

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE VILLAGE FUND DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE (BLT-DD) DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM IN MUNUNG VILLAGE, JATIKALEN DISTRICT, NGANJUK REGENCY

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze community participation in the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) Program in Munung Village, Jatikalen District, Nganjuk Regency. The focus of the study covers four stages of participation based on the theory of Cohen & Uphoff (1977): decision-making, implementation, utilization of results, and program evaluation. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants included the village head, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), the heads of the RT/RW, recipient communities, and non-recipients of BLT-DD. The results showed that at the decision-making stage, participation was carried out through the Village Deliberation (Musdes) forum involving the village government, BPD, and RT/RW. At the implementation stage, participation was realized through the provision of information during data collection and involvement in the distribution process. At the utilization stage, 29 Beneficiary Families utilized the assistance for basic household needs. At the evaluation stage, the community was involved through the Musdes forum to provide responses and input. Overall, community participation takes place through a targeted division of roles between the village government, BPD, RT/RW, and the community, so that program implementation runs transparently and on target.

INTRODUCTION

The Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program is a strategic policy of the Indonesian government aimed at providing social protection for rural communities impacted by economic conditions, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020. The pandemic not only impacted the health sector but also significantly affected the rural economy, prompting the government to issue a village fund-based social protection policy (Lestari, 2023).

Munung Village, Jatikalen District, Nganjuk Regency, is one of the villages implementing the BLT-DD program as part of the national social protection policy. Based on preliminary data for 2025, 73 low-income families were proposed as potential BLT-DD beneficiaries. After a selection process through village deliberations, 29 heads of families (KK) were selected as BLT-DD recipients, with a total budget of Rp104,400,000.00, with an assistance amounting to Rp300,000.00 per family per month for 12 months.

The success of the BLT-DD program is not solely determined by administrative mechanisms but also depends heavily on the level of community participation at every stage of its implementation. Community participation is a form of active involvement of citizens in various activities aimed at achieving shared prosperity, as mandated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution (Herman et al., 2024). Meaningful participation includes involvement in decision-making, implementation, utilization of results, and program evaluation.



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However, the dynamics of community participation in the BLT-DD program in Munung Village presented several challenges. Some residents questioned their involvement in the decision-making process, the clarity of the selection mechanism, and the extent to which community aspirations were truly considered in determining aid recipients. This situation necessitates an in-depth study of the actual community participation mechanisms in the field.

This study aims to describe community participation in the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) distribution program in Munung Village, Jatikalen District, Nganjuk Regency, using Cohen and Uphoff's (1977) participation theory framework, which includes four dimensions: decision making, implementation, utilization of results, and evaluation.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to deeply understand the perspectives of the community and village government regarding participation in the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program from their respective perspectives (Sugiyono, 2023). The descriptive design was used to provide a realistic picture of community involvement in each stage of the BLT-DD program implementation.

The study was conducted in Munung Village, Jatikalen District, Nganjuk Regency, East Java Province. This village was selected because it has consistently implemented the BLT-DD program since the pandemic, implementing a structured village deliberation mechanism.

The research subjects were determined using a purposive sampling technique, which involves deliberately selecting informants based on their relevance and ability to provide in-depth information. The informants consisted of: (1) the Village Head of Munung, (2) the Head of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), (3) the Head of Neighborhood Association (RT) 09, (4) one BLT-DD recipient (Mrs. Yusmiati), and (5) one non-BLT-DD recipient (Mr. Susilo).

The data collection technique used triangulation, a combination of three methods: (1) semi-structured interviews conducted with all informants, (2) direct observation of the implementation and distribution of BLT-DD, and (3) documentation studies in the form of village meeting minutes, Musdes attendance lists, BLT-DD recipient data, and visual documentation of distribution activities.

Data validity was ensured through source and technical triangulation, as well as member checking of interview results. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which consists of three components: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community Participation in Decision-Making. Community participation in decision-making is a crucial indicator of democratic and inclusive governance. According to Cohen and Uphoff's (1977) theory, participation in decision-making is related to community involvement in determining various policy alternatives or programs that affect the common good.

In Munung Village, decisions regarding the BLT-DD program are made through a Village Deliberation (Musdes) forum involving the village government, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and representatives from the neighborhood associations (RT/RW). The village head explained: "We collect data on potential BLT-DD recipients through a deliberation with the heads of the neighborhood associations (RT), neighborhood associations (RW), the BPD, and community leaders. The RTs bring data on residents deemed eligible, which is then discussed collectively in the village to avoid mistargeting and social jealousy" (Interview, January 12, 2026).



The deliberation process begins at the neighborhood association (RT/RW) level, where the RT head conducts initial data collection and discusses residents' economic conditions with neighborhood representatives. This data is then submitted to the Village Consultative Meeting (Musdes) for collective verification and approval. The Village Consultative Body (BPD) head emphasized: "In the decision-making process for determining the BLT-DD (Direct Cash Assistance) program, we from the BPD, along with the village government and RT/RW, conducted discussions based on data collected at the neighborhood level" (Interview, January 12, 2026).

However, research findings indicate that most residents are not directly involved in the decision-making process. Resident involvement is generally conducted through a representative system, where RT/RW and community leaders convey residents' aspirations to the village government. It indicates that community participation in decision-making remains at a consultative stage, where residents are given the opportunity to express their opinions, but the ultimate decision-making authority remains with the village government.

Nevertheless, this representative model still has a positive impact on increasing community acceptance of decisions. Decisions made through deliberation tend to be more easily accepted because they are perceived as having been deliberated through collective deliberation. It is in line with the findings of Attribution & License (2023) that the distribution of BLT-DD funds has been implemented well in principle, based on justice, when the deliberation mechanism is implemented consistently.

Community Participation in Implementation. Participation in implementation encompasses community involvement in implementing formulated programs, including contributing resources in the form of workforce, time, and administrative support, as well as involvement in the coordination and operation of activities (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977).

In Munung Village, the implementation of the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program is not carried out unilaterally by the village government, but rather through mechanisms involving community elements. The role of the neighborhood association (RT/RW) is crucial in this stage because they have direct knowledge of the social and economic conditions of residents. The head of RT 09 stated: "As RT, I assist the village government in the process of collecting data and verifying residents eligible for BLT-DD. We discuss with residents and directly observe conditions in the neighborhood to ensure the data provided is accurate" (Interview, January 13, 2026).

Community participation in the implementation is also manifested through informal social monitoring. Residents indirectly monitor the implementation of the BLT-DD (Direct Cash Assistance) by comparing the list of aid recipients with the socio-economic conditions in their neighborhood. Mr. Susilo, a non-recipient, explained that information regarding the distribution schedule was communicated through the neighborhood association (RT) and community association (RW) WhatsApp groups, allowing the community to follow the distribution process in an orderly manner (Interview, January 15, 2026).

Research findings indicate significant variation in participation levels among residents. Some residents actively monitored the aid distribution process and reported any discrepancies in recipient data to the village government. Others tended to be passive and merely acted as beneficiaries. This difference was influenced by the community's level of understanding of the BLT-DD mechanism and their awareness of their rights and obligations as village residents.

Overall, community participation in the implementation of BLT-DD in Munung Village took place through a focused division of roles. The community acted as a supporter of the implementation through concrete contributions in the field, while the technical process was managed by the village government, the BPD (Regional Consultative Body) and the RT/RW (Neighborhood Association).



This pattern reflects the synergy between village elements, as emphasized by Harjo et al. (2024), who argued that strengthening local community institutions, such as the RT and RW, plays a crucial role in improving the quality of community participation during the implementation phase.

Community Participation in Benefit Utilization. Participation in benefits relates to the extent to which the community can experience and enjoy the results of program implementation. Cohen and Uphoff (1977) explain that community acceptance of benefits depends heavily on the equitable distribution of development outcomes, both physical and non-physical.

Research in Munung Village shows that 29 Beneficiary Families (KPM) utilized the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) assistance responsibly, in accordance with the program's objectives. Mrs. Yusmiati, a BLT-DD recipient, stated that the assistance was used to purchase daily necessities such as rice, cooking oil, and other kitchen necessities, as well as for health and children's education (Interview, January 15, 2026).

The Village Head also revealed that the village government routinely advises BLT-DD recipients to use the assistance appropriately, conveying this through village deliberations, neighborhood association (RT/RW) meetings, and during the aid distribution process. Through this coordination, aid utilization can be continuously monitored and adjusted to meet community needs.

Community participation in utilization is not merely passive as recipients, but also includes social oversight in their respective communities. Non-recipients, such as Mr. Susilo, monitor the use of assistance by recipients in their neighborhood and are willing to report any discrepancies to the neighborhood head (RT/RW) if they find any.

Based on the theory of Oakley and Marsden (1984), participation in utilization indicates the extent to which a community is able to independently manage and utilize the results of a program. In the context of the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) program in Munung Village, this is evident in the recipient community's ability to use the assistance appropriately according to their primary needs. The level of community participation in BLT-DD utilization can be categorized as somewhere between placement and partnership, where the community is beginning to be involved but does not yet have full control over decision-making regarding the sustainable use of the assistance.

Community Participation in Evaluation. Participation in evaluation is the involvement of the community in assessing the implementation of a program. Evaluation aims to determine the level of program achievement according to the established plan, and community input serves as feedback to improve future program implementation (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977).

In Munung Village, the evaluation of the BLT-DD program was facilitated through the Village Deliberation (Musdes) forum, which serves as the primary forum for community participation. The Village Head explained that program evaluation is more often conducted indirectly through village deliberations, neighborhood association (RT/RW) meetings, and direct communication with village officials. In these forums, the community is given the opportunity to submit responses, complaints, and input regarding the implementation of BLT-DD.

The role of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) in the evaluation stage is strategic, acting as a liaison between the community and the village government. The BPD Chair stated: "We from the BPD, together with the village government, provide space for the community to convey evaluations of the implementation of the BLT-DD program, particularly through village deliberation forums and evaluation activities held periodically. Our role is to accommodate and channel these aspirations to be then discussed with the village government as material for improving the implementation of the program going forward" (Interview, January 12, 2026).

A key finding of this study is that approximately 73 potential recipients of the BLT-DD (Village Direct Cash Assistance) were initially proposed. However, through a process of discussion,



verification, and joint evaluation in the Village Deliberation (Musdes), 29 Beneficiary Families (KPM) were ultimately determined to be the most deserving recipients. This process demonstrates that evaluation is not merely a final assessment but also serves a selection function that involves active community participation.

Overall, community participation in the evaluation of the BLT-DD program in Munung Village demonstrated targeted involvement. The community contributed by providing input for consideration, while the village government provided a space for community participation. Through this model, BLT-DD implementation can be continuously adjusted to community conditions and support the program's sustainability in an accountable and effective manner. This type of evaluation forum aligns with the principles of professional learning communities proposed by Sari et al. (2025), which states that collective reflection forums involving various stakeholders serve as shared spaces for collaborative capacity development and a culture of continuous evaluation within a community.

Summary of Research Findings. The following table summarizes research findings regarding community participation in the BLT-DD program in Munung Village based on Cohen and Uphoff's (1977) theory:

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

| No | Forms of Participation | Theoretical Description (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977) | Findings in Munung Village (BLT-DD) |
|----|------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Decision-making | Community involvement in planning through the Village Consultative Assembly forum. | Participation is conducted through the Village Deliberation (Musdes) forum, with representatives from the RT/RW and BPD (Village Consultative Body). The community conveys its aspirations and proposes potential BLT-DD recipients. |
| 2 | Implementation | Community involvement in running the program. | The community participates by providing information during data collection, participating in the distribution process, and through social oversight within the community. The neighborhood association (RT/RW) acts as a facilitator for data collection and information dissemination. |
| 3 | Utilization of Results | Utilization of program results by the community to improve welfare. | 29 beneficiary families (KPM) used the aid for daily necessities, healthcare, and children's education. The community also conducted social monitoring to ensure the appropriate use of the aid. |
| 4 | Evaluation | Involvement in providing input and assessment of the program. | The community was involved through an evaluation forum called Musdes. From 73 proposed recipients, through verification and deliberation, 29 beneficiary families (KPM) were identified as most deserving of BLT-DD. |

CONCLUSION



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This research shows that community participation in the Village Fund Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) distribution program in Munung Village, Jaticalen District, Nganjuk Regency, took place through a structured mechanism, with a clearly defined role division between the village government, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), the Neighborhood Association (RT/RW), and the community.

At the decision-making stage, community participation was realized through a Village Deliberation forum with a representative system of RT/RW and BPD. The community provided information, opinions, and suggestions for potential BLT-DD recipients who met the criteria, although direct community involvement remained consultative. At the implementation stage, participation was evident in the involvement of RT/RW in data collection and verification, as well as in the community's provision of information regarding the conditions of residents in their respective neighborhoods. At the utilization stage, 29 Beneficiary Families (KPM) responsibly utilized the assistance to meet basic household needs, while non-recipients participated in social monitoring. At the evaluation stage, the community was involved through the Village Deliberation forum to provide responses and input, which formed the basis for the selection of 29 Beneficiary Families (KPM) from the 73 proposed candidates.

In general, community participation in the BLT-DD program in Munung Village showed a positive and targeted pattern. Going forward, strengthening community involvement from the initial stages through evaluation, increasing information transparency, and developing more formal and structured evaluation mechanisms can further support the implementation of the BLT-DD program so that it aligns with community needs sustainably. It aligns with the findings of Sari et al. (2025), which showed that collaboratively and contextually designed, active participation-based programs have been shown to improve the competence and commitment of participants, thereby encouraging a real transformation of practices in the field.

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