village Funds play a significant role in encouraging village independence and improving community welfare through development based on local potential. Since their disbursement in 2015, Village Funds have proven effective in strengthening infrastructure, increasing access to basic services, and developing village economies through the tourism sector. The development of village tourism not only creates new jobs and reduces poverty but also narrows the gap between villages and cities, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of independent villages and the decrease in underdeveloped villages between 2015 and 2023. The research methodology, which combines policy analysis and in-depth interviews with respondents, demonstrates that proper management of Village Funds can have positive effects on economic, social, and environmental aspects. A village-centered development approach encourages active community involvement, strengthening local capacity and fostering a sense of ownership in the development process. This aligns with recognition theory, which emphasizes the importance of appreciating local uniqueness and potential (Honneth, 1996) and is supported by the concept of sustainable social justice (Fraser, 1996).

However, the research also emphasizes the need to improve village governance capacity and accountability in the use of Village Funds. The continued high dependence on Village Funds as the primary source of village financing indicates that villages need to strengthen their own-source revenues and develop Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) to achieve more sustainable economic independence. Furthermore, environmental sustainability must be integrated into tourism village development to ensure that positive economic impacts do not compromise the preservation of local ecosystems, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Overall, the Village Fund has significant potential to optimize village development and achieve self-reliance through a locally driven approach. However, its long-term success depends heavily on effective, transparent, and sustainable management, including human resource development, good governance, and a commitment to environmental conservation.

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