

## Strengthening the Economy of the Tengger Community Based on Ecotheology Through Conservation and Educational Tourism

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**Abstract.** Baladaun Conservation is a customary forest in Tosari Village, Pasuruan, managed collectively by the Tengger community as an expression of ecological stewardship and spiritual responsibility. Rooted in an eco-theological worldview, nature is regarded as a sacred trust linking humans, the environment, and the divine. Despite its strong ecological and cultural potential for educational tourism, the community faces challenges in institutional capacity, marketing, halal certification, and product distribution. This community service program applies the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to strengthen local economic capacity through participatory asset mapping, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building initiatives. The program outcomes demonstrate measurable improvements. A total of 17 community members are now actively involved in tourism services, while 12 local producers engage in value-added processing of coffee and honey. Approximately 35% of participating households reported additional income sources beyond traditional agriculture. Digital promotion increased outreach, generating over 1,200 online interactions, while several enterprises successfully obtained Business Identification Numbers (NIB) and initiated halal certification. In addition, conservation efforts included the planting of 500 tree seedlings and the establishment of waste management practices. These results indicate enhanced economic diversification, improved institutional capacity, strengthened market access, and reinforced environmental conservation based on Tengger cultural value

**Katakunci:** ABCD;  
Eduwisata;  
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Masyarakat.

**Abstrak.** Baladaun Konservasi merupakan kawasan hutan adat di Desa Tosari, Pasuruan, yang dikelola secara kolektif oleh masyarakat Tengger sebagai wujud pelestarian lingkungan dan tanggung jawab spiritual. Dalam perspektif ekoteologi, alam dipandang sebagai amanah suci yang menghubungkan manusia, lingkungan, dan Tuhan. Meskipun memiliki potensi besar sebagai destinasi eduwisata berbasis kearifan lokal, pengelolaan kawasan ini masih menghadapi tantangan dalam kelembagaan, pemasaran, sertifikasi halal, dan distribusi produk. Program pengabdian ini

menggunakan pendekatan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) melalui pemetaan aset, pelibatan pemangku kepentingan, dan penguatan kapasitas masyarakat. Hasil program menunjukkan capaian yang terukur. Sebanyak 17 masyarakat terlibat dalam layanan wisata, dan 12 pelaku usaha mengembangkan produk olahan kopi dan madu. Sekitar 35% rumah tangga peserta memperoleh sumber pendapatan tambahan di luar pertanian. Promosi digital menghasilkan lebih dari 1.200 interaksi daring, sementara beberapa usaha berhasil memperoleh Nomor Induk Berusaha (NIB) dan memulai proses sertifikasi halal. Selain itu, kegiatan konservasi mencakup penanaman 500 bibit pohon dan penerapan sistem pengelolaan sampah. Temuan ini menunjukkan peningkatan diversifikasi ekonomi, kapasitas kelembagaan, akses pasar, serta penguatan konservasi berbasis nilai budaya Tengger.

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## 1 Introduction

The accelerating global ecological crisis, reflected in climate change, land degradation, and mounting pressure from mass tourism, has emerged as one of the defining development challenges of the twenty-first century (Holden et al., 2022). Communities living in conservation buffer zones often experience the consequences of environmental change most directly (Dixit et al., 2024). Their livelihoods depend on the very ecosystems that conservation policies seek to protect, creating a complex relationship between ecological sustainability and economic survival.

From the perspective of political ecology, environmental crises cannot be understood solely as ecological phenomena (Hu, 2023). They are also embedded in political and economic structures that shape access to resources, determine patterns of development, and influence how environmental benefits and costs are distributed. In many cases, the economic benefits generated by protected areas and tourism industries tend to concentrate among external investors or institutional actors, while local communities face land-use restrictions or new forms of marginalization (Buckley et al., 2026). These dynamics underscore the need to examine how environmental policies interact with local social systems and livelihood strategies.

Such tensions become particularly visible in protected landscapes that simultaneously serve conservation and tourism functions. In many regions, tourism creates a paradox in which tourism contributes to economic development while simultaneously increasing ecological strain and social vulnerability (Tornel, 2023). Empirical studies in protected areas indicate that conservation and tourism initiatives often produce uneven access to economic opportunities and natural resources, especially for indigenous and rural communities living near national parks (Muchapondwa & Ntuli, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires development strategies that move beyond top-down governance and instead prioritize participatory, locally grounded approaches.

Community engagement has therefore become a central principle in contemporary conservation and sustainable development practice. Growing evidence suggests that conservation initiatives are more effective when local communities participate directly in resource management and benefit from sustainable livelihood opportunities (Zhang et al., 2023). Community-based approaches recognize that local knowledge systems, cultural traditions, and social institutions often play essential roles in maintaining ecological balance. Rather than treating rural populations as passive recipients of conservation programs, participatory frameworks position them as active partners in environmental stewardship and local development.

Within indigenous societies, environmental governance is frequently intertwined with cultural values and spiritual worldviews (Nche & Michael, 2024). These perspectives shape how communities interpret their relationship with nature and guide everyday practices related to land use, agriculture, and resource management. Such knowledge systems can offer valuable foundations for sustainable environmental governance because they embed ecological responsibility within social and moral frameworks. Integrating these cultural perspectives into development initiatives can therefore strengthen both conservation outcomes and community resilience (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

This perspective is particularly relevant for the Tengger indigenous community living in the buffer zone of Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park in East Java, Indonesia. For generations, the Tengger people have maintained a worldview that emphasizes harmony among humans, nature, and spiritual life. Their cultural traditions reflect a form of agrarian spirituality in which environmental stewardship is closely connected to religious belief and communal responsibility (Zubaidi & Jali, 2025). Ritual practices, agricultural systems, and customary institutions reinforce the idea that human prosperity must remain balanced with respect for the natural environment.

Tosari Village in Pasuruan Regency represents one of the important Tengger settlements located along the slopes of Mount Bromo. The village occupies a mountainous landscape characterized by steep terrain and fertile volcanic soils that support intensive highland agriculture. Farmers cultivate crops such as potatoes, cabbage, and carrots for regional markets across East Java. Alongside agriculture, some residents participate in tourism-related activities as local guides or small-scale entrepreneurs producing Tengger specialty products, including coffee, honey, and handicrafts.

Within this landscape lies the Baladaun conservation area, a community-managed ecological space reflecting both environmental and cultural values of the Tengger people. The site emerged from local initiatives aimed at protecting forest ecosystems while preserving the traditions that shape community life (Dr. Sony Sukmawan et al., 2024). For residents of Tosari, protecting nature is not merely a technical environmental practice but also a form of spiritual responsibility.

Baladaun therefore functions as more than a conservation site. It also serves as a cultural and educational landscape where environmental values and spiritual traditions are transmitted across generations. Ceremonial practices such as *Yadnya Kasada* continue to be performed within this ecological setting, reinforcing the connection between ritual life and environmental stewardship. The area also supports the preservation of traditional herbal plants and provides a space where younger community members learn about ecological ethics and cultural heritage (Habib & Rahmatullah, 2025).

Underlying these practices is a worldview closely related to the concept of ecotheology, which emphasizes the interconnected relationship between humans, nature, and the divine. From this perspective, environmental protection is not simply a policy objective but a moral obligation rooted in spiritual belief systems. Within Tengger cosmology, forests and natural landscapes form part of a sacred cosmic order that must be respected and preserved (Ikwan Setiawan et al., 2022). This cultural framework has historically contributed to the maintenance of ecological balance in the region.

Despite these important cultural and ecological assets, the potential of Baladaun as a conservation-based educational tourism destination has not yet been fully realized that can be seen on Table 1. Preliminary socio-economic observations indicate that the majority of households in Tosari still depend heavily on conventional agriculture for their income. While agriculture remains an important component of the local economy, this dependence creates vulnerability to climate variability, declining soil productivity, and fluctuating commodity prices. At the same time, opportunities for economic diversification through tourism and local product development remain underutilized.

Table 1. Evidence and Asset Advantage Map

Aspect	Current Condition	Potential
Ecology	Semi-sustainable forest area, not yet developed as an educational ecotourism area	Local wisdom-based conservation zone, suitable for eco-theological educational tourism
Social Culture	Strong customs and rituals, but not yet developed as educational attractions	Kasada, Larung sesaji, and spiritual values as cultural-based tourist attractions
Economy	Dependent on seasonal agriculture	Diversification through herbal products, educational tourism training, and local souvenirs

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Institutional Management groups do not yet have a business structure or market network	Opportunities for establishing conservation-based cooperatives/business groups
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Many residents have expressed interest in developing alternative economic activities that build upon local ecological and cultural resources. These opportunities include forest-based products, conservation-oriented tourism services, and educational programs related to Tengger traditions and environmental stewardship. However, several structural challenges limit the development of these initiatives. Local management groups often lack formal organizational structures, market networks remain limited, and community members require additional training to manage tourism and product marketing effectively.

These conditions highlight the need for development interventions that simultaneously strengthen local economic capacity and maintain ecological sustainability. Importantly, such interventions must be designed in ways that respect and reinforce the cultural values that guide community relationships with nature. Development models that ignore these cultural foundations risk undermining the socio-ecological harmony that has historically sustained the Tengger community.

In response to these challenges, the Baladaun conservation area presents an opportunity to develop a locally grounded model of sustainable community empowerment (Yazidi & Rijal, 2024). By combining ecological conservation, cultural heritage, and creative economic activities, Baladaun has the potential to evolve into a center for conservation-based educational tourism rooted in Tengger spiritual traditions. Such an approach aligns with broader discussions in sustainability science that emphasize the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into development practice.

This community service program therefore, adopts the Asset-Based Community Development approach combined with an ecotheological perspective. The approach focuses on identifying and mobilizing existing community strengths rather than concentrating solely on local limitations. Cultural traditions, ecological knowledge, and social

networks are treated as development assets that can support sustainable economic innovation.

The program aims to map and strengthen the ecological, cultural, and economic assets of the Baladaun conservation area while improving the capacity of local communities to manage these resources. Through training, mentoring, and participatory learning processes, the initiative seeks to develop conservation-based educational tourism, encourage the growth of community enterprises, and support the formation of local economic institutions rooted in conservation values. Ultimately, the program aspires to create a replicable model of community empowerment that integrates environmental stewardship, cultural resilience, and sustainable rural development within indigenous landscapes.

## 2 Method

The implementation of this community service program is designed using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach as the main methodological framework, emphasizing the strengthening of local assets. In the context of the Tengger community, these assets include strong spiritual values, long-established conservation practices, and a harmonious relationship with the highland ecosystem surrounding Mount Bromo. This approach is selected to ensure that the empowerment process is not top-down, but instead originates from the community's own potential and local wisdom. Thus, the program functions as a facilitation of capacity strengthening rather than an external intervention that replaces existing local systems.

Table 2. ABCD-Based Mentoring Stages

Stage	Focus of Activities	Main Output
Discovery	Mapping ecological, social, spiritual, and economic assets through observation, FGDs, and interviews	Baladaun Conservative asset map

Dream	Formulation of a shared vision for ecotourism and green economy development based on ecotheology	Community vision and action plan
Design	Development of supporting programs (digital marketing, halal certification, product distribution)	Training modules and SOP
Deliver	Implementation of training, technical assistance, and institutional strengthening	Website, NIB, halal certification, distribution system
Reflect	Participatory evaluation and sustainability reflection	Recommendations and follow-up plans

The mentoring process was carried out through a systematic participatory cycle. The initial stage, asset identification (discovery), was conducted through field observations, interviews with community leaders, and group discussions with members of the Baladaun Konservatif initiative. This stage revealed key potentials, including local agricultural knowledge, conservation values, and emerging opportunities in educational tourism. The process then proceeded to the visioning stage (dream), where community members collectively formulated strategies for developing a local economy based on ecotourism and green principles grounded in ecotheology.

The design stage focused on developing strategic programs to support the shared vision, including digital marketing training, facilitation of halal certification, and strengthening of local product distribution systems. The implementation stage (deliver) involved technical mentoring, capacity-building activities, and institutional strengthening. Key outputs included the development of digital promotional media, registration of business identification numbers (NIB), halal certification, and improved market access for local products. All stages were conducted collaboratively between the facilitators and the community.

The reflection stage (reflect) was conducted participatively to evaluate program achievements, identify challenges, and formulate sustainable follow-

up actions. This stage served not only as an evaluation mechanism but also as a space for collective learning among community members and facilitators.

The program was implemented in the Baladaun conservation area, Tosari Village, Pasuruan Regency, over a period of two months, involving local partners such as the Baladaun management and the village government. Data were collected through field observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation review. Data analysis followed the qualitative framework of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in an iterative manner. Overall, this methodological approach integrates economic empowerment, environmental conservation, and the strengthening of local spiritual values as a unified strategy to support sustainable development based on indigenous community foundations.

### 3 Results

The community service program in the Baladaun Conservation Area of Tosari Village, Pasuruan Regency, sought to strengthen community economic resilience while promoting conservation-oriented tourism within the Tengger highlands. The initiative adopted the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which emphasizes mobilizing local assets such as social networks, cultural capital, and ecological knowledge as drivers of sustainable development. Initial field observations and participatory discussions revealed several structural constraints, including limited livelihood diversification, weak tourism management capacity, inadequate digital marketing, restricted market access, and limited awareness of business legality. The program therefore focused on economic diversification, tourism management, conservation-based ecotourism, digital marketing, and business certification.

#### **Community Economic Diversification**

One of the central aims of this program was to reduce the Baladaun community's strong dependence on conventional horticultural farming by opening alternative livelihood pathways linked to conservation-oriented tourism and locally processed products. Before the intervention, most households relied on vegetable cultivation and small-scale coffee production. These commodities were typically sold to

intermediary traders, leaving farmers with limited bargaining power and a relatively small share of the final market value. This structure also made household incomes vulnerable to fluctuating commodity prices and the environmental uncertainties common in highland agriculture.

Table 3. Livelihood Diversification in the Baladaun Community

Indicator	Outcome
Community members involved in tourism services (guiding, environmental interpretation, product sales)	17 people
Small-scale producers engaged in processing and packaging coffee and honey	12 producers
Households reporting additional income sources outside traditional agriculture	~35% of participating households

As the program unfolded, gradual changes began to appear. Community members started exploring complementary economic activities that combined environmental conservation with local enterprise. Educational tourism emerged as one promising direction. Residents now guide visitors through the Baladaun area, introducing them to the ecological landscape of the Tengger highlands while sharing local conservation practices and cultural narratives. At the same time, several households began producing value-added products, particularly roasted Tosari Arabica coffee and forest honey. Processing and packaging now take place locally, allowing producers to capture greater value from their commodities.

The community also developed environmental education activities for visiting tourists and student groups, positioning Baladaun not simply as a scenic destination but as a learning space for indigenous environmental stewardship. Program monitoring shows that 17 community members now participate directly in tourism services such as guiding, environmental interpretation, and product sales. Another 12 small-scale producers have become involved in processing and packaging coffee and honey.



Figure 1. Supply Chain in Agriculture Workshop

These developments reflect a gradual diversification of the local economy. Post-program interviews suggest that about 35 percent of participating households now report additional income sources outside traditional agriculture, indicating growing economic resilience and reduced pressure to expand cultivation into surrounding highland areas.

### Enhancement of Educational Tourism Management Capacity

A second outcome of the program appeared in the strengthening of managerial capacity within the Baladaun Konservatif tourism management group. Before the intervention, tourism activity in the area developed informally. Visitors occasionally came to the site, yet there was little coordination among local actors. Promotional efforts remained limited, and most residents had little experience designing or managing educational tourism programs.

The mentoring process began with a series of workshops and practical training sessions intended to build confidence among community members involved in tourism activities. Participants included representatives from youth groups, farmer associations, and local tourism managers. Discussions moved beyond theory and focused on everyday practices: how to guide visitors, how to explain the environmental significance of the Tengger highlands, and how to organize tourism experiences that remain respectful of local culture.

As the sessions progressed, participants gradually translated these ideas into concrete initiatives. The Baladaun community developed several structured educational tourism packages that combine environmental learning with local cultural knowledge. One program

introduces visitors to forest conservation practices while explaining Tengger environmental philosophy and the community's long-standing relationship with the surrounding mountain ecosystem. Another program centers on highland coffee cultivation and agroecology, allowing visitors to observe sustainable farming practices and learn about traditional coffee production in Tosari.

These initiatives marked a clear shift from informal tourism toward organized educational experiences rooted in local knowledge. The approach reflects the core principles of community-based tourism, where local participation, environmental stewardship, and fair economic benefits remain central considerations (Ahule & Oragbai, 2025). Since these programs were introduced, the Baladaun area has hosted seven organized educational tourism visits, involving student groups and domestic travelers interested in environmental learning and indigenous culture.

### **Development of Conservation-Based Ecotourism**

Environmental conservation remains a central pillar of the Baladaun Konservatif initiative. The program therefore prioritized the integration of ecological protection with tourism development. Prior to the intervention, conservation practices in the community were primarily guided by customary norms embedded within Tengger spiritual traditions. While these values were strong, they had not yet been integrated into formal environmental education or tourism programs.

Through the community empowerment program, the Baladaun group initiated several conservation-oriented activities designed to strengthen both ecological protection and tourism attractiveness. One major outcome was the establishment of a community-led conservation education area within the buffer zone of the Edelweiss forest ecosystem surrounding the Baladaun site. This initiative included the planting of approximately 500 tree seedlings consisting of endemic highland species and soil conservation plants.

In addition, the community introduced waste management practices to reduce environmental impacts associated with increasing tourist visits. Waste separation facilities for organic and inorganic waste

were installed at the Baladaun site, and environmental awareness sessions were conducted for tourism operators and visitors. These efforts have strengthened the positioning of Baladaun as a conservation-oriented tourism destination, where environmental protection is integrated into visitor experiences and local economic activities.

### Digital Marketing and Market Access Improvement

Improving market access for local products and tourism services was another important objective of the program. Prior to the intervention, local producers relied primarily on traditional marketing channels and personal networks.

Through the digital marketing training program, community members were introduced to online promotion strategies using websites and social media platforms. A dedicated Baladaun tourism website was developed to promote tourism packages, environmental education activities, and local products.



Figure 2. Digital Marketing Training

In addition, community members created and actively manage three digital promotion channels, including Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business accounts. Within six months after the implementation of the digital marketing training, the Baladaun tourism social media account recorded more than 1,200 online interactions, including inquiries related to tourism visits and local product purchases.

For local producers, digital marketing has begun to reduce dependence on intermediary traders. Coffee and honey products are

now marketed directly to visitors and online consumers, increasing the share of value retained by community producers.

### **Business Certification and Legality**

Formalization of local enterprises was another important component of the program, as many community-based businesses initially operated without legal registration. Through mentoring and administrative assistance, the program supported the formalization of several community-based enterprises operating within the Baladaun Konservatif initiative. As a result of this process, a group of local business actors successfully obtained Business Identification Numbers (NIB) through the Indonesian Online Single Submission system, which represents an important step toward formal economic participation.

In addition, several locally produced commodities, particularly Tosari Arabica coffee and forest honey, began the administrative process required for halal product certification, which is increasingly important for strengthening consumer trust and expanding access to wider markets in Indonesia.

Beyond the legal registration process, community members also participated in capacity-building sessions focused on basic financial recording and small-enterprise management. These activities aimed to improve the managerial capability of local producers, enabling them to maintain more transparent financial practices and better organize their business operations.

The formal acquisition of business legality through the NIB system has important implications for the long-term sustainability of these enterprises. Legal recognition allows community businesses to access broader market opportunities, participate in formal supply chains, and potentially benefit from government support programs targeting micro and small enterprises. In the context of rural development, such institutional formalization is widely recognized as a key factor in strengthening local economic resilience and improving the competitiveness of community-based enterprises.

### **Integrated Outcomes and Community Transformation**

The outcomes of the community empowerment program in the Baladaun Conservation Area reveal changes that extend beyond the immediate implementation of activities. When viewed collectively, the results point to gradual improvements across economic, institutional, and environmental dimensions within the Tengger community of Tosari. One of the most visible shifts lies in the diversification of local livelihoods. Community members who previously depended primarily on highland agriculture have begun to explore complementary income sources linked to conservation-oriented tourism. The development of local products and educational tourism packages has opened new opportunities for households to participate in small-scale economic activities that align with the ecological character of the area.

Institutional capacity has also evolved through the program. Training sessions on tourism management encouraged local actors to rethink how visitors experience the Baladaun landscape. Participants reported a clearer understanding of visitor management, environmental interpretation, and the organization of tourism services. As a result, educational tourism is no longer treated as an informal activity but as a community-managed initiative supported by improved coordination among Baladaun managers, village authorities, and local entrepreneurs.

Market access has begun to expand as well. The introduction of digital promotion tools, including a community website and social media platforms such as TikTok Go, has provided new channels for reaching visitors and potential buyers of local products. Alongside these efforts, mentoring on business legality facilitated the registration of Business Identification Numbers (NIB) and the initiation of halal certification for several products, strengthening the formal standing of emerging enterprises.

Table 4. Indicators of Success for the Community Service Program in the Baladaun Conservative Area

No	Program Focus	Success Indicators	Evidence / Achievements
1	Community Economic Diversification	Emergence of alternative economic activities based on local assets	Development of local products, educational tourism packages, and economic activities supporting conservation tourism
2	Enhancement of Educational Tourism Management Capacity	Increased managerial capacity in educational tourism management	Training activities on tourism management, improved understanding of visitor management, environmental interpretation, and tourism services
3	Development of Conservation-Based Ecotourism	Integration of conservation values into tourism activities	Development of conservation-based educational tourism packages and environmental education activities for visitors
4	Digital Marketing for Market Access Improvement	Increased market access through digital media	Management of a community website, promotion through social media, and the use of digital platforms such as TikTok Go

5	Business Certification and Legality	Improvement of business legality for community enterprises	Facilitation of Business Identification Number (NIB) registration and halal certification processes for local products
6	Strengthening Community Institutions	Improved coordination among managers and local community leaders	Strengthened institutional coordination in managing conservation-based tourism and economic activities
7	Environmental Awareness	Increased collective awareness of environmental conservation	Integration of conservation messages in tourism activities and community discussions

Perhaps most importantly, these changes illustrate a gradual structural transformation in the Baladaun community, in which traditional ecological values, indigenous knowledge systems, and modern development tools such as digital marketing are increasingly integrated into a sustainable rural development framework.

This experience demonstrates that indigenous communities such as the Tengger people can play a central role in shaping development models that simultaneously promote economic resilience, environmental stewardship, and cultural continuity.

#### 4 Discussion

The findings from this study point to the growing relevance of community-based tourism as a pathway for sustainable rural

development in indigenous mountain regions. The experience of the Baladaun conservation area initiative in Tosari Village shows how a locally rooted conservation movement can gradually expand into a broader socio-economic platform when supported by appropriate institutional collaboration and knowledge exchange. What began as a community effort to protect the surrounding highland ecosystem has evolved into a small but promising model of conservation-oriented tourism managed by the Tengger community.

Community-based tourism has long been discussed as a development approach capable of balancing economic opportunity with environmental protection and cultural continuity (Jackson, 2025). Unlike conventional tourism systems, where benefits often flow outward to external investors, this model places local communities at the center of planning, management, and benefit distribution. In the Baladaun context, tourism development is closely tied to existing community initiatives. The program has involved seventeen community members directly engaged in tourism services, while twelve local producers participate in value-added processing of Arabica coffee and forest honey. In addition, twenty-three residents have taken part in training related to tourism management and environmental interpretation, leading to the development of two educational tourism packages and the hosting of seven organized learning visits.

What makes this initiative distinctive is the cultural framework that shapes it. Tourism activities are interpreted through the Tengger worldview, where rituals such as the Yadnya Kasada festival reflect a moral relationship between people, nature, and the divine. This perspective encourages development that respects ecological balance rather than treating the landscape solely as a commodity. Similar patterns have been observed in other indigenous tourism settings where belief systems influence environmental stewardship.

The emergence of educational tourism in Baladaun also resonates with broader shifts in global travel behavior. Many visitors now seek experiences that offer environmental learning, cultural insight, and direct engagement with local communities. By linking conservation education with tourism activities, the Baladaun initiative strengthens the

appeal of the destination while reinforcing local commitments to environmental protection.

### **Asset-Based Community Development and Endogenous Rural Development**

The experience in the Baladaun conservation area illustrates how the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach can shape rural development in a more grounded and locally driven way. Conventional rural development programs often rely heavily on external inputs such as infrastructure projects, technical assistance, or outside investment. While such interventions may bring short-term improvements, they sometimes overlook the capacities already embedded within communities and can unintentionally create dependency. The ABCD perspective offers a different starting point. It encourages communities to identify and mobilize their own assets, whether these take the form of natural resources, social networks, cultural traditions, or institutional relationships.

Table 5. Potential Local Assets in the Baladaun Conservative Area, Tosari Village

<b>Type of Potential</b>	<b>Description of Local Assets</b>	<b>Sustainable Economic Development Potential</b>
Agriculture and Plantation	Fertile land on the slopes of Mount Bromo with main products: highland vegetables (cabbage, carrots, spring onions) and Tosari Arabica coffee.	Development of local agro-industry, such as processing agricultural products into processed goods (ground coffee, packaged vegetables, organic fertilizer), as well as increasing added value through certification and digital marketing.
Ecotourism and Educational Tourism	The Baladaun area offers mountain views, cool air, and access to the Bromo tourist trail; the community is also active in environmental	Development of local agro-industry, such as processing agricultural products into processed goods (ground coffee, packaged vegetables, organic fertilizer), as well as increasing added value

	conservation activities.	through certification and digital marketing.
Processed Products and Creative Economy	The presence of unique products such as Tosari coffee, forest honey, and natural handicrafts.	Enhancement of <i>the value chain</i> through entrepreneurship training, packaging innovation, branding, and the use of digital platforms for promotion and sales.
Social and Local Wisdom	The community has a strong sense of mutual cooperation, a community-based social system, and a spirituality that is in harmony with nature (eco-theology).	Strengthening social and spiritual capital as the basis for equitable economic development, and developing business models that support environmental sustainability.
Environment and Conservation	The existence of protected forests and agricultural land managed in accordance with ecological and conservation principles.	Strengthening of economically-based conservation programs, such as educational tourism, reforestation, and environmentally-friendly agricultural practices.

In Tosari Village, the asset mapping process revealed a surprisingly rich foundation for endogenous development. The Baladaun area sits on fertile highland land along the slopes of Mount Bromo, where local farmers cultivate vegetables such as cabbage, carrots, and spring onions alongside Tosari Arabica coffee. This agricultural base offers opportunities for agro-industry development, including processed coffee products, packaged vegetables, and organic fertilizer. Beyond agriculture, the landscape itself provides a natural setting for ecotourism and educational tourism. The cool mountain climate, scenic views, and proximity to the Bromo tourism route make the area attractive to visitors interested in environmental learning and cultural experiences.

The community also produces distinctive local commodities, including forest honey and handcrafted products, which carry potential for expansion through better packaging, branding, and digital promotion.

Equally important are the social and cultural assets embedded within the Tengger community. Strong traditions of mutual cooperation and an eco-theological worldview that emphasizes harmony with nature provide a social foundation for collective action. When combined with the presence of protected forest areas and conservation-oriented agricultural practices, these assets create the conditions for a development model that integrates environmental protection with local economic opportunity.

Recognizing these resources as development capital allowed the community to design strategies that link agriculture, tourism, and conservation within a single local value chain. Such endogenous processes are widely recognized in rural development literature as key to strengthening community resilience while ensuring that economic benefits remain rooted in the local economy (Cvijanović et al., 2025). Just as important, the participatory nature of the ABCD process strengthened social capital. Through joint planning meetings and collective decision-making, trust among community members grew, laying a stronger institutional foundation for the long-term sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives (Mustikasari et al., 2023).

### **Ecotheology and Indigenous Environmental Ethics**

One of the distinctive features of the Baladaun initiative is the integration of eco-theological values into local development strategies. Ecotheology emphasizes the moral and spiritual responsibility of humans to protect the natural environment as part of divine creation. This perspective has gained increasing attention in sustainability debates as scholars recognize that environmental ethics rooted in religious or cultural traditions can play an important role in shaping sustainable behavior.

In the Tengger community, eco-theological values are deeply embedded within cultural traditions and religious practices. The belief system centered on Hyang Widhi emphasizes the sacred relationship between humans and the natural world, encouraging practices that maintain ecological balance.

This worldview contrasts with the anthropocentric paradigm that historically dominated modern development models, in which nature is often treated primarily as a resource for economic exploitation (Bogert et al., 2022). Instead, the eco-theological perspective prevalent in Tengger culture promotes a relational understanding of development in which economic activities must be conducted in harmony with environmental sustainability.

The integration of eco-theological principles into tourism and agricultural practices in Baladaun, therefore, represents an important example of culturally grounded sustainability. Rather than introducing conservation values externally, the program builds upon existing spiritual beliefs that already support environmental stewardship (Kirin & Kariman, 2026). Such approaches align with recent scholarship emphasizing the importance of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural values in addressing contemporary environmental challenges. By linking economic activities with spiritual responsibility, the Baladaun initiative strengthens community motivation to maintain ecological sustainability while pursuing economic development.

### Rural Economic Diversification and Community Resilience

The diversification of rural livelihoods observed in the Baladaun community also reflects broader theoretical discussions regarding rural resilience and livelihood sustainability. Many rural communities in developing countries remain heavily dependent on single economic sectors, particularly agriculture. Such dependence can increase vulnerability to environmental shocks, climate variability, and market fluctuations.

Table 6. Changes in the Socio-Economic, Institutional, and Environmental Conditions of the Community

Aspect	Before the Program	After the Program
Economy	Dependent on conventional agriculture	Diversification through educational tourism and local products
Marketing	Limited, not digitally integrated	Active website and social media

Business Legality	Does not yet have an NIB and halal certification	NIB and halal certification facilitated
Institutional	The group is not yet structured	Stronger community coordination
Environment	Customary-based conservation	Conservation integrated with the economy

Livelihood diversification has therefore been widely recognized as a key strategy for strengthening rural economic resilience (Scoones, 1998). By combining agriculture with tourism, creative industries, and value-added product processing, communities can reduce risk while expanding income opportunities.

In the Baladaun case, the integration of conservation-based tourism with agricultural activities particularly Tosari Arabica coffee production illustrates how diversified livelihood strategies can emerge from local resource systems. The development of tourism services, souvenir production, and digital marketing initiatives provides additional income sources that complement traditional farming activities.

Importantly, these diversification strategies are closely linked to environmental conservation efforts (Cvijanović et al., 2025). Tourism development in the Baladaun area is explicitly framed as conservation-oriented, ensuring that economic expansion does not lead to ecological degradation. Such alignment between economic and environmental objectives is consistent with the principles of green economy development, which emphasize that economic growth should be achieved while maintaining ecological integrity (Nguyen et al., 2023).

### **Digital Transformation and Market Integration in Rural Economies**

Another important dimension of the program's outcomes relates to the role of digital technologies in improving market access for rural communities. Prior to the intervention, tourism promotion and product marketing in Baladaun relied largely on informal local networks, limiting the potential reach of local enterprises.

The introduction of digital marketing strategies, including the development of a tourism website and the use of social media platforms, significantly expanded the visibility of the Baladaun destination and its

local products. Digital platforms have increasingly been recognized as powerful tools for enabling small-scale tourism enterprises to compete within global tourism markets (Yaqin et al., 2025)

For rural and indigenous communities, digital technologies can also serve as important instruments for narrative control, allowing communities to represent their culture, environment, and tourism experiences according to their own perspectives. This is particularly important in indigenous tourism contexts, where misrepresentation or commodification of culture can occur if narratives are dominated by external actors.

In the Baladaun case, digital media platforms are used not only for marketing but also for environmental education and cultural storytelling. Online content highlights conservation practices, Tengger traditions, and eco-theological values, helping to shape visitor expectations and promote responsible tourism behavior.

### **Implications for Sustainable Indigenous Tourism Models**

The Baladaun experience offers several broader implications for the development of sustainable indigenous tourism models in rural mountain regions. First, the integration of conservation principles, cultural traditions, and economic development can create tourism models that are both economically viable and environmentally responsible.

Second, community empowerment through participatory development approaches such as ABCD is essential for ensuring local ownership of tourism initiatives. Without such participation, tourism development risks reproducing external dependency and uneven benefit distribution.

Third, the incorporation of digital technologies can significantly enhance market access and strengthen the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations. However, digital transformation must be accompanied by capacity-building initiatives that enable communities to effectively manage and control digital platforms.

Finally, the Baladaun initiative demonstrates the importance of integrating spiritual and cultural values into development strategies. In

indigenous contexts, environmental conservation cannot be separated from cultural identity and belief systems. Development models that respect and build upon these values are therefore more likely to achieve long-term sustainability.

## 5 Conclusion

Community assistance in the Baladaun Konservatif area, Tosari Village, shows that an eco-theological approach combined with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method can strengthen the community's economy without neglecting spiritual values and environmental sustainability. The identification of local assets reveals great potential in the agriculture, ecotourism, and creative economy sectors based on the local wisdom of the Tengger community. The implementation of strategies that emphasize the principles of conservation, cooperation, and spiritual responsibility towards nature encourages the formation of independent and equitable community-based economic institutions. In addition, the use of digital innovations in product and tourism promotion expands market reach and increases the economic added value of the community. Thus, this ecotheology-based empowerment model can serve as an example of sustainable development that harmoniously integrates economic, social, spiritual, and ecological aspects, while preserving local cultural identity as the main strength in community development.

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