

Villages Adapt to SDGs: Environment, Poverty, and Employment are Problems to Be Faced

The issuance of Ministerial Regulations Number 13 of 2020 about Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration concerning Priority for the Use of Village Funds in 2021 is a great example to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the roots.

This ministerial regulation was issued to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of village development and community empowerment. However, this may raise a question, what challenge villages face to adapt to SDGs?

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Firstly, what are the SDGs?

To understand SDGs, we should switch our mindset first that the earth we live on is not an inheritance from the ancestors, but we borrow it from our children. To create a sustainable environment and better future, the United Nations together with 193 countries conducted the project called SDGs. SDGs or well-known as Global Goals are 17 universal goals set by the United Nations members in 2015 to fulfill the world's urgent needs without damaging the needs of future generations and were targeted to be achieved by 2030. The explanation about 17 SDGs can be seen [here](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html).¹

Every human being is responsible for saving the planet. Therefore, the achievement of SDGs not only relies on the government, but also on civil societies, private sectors, and all citizens. As the world's fourth most populous country after China, India, and the US, with archipelagic geography, Indonesia faces a significant challenge to meet sustainable development to all its societies and ensure that *no one is left behind*, as

¹ See <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

pledged by the United Nations.

Village SDGs as the backbone of national development

Village SDGs is a localization SDGs that was adopted from national SDGs and was formalized in Presidential Regulation Number 59 of 2017. Previously, the Indonesian Minister for Villages, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (PDRT), Abdul Halim Iskandar, has set up a pilot project called Village SDGs. The minister said that the Village SDGs can contribute to 74% of the national SDGs achievement as 91% of Indonesia's territory is villages and 11 national SDGs are related to villages.²

The four pilot villages with different typologies in Central Java and East Java are used as a study to measure Village SDGs. The study results on four pilot villages are used as material for the third book of the village SDGs trilogy and materials for recommendations on village SDGs issues. He had also added the 18th point in Village SDGs that regulates local wisdom and customs, namely "Dynamic Village Institutions and Adaptive Village Culture". The 18 Village SDGs can be seen [here](#).³

Seeing that 17 SDGs are too abstract, the implementation of SDGs should start from the bottom to the top, which is from the vulnerable communities. The minister took it seriously through The Ministerial Regulations Number 21 of 2020 about General Guidelines for Village Development and Village Community Empowerment.

The Ministerial Regulations Number 21 of 2020 about General Guidelines for Village Development and Village Community Empowerment regulates that the composition of the working team in developing the village is carried out inclusively by involving vulnerable groups such as women, female household head, disabled, laborer, and poor family members. The regulation also obligates that the working team must consist of at least 30% women. This is a great way to promote gender equality and the involvement of village women.

To facilitate the monitoring and evaluation, the minister uses digital data. All program, village data, socialization, and results of reports on the rate of achievement of the Village SDGs will be put in the Village Information System openly to the government and third parties.

Challenges

Firstly, in an environmental context, villages seem to have the same problem as in rural areas. One example that the writer has found is people's behavior in Sawangan Village, Alian, Kebumen, Central Java where they usually throw the trash into small rivers because they do not have money to pay a sanitation worker.

This phenomenon can trigger villagers' habit of not disposing of garbage in its place that potentially causes disease and contaminating groundwater. This is certainly related to achieving goals 3 (health), 11 (sustainable cities), and 12

² See <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5290543/4-desa-di-jateng--jatim-jadi-pilot-studi-sdgs-mulai-2021>

³ See <https://sdgsdesa.kemendesa.go.id/sdgs-desa/>

(responsible production and consumption).



Small portrait of trash at Sawangan Village river when the river is dry. That is just a fraction of the amount of garbage. Source : author's personal documentation

Secondly, many villagers still live in poverty. Data from BPS (Central Statistics Agency) calculated during March 2020 - September 2020 showed that the poverty rate in rural areas reached 13.20%, while in cities it reached only 7.88%.⁴ The number of poor in rural areas reached 15.51 million people. Meanwhile, the number of poor in urban areas is 12.04 million people.⁵

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has compounded the situation. According to the Minister of Finance, Sri Mulyani, Covid-19 pandemic has extremely affected segments of society at the grassroots, such as the poor.⁶ She mentioned that Covid-19 has affected at least three out of five Pillars of SDGs, namely People, Prosperity, and Partnership which hampers the achievements of SDGs. As a result, Indonesia must go back five years regarding poverty reduction.

Thirdly, villagers still suffer from getting jobs as employment in villages is not as many as in the city. The unemployment in the villages increased to 606,121 people in August 2020 according to BPS.⁷ The Economist of the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance, Rusli Abdullah, opined that the increasing poverty rate in villages was the result of deurbanization--people returning to villages--because of the

⁴ See <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/qok6cr370/bps-kesenjangan-kemiskinan-kota-dan-desa-masih-tinggi>

⁵ See <https://www.republika.id/posts/14248/bps-bansos-hambat-laju-kemiskinan>

⁶ See <https://nasional.kontan.co.id/news/sri-mulyani-indonesia-harus-mundur-5-tahun-soal-penurunan-angka-kemiskinan/>

⁷ See <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20210216/9/1356876/tangani-kemiskinan-dan-pengangguran-di-desa-kemendes-ungkap-rencana-baru>

termination of employment during the pandemic.⁸

The explanation above is to urge local governments at the village level to implement SDGs for both environmental and social issues. On the issue of employment, for example, there should be more emphasis on cash labor-intensive activities in 2021 to create more jobs in villages. As mentioned in the Ministerial Regulations Number 21 of 2020 Article 63, cash labor-intensive is prioritized for unemployment, underemployment, female house head, low-income family members, and other marginal communities. This would help decrease the unemployment and poverty rate in villages.

⁸ See <https://www.republika.id/posts/14248/bps-bansos-hambat-laju-kemiskinan>