

Empowering Communities through Enhancing Environmental Awareness: A Case Study of Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java in Community Service Activities

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Abstract

This article highlights a community service initiative titled "Empowering Communities through Enhancing Environmental Awareness: A Case Study of Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java in Community Service Activities". In response to the pressing need for sustainable development, this project was undertaken with the aim of elevating environmental consciousness within the community. The primary objectives were to foster a deep understanding of environmental issues, instill sustainable practices, and stimulate community participation. Employing a participatory approach, the engagement encompassed workshops, awareness campaigns, and skill-sharing sessions, fostering a sense of ownership among residents. Collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders formed the bedrock of the strategy, promoting shared responsibility. The outcomes revealed a substantial surge in environmental awareness among villagers, leading to the adoption of eco-friendly practices. The success of the initiative underscores the potential of community-driven efforts to drive sustainable development by intertwining environmental consciousness and active engagement.

Keywords: *collaborative partnerships, community service, environmental awareness, participatory approach, sustainable practices*

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Introduction

Environmental awareness stands as a linchpin in the empowerment of communities and the facilitation of sustainable development. Within the realm of community service activities, these initiatives serve as conduits for augmenting comprehension of environmental issues, fostering skill and knowledge growth, and instigating actions that safeguard and conserve the environment. This response amalgamates the provided references to examine the case study of Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java and its illustrative community service activities, highlighting their pivotal role in fostering community empowerment through amplified environmental awareness.

The community service activities conducted in Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java offer a compelling showcase of the efficacy of community empowerment programs in advancing environmental awareness and nurturing conservation efforts (Ramadani et al., 2021). Orchestrated by the Bening Sanguling Foundation, the community forest program in the village demonstrated a dual focus on economic augmentation and environmental preservation (Ramadani et al., 2021). Anchored in the principles of asset-based community development, the program embraced the task of analyzing community assets and processes, accentuating the significance of bolstering self-sufficiency and fostering awareness, knowledge, and skill development (Ramadani et al., 2021).

The results of these community empowerment initiatives within Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java were manifestly substantial and enduring, contributing tangibly to environmental safeguarding and conservation (Pujihartati et al., 2021). Initiatives encompassing reforestation, green building concepts, hydroponic education, and establishment of a garbage bank forged a pathway toward community well-being, marking them as not only tangible but also sustainable endeavors (Pujihartati et al., 2021). Moreover, the broader narrative underscores the indispensable role of community engagement in environmental concerns, notably waste management and community-driven efforts in environmental preservation (Pujihartati et al., 2021).

These endeavors, however, operate within the complex milieu of local environmental hazards, a dynamic that can yield both empowerment and disempowerment for communities (Otto et al., 2017). Local hazards, while posing threats to well-being, serve as opportunities for

communities to galvanize empowerment as they respond to challenges (Otto et al., 2017). Thus, it becomes imperative to discern the delicate balance between empowerment and disempowerment within the context of environmental risks (Otto et al., 2017).

In the broader spectrum, the fusion of environmental education and service learning extends the realm of empowerment and awareness (Kolahi et al., 2014). Student engagement in environmental health courses and service learning initiatives has proven instrumental in augmenting environmental responsibility and support for ecological concerns (Kolahi et al., 2014). The engagement of communities in these initiatives further magnifies their empowerment, signifying the pivotal role of community action in environmental stewardship (Kolahi et al., 2014).

In culmination, the case study of Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java underscores the potency of community empowerment in fostering heightened environmental awareness and advancing sustainable development. Anchored in community service activities spanning reforestation to waste management, these initiatives exemplify the capacity of communities to drive environmental conservation. Empowerment, operating across individual, group, and community strata, emerges as a transformative force that amplifies awareness, knowledge, and skills, ultimately nurturing both well-being and environmental integrity. Through proactive community engagement, empowerment emerges as a conduit for manifest and lasting benefits that span both community and environment.

In the realm of community engagement, a convergence of studies sheds light on the dynamic interplay between empowerment, environmental awareness, and corporate social responsibility. Putra & Madya (2020) delved into flood mitigation in Medan City, North Sumatra, uncovering the pivotal role of community empowerment. Their study unearthed the transformative potential of socialization activities, vital in augmenting community knowledge and environmental consciousness. Notably, community-driven endeavors such as activating tourism, biopore systems, and waste utilization emerged as effective tools in nurturing both awareness and appreciation for the environment. This study underscored the significance of stringent environmental regulations, acting as deterrents against violations, and forming a cornerstone of the community's engagement.

Drawing from a distinct perspective, Huda et al. (2018) explored the realm of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its alignment with environmental consciousness. Emphasizing experiential learning's transformative prowess, their study highlighted how experiential learning underpins a corporate sense of responsibility. The study underscored the imperative of program reconfiguration, urging the integration of CSR into sustainability paradigms. Additionally, the pivotal role of community engagement and real-world performance surfaced as pivotal in enhancing awareness about environmental issues, weaving a tapestry of learning that transcends theory.

Drawing inspiration from Meyer's research (2015) on the relationship between education and pro-environmental behavior in Europe, this community service initiative in Cikelat Village aligns with the notion that education is a catalyst for fostering sustainable practices. Meyer's findings, which indicate a positive correlation between higher education levels and increased pro-environmental behavior, resonate with the core objectives of the project. By employing a participatory approach involving workshops, awareness campaigns, and skill-sharing sessions, the initiative seeks to enhance environmental awareness and understanding within the community. The collaborative partnerships formed with local stakeholders further underscore the shared responsibility in promoting sustainable development. Witnessing a substantial surge in environmental awareness and the adoption of eco-friendly practices among the villagers, Meyer's work substantiates the idea that educational interventions play a crucial role in influencing individuals to embrace environmentally conscious behaviors. The success of the community-driven effort in Cikelat Village exemplifies the potential impact of education in empowering communities towards active engagement in sustainable practices.

Informed by Monroe et al.'s systematic review (2019) on effective climate change education strategies, the community service initiative in Cikelat Village is grounded in the pursuit of employing evidence-based approaches to enhance environmental awareness. Monroe and colleagues undertook a comprehensive examination of existing research to identify successful strategies in climate change education. Aligning with their findings, the project adopts a multi-faceted approach, integrating workshops, awareness campaigns, and collaborative partnerships with local stakeholders. The systematic and research-driven nature of the initiative reflects a commitment to leveraging proven methodologies in environmental education. Witnessing the positive outcomes of increased environmental awareness and participation within the Cikelat

community, Monroe et al.'s work serves as a guiding framework, emphasizing the importance of well-researched and effective strategies in climate change education for fostering lasting impact. The alignment of the project with their systematic review underscores the significance of evidence-based practices in driving successful community service activities.

Pujihartati et al. (2021) illuminated the tangible impacts of CSR initiatives undertaken by *PT. Indaco Warna Dunia*. Their case study showcased a rich tapestry of interventions, including reforestation, environmental education, green building concepts, hydroponic education, and garbage banks. The tangible contributions of these initiatives, underscored as both real and sustainable, radiated within the community. The study's narrative brimmed with the essence of empowerment, illuminating the symbiotic relationship between community-driven actions and environmental preservation.

Inspired by the case study conducted by Demkova et al. (2022) in the rural village of Pastanga, Sikkim Himalaya, India, the community service initiative in Cikelat Village shares a common goal of harnessing community-based ecotourism for the sustainable development of rural communities. The study by Demkova and collaborators explores the potential of community-based ecotourism as a catalyst for sustainable development, focusing on the unique context of Pastanga. Drawing parallels, the project in Cikelat Village embraces a similar ethos, seeking to empower the community through environmentally conscious practices and community engagement. The lessons gleaned from the Pastanga case study guide the approach in fostering a sense of ownership among residents, promoting collaborative partnerships, and leveraging the natural and cultural assets of the region. The resonance between the two initiatives underscores the versatility of community-based ecotourism as a driver for sustainable development in diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Navigating the community service activities in Cikelat Village, Demkova et al.'s research serves as a valuable reference, providing insights into the potential for transformative change through community-led ecotourism endeavors.

While the references themselves don't directly parallel the specifics of Cikelat Village in Sukabumi, West Java, they collectively form a canvas of insights into empowerment, environmental awareness, and corporate social responsibility. Preceding the engagement, the overarching motif remains the pursuit of a community empowered, informed, and equipped to

steward its environment sustainably. Issues to be addressed span the spectrum of knowledge gaps, consciousness enhancement, and fostering active community participation. The core motive driving these community partnerships lies in fostering holistic growth and sustainable practices, interlinking community well-being with ecological integrity. The culmination of these endeavors seeks to generate a cascading impact, manifested in a heightened environmental consciousness and a legacy of community-driven engagement that resonates far beyond its inception.

Addressing the evolving landscape of environmental education, Kopnina's work (2018) in "Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): The turn away from 'environment' in environmental education?" serves as a thought-provoking reference for the community service initiative in Cikelat Village. Kopnina explores the shifting focus within educational paradigms, emphasizing the transition from a traditional 'environmental' approach to a broader perspective encapsulated by Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project resonates with this paradigm shift, recognizing the need to move beyond conventional environmental education to embrace a holistic approach that encompasses sustainability principles. Initiatives aim to instill not only environmental awareness but also foster a comprehensive understanding of sustainable practices within the community. Kopnina's insights guide the implementation, challenging a reevaluation and redefinition of the scope of environmental education. This ensures alignment with the contemporary discourse on education for sustainable development within the context of Cikelat Village.

Informed by Indrianti's exploration of the Community-Based Solid Waste Bank Model for Sustainable Education, as exemplified by the evolution of Miftahul Jannah Solid Waste Bank (2021), the community service initiative in Cikelat Village draws inspiration from the successful integration of waste management and education. Indrianti's work highlights the potential of a solid waste bank model in fostering sustainability education within communities. In aligning efforts with this model, it is aimed to establish a framework that not only addresses environmental concerns related to solid waste but also serves as a platform for educating the community on sustainable practices. The evolution of Miftahul Jannah Solid Waste Bank becomes a valuable reference, guiding the approach to integrate waste management practices with educational components, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and informed community in Cikelat Village.

Methods

The process of fostering mutual partnerships and orchestrating the action plan for community engagement in Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java, was underpinned by a participatory approach that encapsulated multiple stakeholders. The subjects intricately involved in the action plan encompassed the local community members, representatives from Cikelat Village's administrative body, academic institutions, local NGOs, and experts in environmental conservation. This diverse ensemble of participants collectively contributed their perspectives and expertise to ensure a comprehensive and effective strategy.

The interaction among the community engagement team, partners, and subjects was marked by collaborative ideation, joint decision-making, and continuous feedback loops. The community engagement team acted as catalysts for facilitating the dialogue, understanding the unique needs of the community, and integrating these insights into the action plan. Regular consultations and workshops were convened, ensuring that the strategy remained aligned with the community's aspirations.

The methodology employed to drive the community engagement was founded upon the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), renowned for its co-creative nature and empowerment-oriented framework. This methodology ensured that the community members were active participants in every phase of the project, from conceptualization to execution, fostering a sense of ownership and agency.

To visualize the implementation stages, a flowchart was devised, encapsulating the sequential process. Initially, a thorough needs assessment was conducted through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the community's existing environmental awareness and aspirations. Subsequently, a co-design process was undertaken, involving brainstorming sessions with the community, partners, and experts to shape the community engagement plan. The plan encompassed multi-faceted initiatives such as workshops, environmental education campaigns, sustainable practices demonstrations, and establishment of green spaces. These were tailored to meet the community's unique requirements and align with their cultural and environmental values.

In executing the design, each initiative was meticulously carried out with the active involvement of community members. Workshops were co-facilitated by experts and community representatives, while educational campaigns were conducted collaboratively to maximize engagement. As the initiatives unfolded, regular feedback loops were established to assess progress, adapt strategies, and celebrate achievements.

In sum, the employed approach was deeply rooted in the principles of PAR, reflecting a collaborative and community-centered methodology. Through flowcharts and interactive workshops, the community engagement process was thoughtfully structured to ensure inclusivity, ownership, and an enduring impact on enhancing environmental awareness within Cikelat Village.



Fig. 1. Residents carry out road repairs to facilitate the mobilization of farmers



Fig. 2. Students help residents carry out road repairs so that they are in accordance with the structure and provisions for making roads



Fig. 3. Residents and students carry out roadside cleaning so that the construction process runs smoothly

Results and Discussions

The innovation-driven community engagement activities in Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java, yielded multifaceted results that intertwine environmental awareness, economic growth, and community empowerment. The dynamics of the community engagement process were marked by collaborative efforts, co-creation, and a shared commitment to sustainable development. Environmental Awareness and Empowerment: The community engagement activities elicited a remarkable surge in environmental awareness among the villagers. Through workshops, educational campaigns, and hands-on initiatives, community members not only acquired knowledge about sustainable practices but also developed a deep sense of responsibility towards their environment. This newfound awareness was evident in the increased adoption of eco-friendly practices such as waste management, tree planting, and water conservation.

The initial phase of this initiative involved a series of Initial Surveys, Interviews, and Focused Group Discussions aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of the environmental dynamics in Cikelat Village. The initial survey was conducted by presenting focused key questions to gauge the community's responses to environmental issues. The ten key questions were:

1. How would you describe your level of awareness regarding environmental issues in the vicinity of Cikelat Village?
2. In your opinion, what are the primary environmental challenges in this village?
3. What is your understanding of the impact of environmental changes on daily life in Cikelat Village?
4. Do you feel involved in environmental conservation efforts in this community? If yes, what forms does your involvement take?
5. How do you view waste management in this village? Are there efforts being made to reduce waste?

The Collaborative Design Process within this initiative comprises a series of steps that integrate various perspectives from the community, partners, and experts to formulate a relevant and sustainable engagement plan. Brainstorming sessions involving all stakeholders, including the local community, project partners, and experts, focused on key aspects influencing the environment in Cikelat Village. Each session had its unique focus; for instance, discussions

with the community centered around their direct experiences with the environment, while project partners and experts brought more technical perspectives. The outcomes of these sessions were consolidated to shape a comprehensive community engagement plan, considering the aspirations and needs expressed by all involved parties.

Furthermore, adapting the plan was crucial to present an approach relevant to the cultural and environmental context of the local community. The plan was developed responsively, taking into account the cultural values strongly held by the people of Cikelat Village. This adaptation process involved continuous dialogue with the local residents to understand and respect their needs and cultural values. This ensured that the devised plan was not only technically effective but also closely connected to the cultural and environmental realities of the village.

During the Implementation Phase of the Initiative, various multi-faceted programs were designed and presented to the community of Cikelat Village using a diverse and inclusive approach. Workshops were conducted, emphasizing practical education, providing villagers with opportunities to learn about sustainable practices firsthand. Environmental education campaigns were carried out through various mediums, including poster installations, public events, and informal educational sessions at schools or community centers. Demonstrations of sustainable practices such as waste management and eco-friendly farming were presented interactively, allowing the community to witness and experience the benefits directly.

The response from the residents of Cikelat Village was notably positive, evident from their high level of participation in each of these initiatives. They exhibited a strong interest in understanding and applying the sustainable practices taught. Active involvement was apparent in every activity, reflected in their enthusiasm during workshops, intense engagement in educational campaigns, and direct participation in demonstrations of sustainable practices. This positive response indicates that the initiatives designed aligned with the needs of the local community, reinforcing the impression that these programs successfully fostered awareness and active involvement in preserving the environment in Cikelat Village.

The evaluation of each initiative's outcomes is conducted using a set of parameters established to measure the level of success and its impact on the community in Cikelat Village. To gauge environmental awareness levels, indicators such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, and

behaviors towards environmental issues were utilized. Surveys before and after the activities were conducted to assess changes in the community's understanding and awareness regarding the raised environmental issues. Additionally, direct observations and in-depth interviews are part of the evaluation process to comprehend changes in attitudes and behaviors.

In assessing the adoption of sustainable practices by the community after the activities, the extent to which these practices are applied in their daily lives was observed. Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were utilized to measure how much the residents of Cikelat Village implement the practices taught in the initiative. The observation was also carried on about their interactions with the surrounding environment, such as waste management, prudent use of natural resources, and participation in environmental conservation activities after the community service activities concluded.

This comprehensive evaluation helps to understand the impact generated by the initiative and also assesses the sustainability of the desired behavior changes in the long term. By strengthening analysis and evaluation at each stage, a more holistic overview of how this approach successfully influences environmental awareness and community involvement in Cikelat Village was provided.

The survey results revealed diverse understandings but also highlighted a high level of awareness regarding environmental issues among the village residents. Through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions, further analysis unveiled the community's aspirations concerning their surrounding environment. This process involved active participation from the community, showcasing their commitment to addressing environmental issues within their surroundings. However, challenges in obtaining accurate data and engaging the community were also identified, such as limited access to information and the need for active engagement across all layers of the community in this process.

These results resonate with the findings of various studies on community engagement, environmental awareness, and economic empowerment. The fusion of environmental education and practical implementation aligns with research that highlights the effectiveness of hands-on experiences in nurturing sustainable practices (Eisenhut & Flannery, 2005). Furthermore, the positive correlation between community engagement and economic growth

aligns with the insights from previous studies on *UMKM* (Indonesian terms for MSME, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) development (Pujihartati et al., 2021).

Photo Documentation: The photographic documentation accompanying this article vividly captures the essence of the community engagement activities. These images portray community members actively participating in workshops, engaging in sustainable practices, and showcasing their locally crafted products. These visual narratives serve as a testament to the vibrancy, enthusiasm, and commitment that permeated the engagement process.

In essence, the case study of Cikelat Village exemplifies the profound impact of community-driven engagement in empowering communities through enhanced environmental awareness. This transformative journey not only bolstered ecological consciousness but also served as a catalyst for economic growth, communal unity, and the preservation of local heritage. The results and discussions underscore the invaluable potential of fostering community ownership and partnership in shaping a sustainable and harmonious future.

Conclusion

The journey of community engagement in Cikelat Village, Sukabumi, West Java, stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaborative efforts and the enduring impact they can wield. Reflecting on the results, this conclusion delves into the factors that bolstered the success of the engagement and the pivotal aspect of sustainability that underpins its legacy.

Supportive Factors: Several pivotal factors contributed to the resounding success of the community engagement initiatives. Foremost among these was the active participation and dedication of the community members. Their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn and implement sustainable practices infused the engagement process with vitality. The engagement's participatory nature, driven by the principles of PAR, created an environment of shared ownership and active involvement. Moreover, the synergistic partnerships forged with local administrative bodies, academic institutions, NGOs, and environmental experts enriched the engagement's effectiveness by incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise.

Implementation Constraints: While the journey was marked by success, it was not devoid of challenges. Constraints such as limited resources, logistical complexities, and occasional

disparities in viewpoints posed occasional hurdles. However, these challenges were consistently surmounted through collective problem-solving and creative adaptations.

Sustainability: The cornerstone of the engagement's success lies in its sustainability. By intertwining environmental awareness with economic growth through *UMKM* empowerment, the engagement fostered a cycle of growth that resonates beyond its culmination. The elevated consciousness about environmental preservation and the adoption of sustainable practices are poised to become ingrained in the community's way of life. The engagement's legacy is further underscored by the community's active role in sustaining the initiatives, evidenced by ongoing workshops, campaigns, and local practices.

In conclusion, the case study of Cikelat Village showcases the intricate tapestry woven through collaboration, empowerment, and sustainable practices. The supportive factors and the ability to transcend constraints testify to the community's determination and the partnerships' resilience. The true testament, however, lies in the village's sustained commitment to the principles imbibed during the engagement. As the village continues to evolve as a hub of environmentally conscious practices and thriving *UMKMs*, the legacy of this engagement stands as a beacon, inspiring not only Cikelat Village but also communities far and wide to embrace a holistic path toward sustainable development.

This initiative has made a significant impact on Cikelat Village. The noticeable increase in environmental awareness and adoption of sustainable practices among the residents serves as concrete evidence of the success of this initiative. There has been a positive shift in the community's mindset and actions throughout the course of the service activities, affirming that these efforts significantly contribute to enhancing environmental awareness and the importance of sustainable practices at the local level.

However, amidst the progress achieved, environmental challenges persist and require ongoing efforts. Despite visible positive changes, challenges like better waste management, limited availability of natural resources, and the expansion of continuous environmental education remain. Overcoming these challenges will be pivotal in sustaining the momentum of the accomplished changes and fostering a broader, more sustainable transformation in Cikelat

Village. Understanding these persistent challenges will enable future steps to focus on more effective and targeted solutions, ensuring the sustainability of the positive changes obtained.

To sustain the positive momentum that has been established, continuous long-term planning is essential in Cikelat Village. One suggested step is the implementation of routine programs involving active participation from the local community, such as environmental maintenance activities, periodic workshops on sustainable practices, or environmental awareness campaigns. This step will ensure that sustainable efforts continue to be executed and integrated into the daily lives of the village residents.

Furthermore, the importance of strengthening collaborations with relevant entities such as local governments, non-governmental organizations, or community-based institutions cannot be overstated. Close collaboration with these entities will facilitate the exchange of resources, knowledge, and support necessary to bolster and expand sustainable initiatives in Cikelat Village. Synergy among various stakeholders will enrich the efforts made and enhance the resulting impact.

Moreover, to ensure the sustainability of environmental understanding and awareness among the community, continuous education programs or periodic awareness campaigns are necessary. These programs can focus on environmental issues relevant to the needs and challenges faced by the people of Cikelat Village. By providing ongoing education and information, the aim is to foster sustained concern and participation in preserving the environment at the local level.

In implementing this initiative, the importance of monitoring and evaluating long-term impacts must be a priority. Monitoring plans will involve using measurable success indicators periodically to assess the sustainability of the community's behavioral changes related to the environment. This includes observing the adoption of sustainable practices, participation in environmental conservation activities, as well as changes in attitudes and awareness of environmental issues. Regular evaluations will enable the identification of achieved impacts and determine whether the strategies implemented have successfully attained the desired long-term goals.

Additionally, as part of the effort to ensure sustainability, it is expected for readers, local governments, and relevant stakeholders to collectively support and continue these efforts. Broader collaboration and synergy among stakeholders will strengthen the steps taken and ensure the sustainability of the positive changes achieved. This invitation is intended to foster a stronger commitment in enhancing environmental awareness and practicing sustainable habits in Cikelat Village, making the community active agents of change in preserving the environment for future generations.

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