



PARTICIPATORY PLANNING WITH GENDER PERSPECTIVE FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN KLAMBIR 5 COMMUNITY

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Abstract:

Community development in rural areas requires an inclusive approach that recognizes the vital role of women in economic transformation. This research explores the implementation of gender-based participatory planning as a strategy for sustainable local economic empowerment in Klambir 5 Village, Deli Serdang Regency. Through a qualitative descriptive approach involving 45 community members, this study reveals how women's active involvement in planning processes creates more responsive and sustainable development outcomes. The findings demonstrate that participatory mechanisms incorporating gender perspectives significantly enhance women's economic capacity, strengthen community social capital, and foster locally-driven sustainable development. This study contributes to the discourse on inclusive development by presenting an empirical model where gender-sensitive participatory planning becomes a catalyst for equitable economic growth. The research concludes that recognizing women as development agents, not merely beneficiaries, fundamentally transforms the effectiveness of rural economic empowerment initiatives.

Keywords: *Participatory Planning; Gender Mainstreaming; Community Economic Empowerment; Sustainable Local Development; Rural Transformation*

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of sustainable development in rural Indonesia confronts persistent challenges rooted in limited community participation and gender disparities in economic opportunities (Rahmawati & Nugroho, 2023; World Bank, 2024). Klambir 5 Village in Deli Serdang Regency exemplifies communities where traditional development approaches have insufficiently addressed the economic potential of women, who constitute approximately 52% of the productive-age population yet remain marginally involved in formal economic planning processes (UN Women Indonesia, 2024). This situation reflects broader national patterns where women's economic participation continues to lag significantly behind men's, despite substantial progress in education and legal frameworks promoting gender equality (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023).

Recent data reveals the magnitude of gender gaps in Indonesia's economic landscape (International Labour Organization, 2024). As presented in Table 1, women face multiple disadvantages across key economic indicators, from labor force participation to business ownership and leadership positions (Deloitte, 2022; Investing in Women, 2024). These disparities become even more pronounced in rural contexts where patriarchal structures, limited institutional capacity, and insufficient participatory mechanisms constrain women's economic engagement (AC Ventures, 2024).

No	Gender Economic Indicators	National Data (2023-2024)	Source
1	Female Labor Force Participation Rate	54.5%	BPS, 2023
2	Male Labor Force Participation Rate	84.3%	BPS, 2023
3	Gender Gap in Labor Force Participation	29.8%	UN Women, 2024
4	Women in Micro-Scale Business	64%	UN Women, 2024
5	Women in Corporate Leadership (CEO roles)	3.1%	Deloitte, 2022
6	Women in Board Seats	8.3%	Deloitte, 2022
7	Time Spent on Unpaid Care Work (Women vs Men)	18.5% vs 8.2%	ILO, 2024

Table 1. Gender Economic Indicators in Indonesia (2023-2024)

Table 1 presents a stark picture of gender economic inequality in Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). The female labor force participation rate stands at merely 54.5%, creating a substantial 29.8 percentage point gap compared to men's 84.3% participation (UN Women Indonesia, 2024). This disparity is particularly concerning given that Indonesia's overall economic growth and development aspirations require full utilization of its human capital resources (World Bank, 2024). While women constitute the majority in entrepreneurship at 64%, they predominantly occupy micro-scale businesses with limited growth potential and financial security, reflecting constrained access to capital, markets, and business development support (AC Ventures, 2024; International Labour Organization, 2024).

The corporate leadership data reveals even more severe gender imbalances at higher economic levels (Deloitte, 2022). Women hold only 3.1% of CEO positions, 8.3% of board seats, and face systematic exclusion from strategic decision-making positions in Indonesia's formal economy (Investing in Women, 2024). These figures indicate that while women may enter the workforce, structural barriers prevent their advancement to positions of economic influence and power (World Bank, 2024). The gender disparity in unpaid care work with women spending 18.5% of their day compared to men's 8.2% fundamentally constrains women's economic participation by limiting time available for income-generating activities, skill development, and career advancement (International Labour Organization, 2024).

Contemporary development paradigms increasingly recognize that sustainable economic transformation cannot be achieved without meaningful participation from all community segments, particularly women who play crucial roles in household economics

and informal sectors (Anderson & Chen, 2024; Cornwall, 2023). However, translating this recognition into practical planning mechanisms remains challenging, especially in contexts where patriarchal structures and limited institutional capacity constrain participatory spaces (Cleaver, 2021). Research on participatory planning in rural Indonesia reveals systemic challenges including elite domination, ceremonial implementation, insufficient knowledge integration, and persistent gender exclusion despite regulatory requirements (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020; Haryono et al., 2021).

The concept of participatory planning has evolved from tokenistic consultation to genuine power-sharing arrangements where communities actively shape development priorities and resource allocations (Cornwall, 2023; Fung, 2015). When integrated with gender perspectives, participatory planning transcends conventional approaches by deliberately creating inclusive spaces where women's voices, needs, and aspirations fundamentally inform development trajectories (Cleaver, 2021; Moser, 2023). This integration addresses both procedural justice ensuring women's participation and substantive justice ensuring outcomes that advance gender equality (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023). Studies of Indonesia's Musrenbang (village planning deliberation) reveal significant implementation gaps where participatory mechanisms exist formally but fail to engage communities meaningfully, particularly women who remain marginalized despite quota requirements (Haryono et al., 2021; Sopanah, 2012).

Despite growing scholarly attention to participatory development and gender mainstreaming separately, limited empirical research examines their intersection in rural Indonesian contexts (Moser, 2023; Sugiyanto & Setiawan, 2022). Most existing studies focus on either participatory mechanisms without adequate gender analysis or gender-focused interventions without robust participatory foundations (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). Furthermore, evaluations of participatory planning often rely on process compliance rather than substantive inclusion and empowerment outcomes (Pratiwi et al., 2024). This research addresses these gaps by investigating how gender-sensitive participatory planning functions as an integrated strategy for economic empowerment in Klambir 5, examining both mechanisms and impacts (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

RQ 1: How do existing community economic structures in Klambir 5 shape opportunities and constraints for women's economic participation?

RQ 2: What mechanisms enable effective women's participation in local economic planning processes?

RQ 3: How does gender-sensitive participatory planning influence women's economic capacity and community development outcomes?

RQ 4: What institutional arrangements support the sustainability of participatory and gender-inclusive economic development initiatives?

This study holds particular significance as Indonesia advances its national development agenda emphasizing inclusive growth and community-driven development (Ministry of Villages, 2024). The government's 2024 priorities explicitly include reducing regional inequality and ensuring equity through participatory village planning mechanisms (United Nations, 2023). Understanding how gender-based participatory

planning operates in specific local contexts provides valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and communities seeking to implement more equitable and effective empowerment strategies (Pratiwi et al., 2024; World Bank, 2024).

Furthermore, this research contributes to broader debates on democratizing development planning and achieving gender-responsive local economic governance (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023). International frameworks including the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 11 on inclusive cities and communities) emphasize participatory approaches and gender mainstreaming, yet implementation pathways remain contested and context-dependent (United Nations, 2023). By examining the intersection of participation and gender equality in Klambir 5's economic development, this study offers empirical evidence to inform both scholarly understanding and practical interventions aimed at creating more just and sustainable development processes (Cornwall, 2023; Moser, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the dynamics of gender-based participatory planning in Klambir 5 Village. The choice of qualitative methodology reflects the study's emphasis on understanding lived experiences, social processes, and contextual meanings that quantitative approaches might inadequately capture (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Research Location and Context

Klambir 5 Village was purposively selected based on several criteria: (1) active community-based economic initiatives, (2) diverse livelihood patterns including agriculture and small-scale enterprises, (3) expressed community interest in strengthening women's economic roles, and (4) accessibility for sustained researcher engagement. Located in Hamparan Perak District, Deli Serdang Regency, the village encompasses 340 households with primary livelihoods in agriculture (55%), small trading (25%), and services (20%).

Research Participants

This study involved 45 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure diverse perspectives. Participants included: (1) 20 women from various economic backgrounds representing different age groups and livelihood activities, (2) 10 village officials including the village head and community development staff, (3) 8 male community members involved in local economic activities, (4) 5 representatives from women's organizations and farmer groups, and (2) 2 staff members from the sub-district development office.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection occurred over six months (March-August 2024) using multiple methods to achieve comprehensive understanding and data triangulation:

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes were conducted with all participants, exploring their experiences with economic activities, planning processes, gender relations, and development aspirations. Interview guides were developed based on theoretical frameworks but remained flexible to allow emergent themes.

2. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Six FGDs were organized with different community groups women's groups (2 sessions), mixed-gender community forums (2 sessions), village officials (1 session), and youth representatives (1 session). Each FGD involved 8-12 participants and lasted approximately 120 minutes, facilitating collective

reflection and dialogue on participatory planning experiences.

3. Participatory Observation

Researchers participated in regular community meetings, women's group gatherings, and village planning sessions to observe interaction patterns, decision-making dynamics, and gender relations in practical contexts. Field notes documented observations regarding participation patterns, power dynamics, and communication flows.

4. Document Review

Analysis of village development plans, meeting minutes, program reports, and organizational documents provided contextual understanding of formal planning structures and historical development initiatives.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures adapted from Braun and Clarke's framework, involving: (1) data familiarization through repeated reading and initial note-taking, (2) generating initial codes identifying significant features across the dataset, (3) searching for themes by clustering codes into potential patterns, (4) reviewing themes for coherence and distinctiveness, (5) defining and naming themes to capture their essence, and (6) producing the analysis by weaving themes into a coherent narrative with illustrative data excerpts.

The analysis was conducted iteratively, moving between data and emerging interpretations. Regular team discussions ensured analytical rigor and multiple perspectives on data interpretation. NVivo 14 software assisted in organizing and coding data, though final interpretative decisions remained grounded in researchers' contextual understanding.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity. Participants received clear information about research purposes and their rights to withdraw. Pseudonyms protect participant identities in reporting findings. The research received ethical clearance from Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi's Research Ethics Committee.

Research Quality Assurance

Trustworthiness was enhanced through: (1) prolonged engagement enabling deep contextual understanding, (2) triangulation across multiple data sources and methods, (3) member checking where participants reviewed and validated interpretations, (4) reflexivity through maintaining researcher journals documenting assumptions and interpretative decisions, and (5) peer debriefing with colleagues providing alternative perspectives on emerging findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The findings from this research reveal complex dynamics surrounding gender-based participatory planning and economic empowerment in Klambir 5, organized around four interconnected themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Theme 1: Existing Economic Structures and Women's Positioning

The community's economic landscape demonstrates distinct gender patterns that both constrain and create opportunities for women's participation (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). Women constitute the majority of actors in informal economic sectors, particularly in agricultural processing, small-scale trading, and home-based enterprises (AC Ventures, 2024). However, their economic contributions often remain

invisible in formal economic planning processes (World Bank, 2024).

"We women work from dawn to dusk managing households, helping in the fields, selling at the market. But when village meetings discuss economic plans, they mostly talk about men's farming activities or business loans for men's enterprises," shared Ibu Siti, a 42-year-old farmer and small trader".

This invisibility stems from several intersecting factors (Moser, 2023). First, prevailing cultural norms position men as primary economic decision-makers despite women's substantial economic roles (Cornwall, 2023). Second, formal economic indicators predominantly capture male-dominated sectors while undervaluing women's informal economic contributions (International Labour Organization, 2024). Third, women's time poverty resulting from disproportionate care responsibilities limits their availability for formal planning processes typically scheduled without considering women's time constraints (World Bank, 2024).

Theme 2: Mechanisms for Women's Participatory Engagement

Effective women's participation in planning processes requires deliberate mechanisms that address structural barriers. This research identified several enabling mechanisms that facilitated meaningful women's engagement in Klambir 5:

Separate Women's Forums:

Establishing women-only planning forums created safe spaces where women could articulate needs and priorities without male domination or judgment (Cleaver, 2021). As Ibu Rahma, a women's group leader, explained: "In mixed meetings, we often hesitate to speak our minds. In our women's forums, we freely discuss our economic challenges and ideas. We then bring our collective voice to larger planning meetings." These separate spaces proved essential for building women's confidence and collective voice (Cornwall, 2023).

These forums functioned not merely as information-sharing venues but as deliberative spaces where women analyzed their economic situations, identified shared priorities, and developed collective proposals (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023). The forums' effectiveness stemmed from culturally appropriate facilitation, flexible scheduling accommodating women's time constraints, and childcare provision enabling mothers' participation (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Gender-Sensitive Facilitation:

Training village facilitators in gender-aware planning techniques proved crucial (Cleaver, 2021). Facilitators learned to: (1) actively solicit women's input in mixed-gender settings, (2) recognize and validate women's economic knowledge, (3) identify and address power imbalances in group discussions, and (4) ensure planning documents reflected women's priorities (Moser, 2023).

The village secretary, Pak Ahmad, reflected on his learning: "I realized we unconsciously directed questions about farming to men and questions about food to women. Now we intentionally ask women about their agricultural insights and men about household economy. This simple change revealed knowledge we were missing."

Accessible Information and Capacity Building:

Women's meaningful participation required access to information about planning processes, budgets, and decision-making procedures (Fung, 2015). The research found that providing information through multiple channels written materials, visual presentations, and oral explanations enhanced comprehension across literacy levels (Haryono et al., 2021).

Additionally, capacity-building workshops equipped women with skills for economic analysis, proposal development, and budget monitoring (World Bank, 2024). These workshops combined technical skills with confidence-building, addressing both

practical and psychological barriers to participation (Anderson & Chen, 2024).

Institutional Support Structures:

Establishing formal mechanisms ensuring women's participation such as quotas for women representatives in planning committees and mandatory gender analysis in development proposals created accountability for inclusive planning (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). While quotas alone proved insufficient, they provided entry points for women's engagement that could evolve toward more substantive participation (Cornwall, 2023).

Theme 3: Impacts on Women's Economic Capacity and Community Development

Gender-sensitive participatory planning generated multiple impacts on both individual women's economic capacity and broader community development outcomes:

Enhanced Women's Economic Agency:

Participation in planning processes strengthened women's economic confidence and capabilities (Anderson & Chen, 2024). Women who engaged in participatory forums reported increased knowledge of economic opportunities, enhanced negotiation skills, and greater confidence in advocating for their economic interests (AC Ventures, 2024).

Ibu Desta, who established a successful catering business following her participation in planning workshops, shared: "Through the planning process, I learned about business planning and market analysis. More importantly, I realized that my cooking skills could become a real business, not just household work. The support from other women and recognition from village officials gave me courage to start." The research documented several economic outcomes: 15 women launched new micro-enterprises, 8 existing women led businesses expanded operations, and women's collective income from economic activities increased by approximately 35% during the research period. While various factors contributed to these outcomes, participants consistently identified their involvement in participatory planning as a catalyst for economic action.

Gender-Responsive Development Initiatives:

Participatory planning incorporating women's perspectives produced development initiatives better aligned with community needs (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Projects emerging from this process included: (1) a communal food processing facility enabling women to add value to agricultural products, (2) a village market stall system providing affordable vending spaces for women traders, (3) skills training programs scheduled considering women's time availability, and (4) revolving loan funds with flexible terms accommodating women's income patterns (World Bank, 2024).

These initiatives differed markedly from previous development projects that primarily benefited male-dominated sectors (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). Their design reflected women's practical needs while strategically positioning women's economic empowerment within community development priorities (Moser, 2023).

Strengthened Community Social Capital:

The participatory process fostered social connections and mutual support networks, particularly among women (Cleaver, 2021). Women's planning forums evolved into solidarity networks where members shared information, provided mutual assistance, and collectively addressed challenges (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023). This social capital proved instrumental in sustaining economic initiatives and navigating difficulties (Cornwall, 2023). Moreover, the process enhanced community-wide understanding of women's economic roles and contributions. Male community members who initially dismissed women's economic priorities developed appreciation for women's economic insights and capabilities as they observed outcomes from women-led initiatives.

Shifts in Gender Norms and Relations:

While acknowledging that transforming deeply rooted gender norms requires

sustained effort, this research observed emerging shifts in attitudes and practices (Moser, 2023). Women reported greater respect from family members and community for their economic activities (Anderson & Chen, 2024). Some men expressed willingness to share domestic responsibilities to support women's economic participation (World Bank, 2024). Village officials increasingly recognized gender considerations as essential rather than peripheral to development planning (Ministry of Villages, 2024).

These shifts remained partial and contested. Some community members, both women and men, maintained traditional views about gender roles. However, the participatory process created spaces for negotiating gender relations and demonstrating alternatives to rigid gender hierarchies.

Theme 4: Sustainability Challenges and Institutional Arrangements

Despite positive outcomes, sustaining gender-inclusive participatory planning faces several challenges requiring ongoing attention:

Resource Constraints:

Meaningful participatory processes require resources time, facilitation, venues, materials that strain limited village budgets (Haryono et al., 2021). Without external support, maintaining regular participatory forums and capacity-building activities becomes difficult (Fung, 2015). The research identified creative resource mobilization strategies, including cost-sharing arrangements and volunteer facilitation, though questions about long-term sustainability persist (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Sustaining participatory approaches depends on institutional capacity and leadership commitment that can fluctuate with staff turnover and political changes (Sopanah, 2012). Building institutional culture that normalizes gender-sensitive participation requires systemic capacity development beyond individual skill-building (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020).

Participatory processes demand time and patience, sometimes creating tensions with administrative pressures for rapid decision-making and implementation (Fung, 2015). Finding appropriate balances between inclusive deliberation and operational efficiency remains an ongoing challenge requiring contextual judgment rather than formulaic solutions (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023).

Despite deliberate efforts toward inclusivity, power dynamics shaped by class, education, and social status influenced participation (Haryono et al., 2021). More educated and economically established women often dominated discussions, potentially marginalizing voices of poorer or less educated women (Cornwall, 2023). Facilitators required ongoing vigilance to ensure diverse women's perspectives received attention (Cleaver, 2021).

Participatory planning at village level exists within multi-level governance systems where higher-level policies and resource allocations significantly constrain local options (Ministry of Villages, 2024). Effective integration requires alignment between village-level participatory processes and district and provincial planning systems an alignment currently incomplete in many contexts (United Nations, 2023).

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Power Dynamics and Elite Capture:

These findings contribute to theoretical understanding of participatory development and gender empowerment in several ways (Moser, 2023). First, they demonstrate that participatory planning and gender mainstreaming are mutually reinforcing rather than separate interventions (Cornwall, 2023). Gender-sensitive participatory planning creates conditions for women's meaningful engagement while women's participation enriches

planning processes with previously marginalized knowledge and priorities (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023).

Second, the research highlights that women's economic empowerment operates simultaneously at multiple levels individual capabilities, collective organization, and transformation of structural conditions (Anderson & Chen, 2024). Effective interventions must address all these levels rather than focusing narrowly on individual skill development or structural reform alone (World Bank, 2024).

Third, the findings underscore the importance of culturally appropriate participatory mechanisms that respond to specific contextual constraints and opportunities (Cleaver, 2021). Universal participatory models require adaptation to local gender relations, institutional capacities, and community dynamics (Pratiwi et al., 2024).

Finally, this research reveals that sustainable participatory planning requires institutional embedding through formal mechanisms, capacity development, and resource commitments, not merely project-based activities (Fung, 2015). Transforming participation from isolated events to standard practice demands systemic institutional change (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020).

DISCUSSION

Discussion and Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to theoretical understanding of participatory development and gender empowerment in several ways. First, they demonstrate that participatory planning and gender mainstreaming are mutually reinforcing rather than separate interventions. Gender-sensitive participatory planning creates conditions for women's meaningful engagement while women's participation enriches planning processes with previously marginalized knowledge and priorities.

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This research demonstrates that gender-based participatory planning offers a powerful approach for economic empowerment in rural communities when implemented thoughtfully and contextually (Cornwall, 2023; Moser, 2023). In Klambir 5 Village, creating inclusive planning spaces enabled women to articulate economic priorities, develop capabilities, and pursue economic opportunities previously unavailable to them (Anderson & Chen, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that gender-based participatory planning offers a powerful approach for economic empowerment in rural communities when implemented thoughtfully and contextually. In Klambir 5 Village, creating inclusive planning spaces enabled women to articulate economic priorities, develop capabilities, and pursue economic opportunities previously unavailable to them.

The study's key contributions include: (1) empirical evidence of how specific

participatory mechanisms facilitate women's meaningful engagement in planning processes (Gaventa & Barrett, 2023), (2) documentation of multiple impacts spanning individual economic capacity, community development outcomes, and gender norm evolution (World Bank, 2024), (3) identification of sustainability challenges requiring ongoing attention (Haryono et al., 2021), and (4) demonstration of the mutually reinforcing relationship between participatory approaches and gender inclusion (Cleaver, 2021).

Several implications for policy and practice emerge from these findings (Ministry of Villages, 2024). Development programs should invest in creating and sustaining participatory infrastructure including trained facilitators, accessible forums, and information systems (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Gender considerations must be integrated into participatory processes from design through implementation rather than added superficially (Moser, 2023). Capacity building should address both technical planning skills and critical consciousness about gender relations and power dynamics (Cornwall, 2023). Adequate resources must be allocated to support participatory processes recognizing that genuine participation requires investment (World Bank, 2024).

This research also reveals areas requiring further investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Longitudinal studies could examine how participatory planning impacts evolve over time and across changing contexts (Sugiyanto & Setiawan, 2022). Comparative research across diverse communities could identify how varying social, economic, and institutional conditions shape participatory outcomes (Anderson & Chen, 2024). Investigation of participatory planning's interaction with other development interventions could illuminate synergies and tensions (United Nations, 2023). Research on men's roles in supporting or resisting gender-inclusive development would provide fuller understanding of transformation processes (Moser, 2023).

The Klambir 5 experience offers hope that participatory planning grounded in gender justice can contribute meaningfully to rural transformation (Cornwall, 2023). While challenges persist and transformation remains incomplete, the tangible improvements in women's economic opportunities and community development processes demonstrate the potential of approaches that recognize women as development agents rather than merely beneficiaries (World Bank, 2024; Anderson & Chen, 2024). Realizing this potential requires sustained commitment, adequate resources, and ongoing learning investments justified by the promise of more equitable and effective development for all community members (United Nations, 2023).

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