

Inclusive Rural Development in Practice: Lessons from an Inclusive Village Model in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article addresses the ongoing issues of inequality and social exclusion faced by vulnerable groups in rural development. These problems are not adequately addressed by traditional development policies, which tend to be administrative, sector-specific, and one-dimensional. Using a qualitative case study of Sumberkerang Village, Indonesia, this study analyzes the implementation of social development strategies and identifies the forms of multidimensional inclusivity realized at the local level. By integrating social development strategies with a multidimensional inclusivity framework within the village context, an approach that has been lacking in previous literature, this study makes a novel contribution to the field. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 22 informants, non-participant observation, and document analysis, and were subsequently analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. The findings indicate that social development strategies are implemented through the synergistic roles of individuals, communities, and the village government. These strategies work harmoniously to produce multidimensional inclusiveness, including social inclusiveness, which ensures equitable access and participation; ecological inclusiveness, which supports sustainable environmental management; and relational inclusiveness, which promotes fairness, equality, and accountability. The findings also reveal that economic inclusion functions as an integrative component that strengthens these dimensions. In an academic context, this study advances social development and rural studies by broadening the concept of inclusiveness beyond single-dimensional approaches and by demonstrating how multidimensional inclusiveness can be implemented in rural development practices.

Keywords: Inclusive Development; Inclusive Village; Social Development; Vulnerable Groups

1. Introduction

In Indonesia, the issue of social exclusion in development remains a challenge. According to a World Bank (2020), around 25.9 million people out of a total population of 264 million still live below the poverty line, while approximately 20.2% of the population remains at risk of falling back into poverty. The SETARA Institute, through the 2025 Indonesian Social Inclusion Index (IISI), also reported that the national level of social inclusion is still in the "basic to improving" category, with an average score of 3.2 points (Juanita et al., 2025). These results indicate that the principle of inclusiveness has not yet been fully integrated into Indonesia's development system.

In line with these findings, United Nations Indonesia (2022) has identified several community groups that remain highly vulnerable across various dimensions of development, as outlined in the following table:

Table 1. Findings on Vulnerable Groups in Indonesia

Dimension of Development	The Most Disadvantaged Groups
General economic welfare	Elderly persons with disabilities in urban and rural areas; persons with disabilities in rural areas.
Education	Elderly people with disabilities in urban areas; elderly women in urban areas; elderly people in rural areas or disadvantaged regions.
Decent work	People with disabilities in rural areas, elderly people in rural areas.
Food security	Women in rural areas, elderly people in rural areas, and people with disabilities in rural areas
Asset ownership	People with disabilities in rural areas; elderly people in rural areas.
Health	Persons with disabilities, the elderly.
Civil space	Elderly woman
Political participation	Women, widows or widowers, and the elderly in rural areas.

Source: United Nations Indonesia (2022)

Based on the table, persons with disabilities, the elderly, women, and rural communities are the groups most at risk of being left behind across various dimensions of development. This highlights that social vulnerability in rural areas is increasingly complex. In line with this, the World Bank (2020) emphasizes that geographical factors contribute to social inequality, as economic conditions are often dependent on the natural sector and access to basic services is limited. Addressing this situation requires interventions that promote regional balance in development (World Bank, 2020) through an approach that promotes inclusiveness and the well-being of vulnerable groups.

A relevant approach is social development, integrated with the concept of inclusive development. Social development aims to align social policies with economic development and seeks to remove barriers that prevent communities from accessing and fully participating in development processes (Midgley et al., 2020). In this sense, inclusive development ensures that all segments of society can participate and benefit, leaving no one behind. The integration of these two approaches is reflected in the Inclusive Villages practices, which prioritize social justice, equal rights, and non-discrimination in village governance (Direktorat Jenderal Pembangunan Desa dan P. D. T., 2021). This approach is implemented through a combination of government facilitation in a top-down manner and local initiatives in a bottom-up manner. At the local level, some villages have independently initiated Inclusive Village, demonstrating a bottom-up approach that is more adaptive to contextual village needs, particularly in addressing challenges

arising from leadership that lacks vision and responsiveness to vulnerable groups (Juanita et al., 2025).

Indeed, inclusive leadership plays a strategic role in formulating equitable policies, expanding participation, strengthening village institutions, and ensuring the sustainability of inclusive development at the grassroots level. One notable example is Sumberkerang Village, Probolinggo Regency, Indonesia, which, since 2022, has prioritized vulnerable groups in its development programs and received first place in the 2024 National Inclusive Village Award organized by the State University of Surabaya. This best practice demonstrates that inclusive village success depends not only on national policy frameworks but also on local autonomy and the capacity of village officials to plan, budget, and implement inclusive programs sustainably (Annahar et al., 2023). These factors make Sumberkerang Village a particularly relevant case for studying development models that prioritize vulnerable groups.

Based on current literature, studies on inclusive village development have been partial. This suggests that the issue of exclusion in development has yet to be addressed. Firstly, research on inclusive village governance has tended to focus on managerial aspects and the roles of village officials (Dinata et al., 2022; Hariri et al., 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2023; Sugianto & Permady, 2020), without fully integrating social development strategies centred on communities and individuals. Similarly, research on social development in villages has not yet been linked to inclusive village practices. For example, the research conducted by Dwi Sihotang & Nugroho (2021), Riabokon (2021), Ramadhan & Daniel (2021) and (Bertrand Nathaniel & Buchari (2024) only examines social development in the context of decentralization, empowerment programmes, and evaluations of village development implementation, rather than inclusive village programmes.

Secondly, research on inclusive villages has also tended to be sectoral, often highlighting specific groups, such as persons with disabilities (Dinata et al., 2022; Macaria Theresia, 2024, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2023; Probosiwi, 2017), or women's participation (Hariyono, 2020). Thirdly, research on inclusive development in Indonesia generally only addresses social or socio-economic dimensions (Gutama & Widiyehseno, 2020; Jamal et al., 2023), unlike global studies which examine inclusiveness multidimensionally (Buzinde & Caterina-Knorr, 2023; Morosoli et al., 2024). Lastly, several studies still rely on literature reviews or secondary data (Probosiwi, 2017; Putri et al., 2024), meaning the empirical dynamics of inclusive village implementation are not explored in sufficient depth.

These limitations indicate a clear gap in the literature, namely the absence of an integrative, multidimensional, and empirically grounded analysis that connects social development strategies with Inclusive Village practices at the local level. To address these gaps, this study offers a novel contribution by developing an integrative analytical framework that links social development strategies with multidimensional inclusiveness within the context of Inclusive Villages. This novelty lies in three key aspects. First, it bridges the conceptual divide between social development theory emphasizing the roles of the state, community, and individuals and the practical implementation of Inclusive Village initiatives. Second, it operationalizes a multidimensional perspective of inclusiveness, encompassing social, ecological, and relational dimensions, within a micro-level (village) context, which has been largely overlooked in previous studies. Third, this study is grounded in empirical evidence derived from a case study approach, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of inclusive development at the local level.

Therefore, the following research question guided the design of this study: 'How are social development strategies implemented in the Inclusive Village programme to achieve multidimensional inclusivity, as illustrated by the case study in Sumberkerang Village?' The study addresses how persistent social inequalities and exclusion at the local level can be tackled

through an integrative development approach within a community-based development framework grounded in multidimensional inclusivity, particularly in the village context. Thus, the findings of this study offer an integrative approach that links social development strategies centered on individuals, communities, and government with multidimensional inclusivity, thereby avoiding fragmentation and sectoral analysis.

In addressing the research question, this study makes an innovative contribution to the practical implementation of inclusive development. Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to provide new theoretical and empirical insights into the study of inclusive local development and offer a more holistic analytical framework for future research. In practical terms, this study has policy implications, as it can inform the development of more inclusive, participatory and sustainable local policies, particularly in efforts to address inequality and social exclusion among vulnerable groups.

2. Literature Review

Social Development

In the 1980s, many countries experienced distorted development, where economic growth was not accompanied by equitable welfare distribution, particularly in Third World countries facing extreme poverty, inequality, exploitation of vulnerable groups, and environmental degradation (Midgley, 1995).

Table 2. Social Development Strategy

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Description</i>
Individual	• Fostering an Enterprise Culture to Promote Social Progress • Promoting Small Enterprises for Needy People • Promoting Social Welfare by Enhancing Individual Functioning	• Creating an entrepreneurial culture to advance social progress • Supporting small enterprises for vulnerable or poor populations • Improving individual capacities and welfare through social interventions
Community	• Community Development and Social Development • Community Action, Participation and Development • Women, Gender and Social Development	• Strengthening local organizations and community capacity • Encouraging community participation and collective action for social development • Empowering women and promoting gender equality within communities
Government	• Promoting Social Development through Unified Planning • Economic Growth, Welfare and Equality • Social Welfare and Basic Needs • Sustainable Development	• Coordinated socio-economic planning led by government • Linking economic growth with social welfare and equity • Meeting basic needs as part of social development efforts • Integrating social, economic, and environmental objectives for long-term development

Source: Midgley (1995)

According to Midgley (2024), the impact of social development has stagnated to this day due to uneven progress and exacerbated inequalities resulting from global economic and technological changes. Consequently, social development has recently gained recognition as a

relevant strategy that deliberately links economic and social policies in a planned, inclusive, universal, and transformative manner. The aim is to create just, participatory and sustainable communities.

Historically, such interventions were once rejected, for example, by Herbert Spencer and William Sumner, who argued that government involvement could disrupt market mechanisms. However, this view was challenged by Veblen, who rejected the notion that the market is the sole mechanism for achieving welfare (Midgley, 1995). Thus, social development is not a dichotomy that separates social and economic well-being; rather, it proceeds in parallel with the aim of achieving a more meaningful and participatory form of social well-being (Burchi et al., 2022; Cattaneo et al., 2022). This development model, therefore addresses various development goals and has become a policy-promoted process in both developing and developed countries, as it is considered relevant to equitable development (Burchi et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022; Işık et al., 2024). Midgley (1995) offers three strategies for achieving social development goals, namely a social development by individuals, social development by communities, and social development by governments, as summarized in the following table.

Inclusive Development

The concept of inclusive development was first popularized by the Asian Development Bank through its publication in 2007 as a strategy towards equality and community empowerment (Rauniyar & Kanbur, 2010). Since criticism of purely economic growth approach actually widens inequality and triggers social exclusion in many developing countries (Piketty, 2014), this approach has emerged as a response to the neoliberal paradigm, which emphasizes market efficiency but often neglects socio-ecological dimensions and exacerbates structural inequality (Gupta et al., 2015).

The evolution of the concept of inclusivity in development shows a shift from a narrow focus on economic performance towards a more multidimensional, institutional, and relational understanding. Gupta et al. (2015) argue that the inclusive growth approach is too narrow because it focuses solely on economic performance indicators, thus failing to capture the multiple dimensions of poverty. This criticism gave rise to the inclusive wealth approach, which expands the measurement of progress beyond GDP by assessing stocks of physical, human, and natural capital through a composite index. Nevertheless, this approach is still based on per capita monetary averages and remains inadequate in capturing social relations, psychological well-being, and the distribution of inequality (Gupta et al., 2015).

Subsequent developments have been influenced by the institutional thinking of Karl Polanyi and Amartya Sen's capability approach, which shifts the focus towards the role of formal and informal institutions, cultural norms, power relations, and human capabilities in determining access to resources (Gupta et al., 2015). At this stage, inclusivity is no longer understood simply as a matter of distributional outcomes but as an institutionalized social process. This evolution culminates in the concept of inclusive development, which incorporates intra-society inequality as well as non-income dimensions such as social participation and environmental sustainability (Dörffel & Schuhmann, 2022; Gupta & Vegelin, 2016).

Rauniyar & Kanbur (2010) define inclusive development as growth accompanied by equal opportunities, in which all members of society, including vulnerable groups, can participate in economic activities and fairly benefit from development. Thus, this approach bridges social justice and economic efficiency (Nurlanova et al., 2021). Gupta et al. (2015) emphasize that inclusive development requires transforming governance into an interactive and relational model that promotes empowerment, adaptive learning, and equitable power structures. To operationalize this approach, Gupta & Vegelin (2016) formulated three main principles of inclusive development, as summarized in the following table:



Table 3. Principles of Inclusive Development

<i>Social Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Ecological Inclusiveness</i>	<i>Relational Inclusiveness</i>
• Ensure the principles of equity in the distribution of development opportunities. • Incorporate the knowledge and perspectives of all stakeholders. • Provide targeted capacity-building programs to enable effective participation. • Strengthen protection mechanisms for the poorest groups. • Engage all stakeholders in the governance and decision-making processes of development.	• Adopt ecocentric principles from the local to the global level. • Equitably share rights, responsibilities, and risks. • Build resilience and adaptive capacity. • Utilize environmentally sustainable “green” international cooperative instruments. • Involve all stakeholders in decision-making and implementation.	• Ensure that public goods and merit goods are not privatized or securitized. • Address all drivers and actors contributing to inequality. • Combat offshoring, tax havens, and other mechanisms that lead to the concentration of wealth and ecospace. • Challenge discourses that concentrate wealth to ensure that markets and growth operate within an inclusive development paradigm. • Test instruments for inclusiveness and ensure downward accountability. • Uphold the global rule of law and principles of constitutionalism.

Source: Gupta & Vegelin (2016)

Vulnerable Groups and Inclusive Villages

Limantè & Tereškinas (2022) trace the concept of vulnerability to the Latin *vulnerare* and *vulnus*, meaning “to wound.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, physically or emotionally,” aligning with Larkin (2009) view of vulnerability as a condition of risk, powerlessness, or need for protection. Mainstreaming vulnerable groups in development is operationalized through Inclusive Villages, which are grounded in social justice, equal rights, and non-discrimination. Direktorat Jenderal Pembangunan Desa dan P. D. T. (2021) emphasizes rejecting discrimination based on gender, religion, race, ethnicity, physical condition, or social status, ensuring all citizens have equal access to resources, services, and decision-making. Inclusive Villages also aim to remove social, economic, and cultural barriers through participatory governance (Putri et al., 2024) and foster social solidarity and cross-sector collaboration (Hariri et al., 2025).

In this study, the Inclusive Village is conceptualized as an operational form of social and inclusive development at the village level. It functions not merely as an administrative program but as a platform for social transformation, expanding access, enhancing the capacity of vulnerable groups, and promoting equitable and sustainable distribution of development benefits. Thus, examining Inclusive Village practices provides a framework for analyzing strategies that prioritize vulnerable groups through access to resources, economic opportunities, education, and basic services in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

3. Methods

3.1 Data description

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to capture in depth the processes and social development strategies embedded in the implementation of the Inclusive

Village. According to Creswell & Miller (2000), the qualitative approach does not focus on scores or measurement instruments, but rather on achieving a deep understanding of the social context by considering the perspectives of those involved, whether as researchers, participants, or readers and reviewers of the study. This approach, therefore, emphasizes the interpretation of meaning and the social dynamics that emerge within the studied situation. In practice, qualitative researchers systematically apply various techniques to ensure the credibility and validity of their findings. These techniques include member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer debriefing and external audits.

Data analysis followed the qualitative framework proposed by Ellen as cited in Neuman (2014), which consists of data sorting, classification, and coding. In the open coding, the researcher identified initial concepts and themes from interviews, observations, and documents, such as leadership initiative, community participation, institutional support, and programmatic inclusiveness. During axial coding, these initial codes were systematically organized into categories and subcategories, emphasizing the relationships among leadership values, collective learning processes, institutional facilitation, participatory planning, and inclusivity practices. Finally, selective coding integrated these categories into core themes that explain the implementation of social development strategies as outlined by Midgley (1995) in Table 2, and the multidimensional principles of inclusiveness according to Gupta & Vegelin (2016) as presented in Table 3.

The Social Development Strategy proposed by Midgley (1995) and the Inclusive Development perspective from Gupta & Vegelin (2016) are used as analytical tools to interpret how Inclusive Village practices address social inequality, social exclusion, and the needs of vulnerable groups at the local level, ultimately leading to the creation of an inclusive environment. This is illustrated in the following Research Framework.

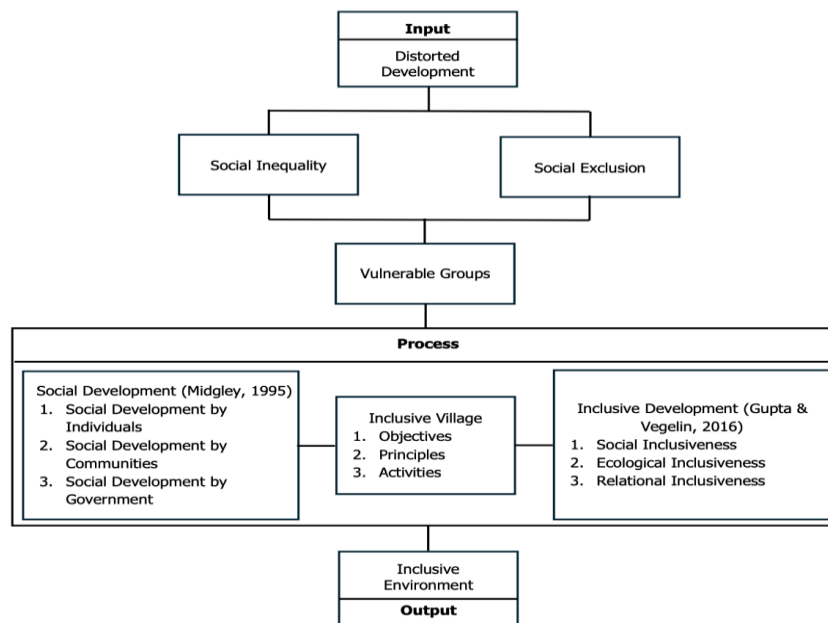


Figure 1. Research Framework

To enhance data quality, the researcher applies Guba (1981) trustworthiness model by triangulating data through comparison of interviews with village government officials, community members, and vulnerable groups, and by verifying the findings with activity documentation, this

ensures that the results reliably reflect social development strategies and inclusiveness practices in the Sumberkerang Inclusive Village program.

3.2 Methods

The research site was purposively selected based on three considerations first, Sumberkerang Village developed an inclusive model through a bottom-up approach; second, this initiative has been formalized this through Village Regulation No. 03 of 2024 on the Inclusive Village of Sumberkerang; and third, the village received national recognition as the Best Inclusive Village at the 2024 UNESA Village Award.

Data were collected from 6–29 January 2026 through in-depth interviews with 22 informants, non-participant observation of the village's physical environment, inclusive infrastructure, and social services supporting inclusiveness, as well as document review, including the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes), village deliberation records, Sumberkerang Village Regulation No. 03 of 2024, meeting outcomes of the inclusive village mobilizer organization, and documents related to the 2024 Inclusive Village Award.

Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement, knowledge, and experience in the development of the Inclusive Village and programs for vulnerable groups. They were categorized to ensure diverse perspectives on policy, organizational practice, and community experience, as summarized in the table below:

Table 4. Informant Selection Framework

Research Objectives	Informant Categories	List of Informants	No. of Participants
1. Describing social development strategies in practice in the Inclusive Village of Sumberkerang Village	Local Government	Regency Government, Village Government, and Village Facilitators	4
	Local Organization	Inclusive Village Movement Organization in Sumberkerang Village, Sumberkerang Village Inclusive Islamic Boarding School, Integrated Health Service Post, Family Empowerment and Welfare (PKK), Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), and Youth Organization	9
	Local Individuals	People with disabilities, the elderly, female heads of households, poor citizens, and MSMEs actors	9
Total			22

The interview process was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, and all interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The combination of these three methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the social development strategies and practices of inclusiveness in Sumberkerang's Inclusive Village.

4. Results

The Implementation of Social Development Strategies in Sumberkerang's Inclusive Village

This section explains how social development strategies in Sumberkerang Village, as follows:

a. Social Development Strategy by Individuals

1) Village Leader's Initiative

The initial development of inclusivity in Sumberkerang Village originated from the initiative of the village head, who has a sibling with a disability, as expressed by the village head below:

"From my personal experience, I have a sibling with a disability, and I saw how difficult it was during my childhood. During my campaign, I visited residents and found that some of them were also persons with disabilities. So, when I was inaugurated in 2022, I created a special program for persons with disabilities, one of which was providing a vehicle to shuttle students with disabilities to and from the special needs school." (Village Head, Informant BR)

The excerpt illustrates that the personal experiences and values held by the village leader serve as the main foundation in designing policies and programs that support vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities. This strategy demonstrates how social change and innovation at the village level can begin with individual concern and initiative, before later being integrated institutionally and collectively.

2) Community Member's Initiative

Based on observations, the people of Sumberkerang generally coexist with vulnerable groups and provide opportunities for their participation in various social, economic, and educational activities. For example, physically disabled individuals recite the Qur'an (qiraah) during event openings, visually impaired individuals participate in village singing competitions, and MSME actors, such as fried shallot entrepreneurs, employ elderly people or women to peel shallots. Some social development initiatives by individuals are described by informant SR in the following interview:

"In my workshop, there are workers with disabilities. He didn't finish junior high school and sometimes has difficulty understanding instructions, but I understand inclusion, so I don't treat him any differently. We also chose them out of compassion, especially since they were unemployed at that time." (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

This reflects how individuals in Sumberkerang foster social inclusion by taking empathetic personal initiatives, exemplified by Informant SR, who offers jobs to people with disabilities regardless of their educational or learning limitations. Similarly, in the field of education, there is a faith-based educational institution, namely the Inclusive Islamic Boarding School in Sumberkerang. Its founder has taken the initiative to promote inclusive education for persons with disabilities. This is explained in the following quotation.

"At first, there were already children with special needs, but we did not yet understand their conditions. In 2014, a parent entrusted their autistic child to us. We accepted the child and now he successfully became a memorizer of the Qur'an. This encouraged many parents, including Mrs. SR, to enroll their children as well. In 2017, we officially established the Inclusive Islamic Boarding School. All materials, including the Braille Qur'an and special teaching methods, were developed independently while also learning from other communities and foundations" (Founder of the Inclusive Islamic Boarding School, Informant MH)

Based on the interview, MH, through personal dedication, created educational opportunities for people with disabilities. Although this initiative was carried out independently, the boarding school has successfully developed to produce a Braille Qur'an and special teaching methods for individuals with disabilities.

b. Social Development Strategy by Community

1) Benchmarking in the Development of Inclusive Villages

Sumberkerang Village strengthened its understanding of inclusivity through a benchmarking visit to Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara. According to the village head, the benchmarking experience succeeded in broadening the village's perspective on inclusivity. This was conveyed in an interview:

"From the benchmarking visit, I learned about Inclusive Villages. It turns out that vulnerable groups are not only persons with disabilities but also the elderly, women, children, and various other groups." (Village Head, Informant BR)

The interview excerpt above demonstrates a transformation in understanding, from a sectoral approach (focused only on disabilities) to a more holistic approach to inclusivity.

2) Technical Guidance for Inclusive Village Community Actors

After benchmarking, Sumberkerang Village was designated as a locus for Inclusive Village facilitation by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. The facilitation provided took the form of technical guidance, which consisted of three sessions. The first session was participatory, involving forty participants, including the Village Consultative Body (BPD), village officials, community leaders, and vulnerable groups. Informant Y explained the process of the first technical guidance session in the following interview:

"In the first technical guidance session, the discussion focused on the Inclusive Village and identifying Sumberkerang residents who belonged to vulnerable groups." (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant Y)

During this session, participation in the technical guidance involved multiple stakeholders, with the discussion centered on understanding the concept of the Inclusive Village and identifying villagers in Sumberkerang who are considered vulnerable. The second session then focused on strengthening the capacity of Inclusive Village cadres. As Informant SR stated:

"We were given materials on the duties of inclusive cadres, how to conduct needs analysis, and propose programs. This way, the village can form the organizational structure of the inclusive village cadres." (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

This quote shows that the second session provided briefing on the duties and functions of inclusive cadres, enabling the community to establish the inclusive cadre institution in Sumberkerang Village. The third session discussed the formulation of thematic work programs to develop the Inclusive Village program. The village facilitator explained:

"Then, the thematic focus on chili seedling cultivation for women had already been determined. In this session, the village head presented the theme to all participants." (Village Facilitator, Informant ASM)

The final session showed that participants began to formulate a concrete thematic work program, namely chili seedling cultivation for women. Thus, the entire technical guidance process not only provided understanding and capacity building, but also resulted in concrete action plans that directly involved vulnerable groups in the Inclusive Village.

3) Establishment of Inclusive Village Mobilizer Organization (Inclusive Village Cadres)

The establishment of the Inclusive Village cadre structure emerged as a key outcome of the Inclusive Village facilitation process. Informant SR explained that the composition of the Inclusive Village Cadre is multi-actor, as reflected in the following statement:

"The members of the Inclusive Village Cadre are complete, there are Village Consultative Body (BPD) like me, Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), posyandu cadres, the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), village officials, the Youth Organization (Karang Taruna), including the vulnerable groups themselves..... The process of becoming a cadre involves both appointments and voluntary applications. I volunteered because of my personal experience with a child who has dyslexia." (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

In addition to involving various actors village, the recruitment process for Inclusive Village Cadres combined formal appointment and voluntary participation based on personal experiences, enhancing social legitimacy and fostering a sense of ownership of the Inclusive Village.

c. Social Development Strategy by Government

1) Planning of Inclusive Village Programs

The planning of Inclusive Village programs was explained by the village facilitator in the following interview:

"The main goal of the Inclusive Village Program in Sumberkerang is to enable marginalized groups to live independently, just like other members of society. Therefore, we involve them and provide opportunities for them to be productive." (Village Facilitator, Informant ASM)

The excerpt above indicates that the planning of the Inclusive Village program is directed toward empowering marginalized groups so that they can live independently and on an equal footing with other members of society. Informant ASM also emphasized that, at the initial stage, empowerment programs prioritized the economic sector, as conveyed in the following statement:

"Our priority was the economy and the simplest program was seedling cultivation because it could be carried out by women, the elderly, or persons with disabilities."

In addition, the Village-Owned Enterprise also focused on agriculture, so it was very well aligned.” (Village Facilitator, Informant ASM)

The quotation indicates that Inclusive Village planning also focuses on economic development by considering programs that are accessible to vulnerable groups. Informant ASM added the following regarding the planning process:

“I assigned the inclusive cadres to identify the needs of vulnerable groups; I provided them with training and prepared the assessment format. The results of the needs analysis were then incorporated into the budget” (Village Facilitator, Informant ASM)

The excerpt shows that the inclusive village is developed through integrated planning based on the needs of vulnerable groups, allocation of the village budget, and the integration of social and economic objectives. In this process, the village government, together with the inclusive cadres, are the main actors in socio-economic planning that is truly oriented towards social welfare and the fulfillment of the basic needs of vulnerable groups.

2) Drafting of the Village Regulation on Inclusive Village

The drafting of the Village Regulation on the Inclusive Village serves as a form of formal legitimacy to underpin and ensure the sustainability of the inclusive village program. The process of drafting this regulation was explained by Informant SR, who is both an Inclusive Village Cadre and a member of the Village Consultative Body (BPD)

“The drafting process took place at the village office, with discussions involving us (the Inclusive Village Cadres), BPD members, the village head, and assistance from the village facilitator. Then, the draft was taken to Kraksaan for feasibility testing.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

During the drafting process, cadres actively participated by providing suggestions regarding the substance of the regulation. Informant SR further stated:

“I suggested including dyslexia, because many children cannot read.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

This suggestion demonstrates that the cadres were actively involved in formulating the village regulation. It also highlights that previously under-recognized issues, such as dyslexia, received more attention through the regulation, expanding the scope of disability considerations in the village.

3) Implementation of Basic Services and Social Protection Programs

Sumberkerang Village implements basic social services and social protection programs to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all residents, particularly vulnerable groups. Several of these programs were explained by inclusive village cadres as follows:

“What the village head has executed includes a disability-accessible toilet, next to which there is a lactation room and a village reading corner. The roads and stairs have also been made disability-friendly. Assistance for persons with disabilities is

also available, such as hearing aids and wheelchairs.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant F)

In addition to infrastructure, the cadres emphasized educational support through package schools or Community Learning Centers (PKBM):

“Here there is also a package school for children who have dropped out. The teachers are kindergarten instructors.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

The village’s social protection programs are also implemented through various initiatives, including RTLH (Rehabilitation of Uninhabitable Houses), BLT (Direct Cash Assistance), PKH (Conditional Cash Transfers), and the sanitation program. The cadre explained:

“The village head always ensures that no residents are left behind. When building RTLH, he personally added improvements when there were deficiencies to make houses habitable. Social assistance programs such as BLT and PKH are always implemented to ensure residents benefit.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant SR)

Another informant shared experiences related to the sanitation program:

“We received the sanitation program. Many recipients were women who had suffered strokes, so toilets were relocated to make them more accessible. For social assistance, the village head prioritizes the elderly and adjusts recipients so that vulnerable groups are served first.” (Inclusive Village Cadre, Informant Y)

Overall, these practices demonstrate social development by the government aimed at improving the well-being of all residents, particularly the most vulnerable groups. This multi-program approach reflects an integrated social development strategy, in which government, community, and individual interventions complement each other to create equal opportunities and reduce disparities among vulnerable groups.

Manifestations of Inclusivity in Sumberkerang’s Inclusive Village

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, Sumberkerang Village has implemented a range of cross-dimensional programs to improve the well-being of vulnerable groups. In the social dimension, the government provides disability support services (inclusive transportation, assistive devices, and accessible infrastructure), basic services for women and children (lactation room, village library, Community Learning Center (PKBM), Kindergarten and Early Childhood Education Centers), faith-based inclusive education, healthcare services for the elderly, as well as social protection programs for poor households. The ecological dimension is realized through environmental and health programs such as tree planting, nutrition gardens, and Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (PHBS). Meanwhile, relational inclusiveness is embedded in inclusive village governance through village regulations, budget integration, village deliberation forums, and the establishment of inclusive cadres representing vulnerable groups in village development processes.

In addition, multidimensional inclusivity that synergizes with economic aspects was also identified. The economic–social dimension is evident through support and facilitation for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) provided by the village government in collaboration with business actors. The economic–ecological dimension is manifested through the development of community enterprises such as BUMDes units engaged in agriculture, chili seedling programs,

organic fertilizer production training, and waste banks involving farmers and women. Meanwhile, the economic–relational dimension is reflected in youth entrepreneurship activities, such as the youth angkringan (street food stall) program.

Based on these findings, the development practices of the Inclusive Village in Sumberkerang demonstrate a strong connection between social development strategies carried out by various actors (individuals, communities, and the government) and the diverse activities that realize inclusivity at the village level. To further illustrate this relationship, Figure 2 presents the integrated framework of inclusive village development practices in Sumberkerang.

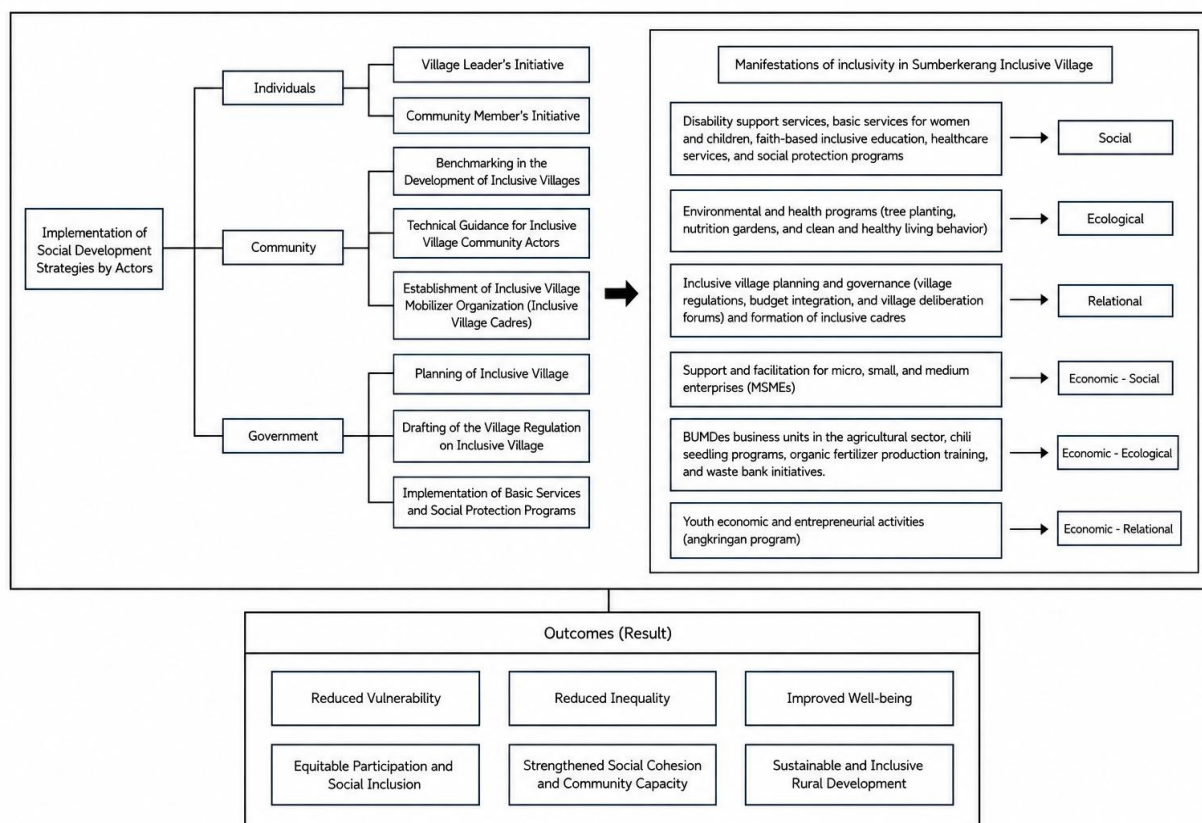


Figure 2. Integrated Framework of Social Development and Multidimensional Inclusivity in Sumberkerang Inclusive Village

The figure demonstrates that social development strategies implemented by various actors create an interconnected system of inclusivity across social, ecological, relational, and economic dimensions. The interaction among these dimensions contributes to broader development outcomes, including improved well-being, reduced inequality, strengthened social cohesion, and more sustainable and inclusive rural development. Thus, inclusivity in Sumberkerang Village can be understood as an integrated and sustainable social development process grounded in multi-actor collaboration.

5. Discussion

Social Development in the Inclusive Village Practice

The inclusive village practices in Sumberkerang demonstrate the integration of social and economic development to promote participation, sustainability, and equitable well-being. Village-level practices deliberately combine social intervention, social protection, and economic

empowerment to reduce structural barriers faced by vulnerable groups and enable their equal participation in development. This reflects Midgley's (1995) concept of social development as the planned integration of economic and social goals, as well as Midgley et al. (2020) emphasis on inclusiveness and the elimination of structural barriers that limit access and participation for marginalized groups. Furthermore, these practices illustrate a multidimensional form of inclusive development in which social, environmental, and relational dimensions advance simultaneously (Gupta & Vegelin, 2016; Pouw & Gupta, 2017).

These various processes are reflected in the roles of individuals in developing the Inclusive Village, through the integration of various initiatives from the village head, community members, founders of Islamic boarding schools, and MSME actors, who provide vulnerable groups with access to employment, education, and economic activities. This aligns with Midgley's (1995) assumption that social welfare improves when individuals are able to function effectively in social and economic life by leveraging available opportunities. Furthermore, such individual participation fosters the creation of an interconnected inclusive ecosystem, in which various stakeholders collaborate to expand access to basic necessities (Cairo & Mahlstedt, 2023; Lee et al., 2019).

In addition, the initiatives of the Sumberkerang village head demonstrate the crucial role of strong local leadership. This aligns with the findings of the SETARA Institute (Juanita et al., 2025), which highlight three pillars of leadership in shaping a social inclusion ecosystem: political leadership (integrated into the village medium-term development plan and programs for vulnerable groups); bureaucratic leadership (inclusive cadres, regulations, budgeting, and data systems); and social leadership (active engagement of local institutions and vulnerable groups through capacity building and facilitation). Thus, strengthening individual capacity and the role of local leadership are key elements in ensuring the realization of inclusiveness at the village level. In the long term, this approach not only enhances community participation, but also fosters the development of strong political leadership based on social capital and the sustainability of development impacts (Kamal et al., 2025; Sajjad et al., 2024).

Social development by communities is reflected in the role of multi-actor inclusive cadres, local organizations, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), community health posts (Posyandu) and inclusive Islamic boarding schools, which act not only as beneficiaries but also as key implementers of programs. These findings reinforce Midgley's (1995) view that the community plays a vital role in promoting community well-being through inclusive village programs, emphasizing participation, cooperation, and community self-reliance. Collective engagement in Sumberkerang strengthens institutional capacity and the social legitimacy of inclusive development. Then, social development by government is demonstrated through integrated planning based on the needs of vulnerable groups; allocation within the village budget; legalization through inclusive village regulations; and the provision of accessible infrastructure and basic services. The village government coordinates resources, ensures redistribution, and guarantees basic needs as prerequisites for socio-economic participation, consistent with Midgley (1995) emphasis on integrated socio-economic planning, redistribution, and sustainability.

The integration of these strategies aligns with Midgley's (1995) institutional perspective, which represents a middle path between state dominance and market mechanisms, where local values, norms, and institutions shape socio-economic behavior. Economic empowerment programs and the involvement of vulnerable groups in productive activities demonstrate how village economic growth is intentionally directed toward social welfare. In this context, economic development functions as an instrument to strengthen social participation and the self-reliance of vulnerable groups. Thus, the Inclusive Village in Sumberkerang reflects a broader process of rural transformation that integrates social protection, economic empowerment, participatory governance, and institutional reform within village development. Inclusiveness emerges from

bottom-up community initiatives that are later institutionalized through policies, regulations, and cadre structures. This case shows that successful inclusive development at the local level depends on the synergy among individuals, communities, and government within a mutually reinforcing institutional ecosystem to achieve equitable well-being.

The Practice of Inclusive Development at the Local Level

This study demonstrates that the Inclusive Village in Sumberkerang reflects the practical implementation of inclusive development at the local level, which can be understood through Gupta & Vegelin's (2016) multidimensional framework encompassing interconnected social, ecological, and relational dimensions. In the social dimension, inclusiveness in Sumberkerang extends beyond the provision of basic services and is embedded within planning systems, governance mechanisms, and everyday social practices. The principle of equity, as argued by Rauniyar & Kanbur (2010) that inclusiveness requires the fair distribution of benefits, not merely economic growth is reflected in village development planning based on the needs of vulnerable groups, which has been formally integrated into the village budget.

Community involvement in village development, such as the proposals made by inclusive cadres regarding dyslexia issues in the Inclusive Village Regulation, as well as the participation of vulnerable groups in village deliberation forums, demonstrates a shift toward more inclusive and participatory governance. This condition is in line with the view of Fiasse & Nader-Grosbois (2012) that recognition and participation are central components in village social development, especially in the context of sustainable development. In addition to broadening participation, the village government also encourages capacity building for vulnerable groups through various programs such as cadre training, faith-based inclusive education, and women's economic empowerment. These various initiatives demonstrate the village's efforts to ensure that vulnerable groups are not only present symbolically, but are also able to participate substantively in the village development process. In line with this, Talmage & Knopf (2017) emphasize that inclusiveness is achieved when individuals have the real capacity to engage in social and economic life.

Ecological inclusiveness in Sumberkerang Village is closely linked to the village's agrarian livelihood structure, where most residents depend on farming natural resources. In this context, inclusive development requires not only social justice but also ecological sustainability. Gupta et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of ecological stewardship in sustaining local livelihoods, while Bolt, as cited in Rauniyar & Kanbur (2010), identifies agricultural and rural economic development as key pillars of inclusive development in developing countries, including Indonesia. In Sumberkerang, ecological inclusiveness is reflected in village development practices that integrate environmental sustainability with community welfare. BUMDes initiatives, such as agricultural net rentals and liquid fertilizer production training, indicate efforts to reduce dependence on chemical inputs while maintaining agricultural productivity. Programs including Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (PHBS), waste banks, tree planting, chili seedling cultivation, and family nutrition gardens further support environmental conservation, public health, and household economic resilience. The involvement of women, youth, and the elderly in these various ecological initiatives further demonstrates that environmental governance in Sumberkerang Village is implemented in an inclusive and participatory manner.

Meanwhile, relational inclusiveness highlights how power relations and social structures are transformed within the Inclusive Village framework. As argued by Pouw & Gupta (2017), inequality is often reproduced through unequal access to decision-making and control over resources. In Sumberkerang, however, these dynamics are reconfigured through institutional arrangements such as Village Regulation No. 03 of 2024 on Inclusive Villages, the establishment of multi-actor inclusive cadres, and the active involvement of vulnerable groups in planning and

deliberative processes. Participatory needs assessments conducted through direct community engagement further ensure that marginalized voices are incorporated into policy formulation, positioning vulnerable groups as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries. Relational inclusiveness is also reflected in the equitable management of public goods and the prevention of exclusionary practices. Village assets, including waste banks and BUMDes services, are managed openly and accessibly to prevent benefits from being concentrated among particular groups. This approach contrasts with market-driven development models that often prioritize efficiency over equity.

Although Gupta & Vegelin (2016) conceptualize inclusive development through social, ecological, and relational dimensions, the findings in Sumberkerang indicate that economic inclusion functions as an integrative component that strengthens all dimensions of inclusiveness, rather than merely serving as a standalone sectoral domain. Economic initiatives such as MSME facilitation, BUMDes enterprises, youth entrepreneurship programs, and the productive involvement of vulnerable groups demonstrate how village economic development is intentionally directed toward supporting social welfare and inclusive participation. This interpretation aligns with Rauniyar & Kanbur (2010), who argue that inclusive development requires broad-based, equitable, and sustainable economic growth capable of creating opportunities for vulnerable populations. In Sumberkerang, economic empowerment programs not only support participation in productive activities but also strengthen the bargaining position and social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

These findings expand the multidimensional inclusiveness framework by demonstrating that economic inclusion functions as a connecting mechanism linking social participation, ecological sustainability, and relational justice within local development processes. The presence of economic inclusiveness in the practice of the Inclusive Village in Sumberkerang also reflects the balance between social and economic development emphasized by Midgley (1995). Various inclusive practices developed through participatory governance, economic empowerment, community capacity building, and expanded access to village services and resources contribute to strengthening social well-being, enhancing the participation of vulnerable groups, reducing vulnerability and inequality, and reinforcing community capacity and social cohesion. Thus, local development is oriented not only toward economic growth, but also toward promoting more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable rural development, in line with Midgley's et al. (2020) perspective on development that emphasizes inclusiveness, participation, and social justice.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the Inclusive Village practices in Sumberkerang represent a locally grounded model of inclusive rural development, integrating social development strategies with multidimensional inclusiveness. The findings highlight the interconnectedness of social, ecological, relational, and economic dimensions, moving beyond sectoral and single-dimensional approaches and thus contributing to the development of more comprehensive, inclusive development frameworks. The study also underscores the critical role of local leadership, participatory governance, institutional support, and community capacity in sustaining inclusive village development. Theoretically, these findings advance the literature on social and inclusive development by illustrating how multidimensional inclusiveness can be operationalized at the village level in the context of the Global South. In practice, the study indicates that achieving sustainable and equitable rural development requires institutionalized community participation, locally embedded governance mechanisms, and strong policy commitment.

Implication of research

This study has important implications for community-based social development practices in developing countries, many of which are found in the Global South. It shows how an inclusive village model can be used as a rural development strategy to promote community well-being, rather than focusing on a single dimension of development, which often leads to unsustainable models. Theoretically, the findings of this study emphasise the importance of political leadership at the village level that can foster community participation. Consequently, policymakers must consider local contexts that can promote the integration of ecosystem-based development to advance inclusivity. Therefore, a village development model that promotes the formation of ecosystems is essential for supporting the SDGs agenda, including ensuring that all residents can address issues such as poverty, gender inequality, reduced inequalities and inaccessible public services.

Limitation of study and future research

This study is limited to Sumberkerang Village, so the findings may not be generalizable to areas with different social, economic, or cultural characteristics. The qualitative, interview-based approach relies on informants' knowledge and perceptions, which may introduce subjective bias. Furthermore, the study is descriptive and does not evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the programs. Future research should adopt evaluative or mixed-method approaches and include a broader range of contexts to address these limitations and strengthen the evidence on inclusive village practices.

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

Afifah Dwi Lestari: conceptualization, methodology, data collection and analysis, and writing original draft and final manuscript;

Fentiny Nugroho: supervision, validation, writing review & editing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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