

The Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Indonesia: Perspectives from Local Communities, Government, and the International Community

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ABSTRAC

Rural poverty is a multidimensional issue that involves various actors with differing perspectives and roles. This study aims to explore and compare the ways in which rural communities, government institutions, and international community perceive poverty in rural Indonesia. Using a literature review approach, this paper examines previous research, policy documents, and reports from international agencies over the past two decades. The findings reveal that rural communities tend to understand poverty as a condition marked by limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. In contrast, government actors often frame poverty reduction through programmatic and structural interventions. Meanwhile, the international community views rural poverty as part of global inequality and the broader challenge of sustainable development. This study highlights the importance of holistic and collaborative approaches in designing poverty reduction policies that are both locally responsive and aligned with national and global development agendas.

Keywords: rural poverty, actor perspectives, policy integration, community empowerment, inclusive development.

INTRODUCTION

Rural poverty remains a fundamental challenge that continues to overshadow Indonesia's development trajectory. While national poverty rates have generally shown a declining trend, poverty levels in rural areas remain significantly higher. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), as of March 2023, there were 12.22 million people living in poverty in rural areas—representing 10.85% of the rural population—compared to 7.29% in urban areas. This disparity underscores the unequal distribution of economic growth, which has yet to fully reach rural communities. Geographic isolation, limited access to infrastructure, and scarce formal employment opportunities are among the key factors contributing to the persistent poverty in Indonesia's rural regions (World Bank, 2020). In addition to economic factors, social, cultural, and political dimensions also play a crucial role in reinforcing the vulnerability of rural households to poverty. For rural communities, poverty is not merely understood as a lack of income but as a deeper experience of limited access to basic services, the loss of social status, and a weakened ability to influence decisions that affect their lives (Chambers, 1995; Narayan et al., 2000). A multidimensional approach is increasingly relevant, as many studies show that income-based poverty lines fail to fully capture the lived experiences of the rural poor (Alkire & Foster, 2011; Mitra et al., 2023). Ethnographic and participatory studies over the past decade have highlighted how social insecurity, geographic isolation, and the erosion of control over local natural resources further intensify rural vulnerability (Sultana & Loftus, 2020; Sugiyarto et al., 2021). At the same time, vulnerable groups such as women, smallholder farmers, and Indigenous communities often find themselves trapped in cycles of social exclusion and structural injustice due to unequal access to resources, information, and opportunities (Green & Hulme, 2005; Leal et al., 2020). In this context, impoverishment is not only produced by economic scarcity but also by unequal power relations. Emerging development literature emphasizes the need to understand poverty through a local lens—grounded in lived experience and the voices of the people themselves. This is essential to avoid technocratic policy biases that overlook the socio-cultural realities embedded in rural life (Camfield et al., 2009; de la O Campos et al., 2018). Efforts to reduce rural poverty in Indonesia have been largely driven by

state-led interventions, from direct assistance programs like the Family Hope Program (PKH) and Cash Transfer Assistance (BLT), to village-based development initiatives such as the Village Fund (Dana Desa). These policies have significantly improved basic welfare and public service access for rural poor communities (World Bank, 2020). However, their long-term effectiveness remains debated, particularly due to their top-down nature, the lack of community participation in planning processes, and the limited responsiveness to diverse and evolving local contexts (Kemendes PDTT, 2022; Nasution & Fauzan, 2021).

Many national programs continue to view poverty as a quantitative issue to be addressed through aid distribution or infrastructure provision. Yet recent studies suggest that rural poverty is deeply intertwined with structural injustice, limited control over natural resources, ecological vulnerability, and social exclusion (Widiyanto & Sholihah, 2022; Prakosa, 2023). As such, overly standardized poverty reduction approaches often fall short of addressing local complexities or building long-term community resilience.

Meanwhile, the international community frames rural poverty within the broader context of global sustainable development, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 13 (Climate Action). Organizations such as UNDP, IFAD, and the World Bank promote approaches that emphasize social justice, climate adaptation, and the strengthening of local institutional capacities to enhance rural socio-economic resilience (UNDP, 2021; IFAD, 2022). Cross-actor collaboration is essential in tackling the increasingly complex and interconnected nature of rural development challenges. Understanding rural poverty from multiple perspectives is therefore vital in designing solutions that are participatory, integrated, inclusive, and context-specific. A multi-stakeholder approach—one that centers the perspectives of communities as key actors, governments as policy architects, and global partners as framework providers—is necessary to avoid oversimplification and to create more targeted, sustainable poverty alleviation policies (Alkire & Santos, 2010; Hickey & du Toit, 2013).

This study aims to explore and compare how three key actors—rural communities, the Indonesian government, and the international community—understand and respond to rural poverty in Indonesia. By reviewing scholarly literature, policy documents, and reports from international institutions over the past two decades, the study offers a critical and reflective analysis of the directions and effectiveness of the approaches that have been implemented. At the heart of this inquiry are the following guiding questions:

1. What are the perceptions and life experiences of rural communities regarding poverty ?
2. How has the government designed and implemented rural poverty alleviation policies ?
3. How does the international community view and respond to rural poverty in Indonesia within the broader context of global development?

Through this literature-based approach, the study seeks to develop a more holistic understanding of rural poverty dynamics and offer insights for shaping policy directions that are both locally grounded and globally attuned.

Conceptual Framework

Rural poverty in Indonesia cannot be fully understood through a singular, conventional economic lens. Rather, it is a complex phenomenon shaped by the interplay of structural conditions, institutional arrangements, and the agency of local communities within both national and global contexts. This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach that integrates three main conceptual frameworks such as the multidimensional approach to poverty, the actor–structure theory, and perspectives from participatory and global development, to offer a more holistic understanding of rural poverty dynamics.

Multidimensional Approach to Poverty

The concept of poverty has undergone a significant transformation over the past few decades. Whereas it was once narrowly defined in terms of insufficient income to meet basic needs, such a definition is now

seen as inadequate for capturing the complex realities experienced by people, particularly in rural areas. Traditional monetary approaches—such as poverty lines based on minimum consumption—tend to overlook critical aspects of human well-being, including education, health, safety, and social participation. To address these limitations, Alkire and Santos (2010) developed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which aims to capture the various forms of deprivation that households may experience. The MPI assesses poverty across three core dimensions: education (e.g., years of schooling and school attendance), health (e.g., child nutrition and mortality), and living standards (e.g., access to clean water, electricity, sanitation, cooking fuel, adequate housing, and ownership of assets). This approach reveals that individuals can live in multidimensional poverty even if their expenditures exceed national poverty thresholds. Importantly, it encourages more responsive policymaking. For instance, in areas where poverty is driven primarily by lack of access to education, interventions can focus on expanding school access, improving teacher availability, or providing financial support for students—rather than relying solely on direct cash transfers, as is common in traditional strategies. In the rural Indonesian context, a multidimensional approach is particularly relevant. Many households that do not fall below the poverty line in terms of expenditure still lack access to clean water, proper sanitation, or basic health services. These structural deprivations are not fully captured by economic indicators alone (Alkire et al., 2015). Therefore, the multidimensional lens offers a more accurate picture of the depth and nature of rural poverty. Numerous studies show that adopting the MPI can enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs. In Bangladesh, for example, MPI-based planning has led to more precisely targeted village development efforts (Alkire et al., 2015). In Indonesia, similar approaches are beginning to inform microdata-driven planning, such as in the Village Fund policy. However, the multidimensional approach is not without challenges. One major issue is the availability of high-quality, up-to-date data for each MPI indicator. In many rural areas, data on child nutrition or housing quality may be incomplete or not regularly updated. Beyond technical constraints, setting the relative weights for different MPI dimensions often involves normative judgments, which may vary across regions and cultures. Local adaptation is therefore crucial to ensure that indicators reflect community-specific social and cultural realities. Without such adjustments, there is a risk of policy bias that may inadvertently deepen inequality. Research by Ferreira et al. (2019) highlights that rural households frequently experience overlapping deprivations, such as low educational attainment, informal employment, and unhealthy living environments. These findings further underscore the insufficiency of income-based approaches in explaining poverty's complexities. Multidimensional deprivation also reflects deeper structural inequalities—both spatial and social—where certain groups, particularly women, smallholder farmers, and Indigenous communities, are doubly disadvantaged by a combination of economic and non-economic factors. Furthermore, the MPI developed by Alkire and Santos has been widely used to identify who is being left behind—and in what dimensions—so that policies can be more precisely targeted (Alkire & Jahan, 2018). In Indonesia, the MPI is beginning to gain traction among research institutions and development organizations. However, its full integration into national policy continues to face challenges, including institutional capacity and data consistency. A study by Sutaryo et al. (2020) in East Nusa Tenggara revealed that indicators such as the absence of health insurance, limited access to secondary education, and high rates of child stunting are more reflective of poverty vulnerability than household expenditure data alone. These findings highlight how the multidimensional approach can uncover patterns of inequality that remain invisible under conventional economic assessments. A similar conclusion was drawn by Yumna and Taher (2021), who observed that many Indonesian villages, while not classified as economically poor, face digital exclusion and poor basic infrastructure—factors that significantly hinder social mobility and long-term well-being. Despite its limitations, the multidimensional approach has influenced how policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners perceive and respond to poverty. It has shifted the emphasis from short-term relief efforts toward structural empowerment and the enhancement of capabilities among

the poor. As such, the MPI functions not merely as a measurement tool but as a conceptual framework for designing more equitable and sustainable development policies. Moreover, this approach aligns closely with the philosophy of human development, which regards freedom as both the end and means of development (Sen, 1999). In this view, poverty is understood as a deprivation of freedom—the lack of opportunities and choices that enable individuals to lead a life of dignity. Therefore, poverty reduction efforts must go beyond income support to encompass the expansion of rights, opportunities, and human capabilities. The integration of MPI into village development planning systems offers promising avenues for improving budget accountability and targeting efficiency. Village governments, for instance, can use MPI data to identify the most vulnerable households and design programs that address their specific needs, rather than adhering to generic technical guidelines. This approach also holds significant potential for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those closely aligned with MPI indicators—namely Goal 1 (ending poverty in all its forms), Goal 3 (ensuring healthy lives and well-being), Goal 4 (ensuring inclusive and quality education), and Goal 6 (ensuring access to clean water and sanitation). In this way, adopting a multidimensional approach not only improves the precision of poverty analysis but also strengthens the alignment between local development strategies and global development agendas.

THE Theory of Actor and Structure

The theory of actor and structure, as formulated by Anthony Giddens in his Structuration Theory (1984), provides a conceptual lens for understanding the dynamic interplay between individual agency and social systems. Giddens introduces the idea of the “duality of structure”, where social structures do not merely constrain human actions but also enable them. Structures are composed of rules and resources that actors draw upon in social interactions, and through these very interactions, structures are either reproduced or transformed (Giddens, 1984; Stones, 2005). In the context of rural poverty, this approach helps illuminate how rural communities, while often embedded in structurally disadvantaged contexts—such as limited access to education, markets, or basic services—still possess the capacity to act, adapt, and even reshape the systems they inhabit. For example, the formation of farmers’ groups or civil society organizations in rural areas can serve as local engines of change, even amid resource constraints or limited policy support (Bebbington, 1999; Cleaver, 2012). Structures in development contexts encompass a wide array of institutional frameworks, including government policy, bureaucratic systems, labor markets, and prevailing social or cultural norms. These structures may act as barriers—such as by subordinating women’s roles or restricting indigenous communities’ access to land—but they may also open pathways for collective action and resistance, such as through village-level deliberative forums or affirmative action programs (Archer, 1995; Mosse, 2005; Clegg, 1989). Rural communities should not be seen as passive recipients of centrally designed policies. In practice, they often negotiate, adapt, or even resist external interventions that misalign with their values or local realities. In some cases, communities have modified the design of Dana Desa (Village Funds) programs to make them more contextually appropriate (Cleaver, 2012; Hay, 2002). This framework also underscores the vital role of the state as an actor with significant structural capacity. Governments not only design policies but also shape how these policies are interpreted and enacted at the local level. In many instances, rigid national policy frameworks can reinforce structural inequalities if they fail to adapt to local conditions (Jessop, 2001; Whittington, 1992). Likewise, international development actors help construct global structures through development frameworks, funding mechanisms, and performance indicators. These institutions often exert considerable influence over national policy directions through aid packages, technical cooperation, and global reporting standards. Yet their effectiveness depends greatly on how well these global structures accommodate local realities (Mosse, 2005; Bebbington, 1999).

By examining the interaction between actors and structures, analyses of poverty become more textured and nuanced—moving beyond economic indicators to incorporate the social and political processes that determine who is poor, why they are poor, and how they respond to that condition. This perspective allows for the envisioning of policies that are not only technocratic, but also political and transformative in nature (Bhaskar, 1998; Jackson, 2009). Several studies have advanced the application of structuration theory in rural development settings. Stones (2005), for instance, developed strong structuration theory, which highlights the importance of analyzing both internal and external structures in shaping agency. Sewell (1992) demonstrated how structures are reconfigured as agents apply cultural schemas across varying contexts. Meanwhile, McPhee and Zaug (2001) identified four communication flows within organizations that contribute to the formation of social structures. In sum, the integration of actor–structure theory into the analysis of rural poverty offers a more holistic understanding of the social, economic, and political dynamics affecting rural communities. This approach emphasizes not only the structural constraints that shape poverty, but also the capacity of rural actors to respond, negotiate, and transform their realities through collective action and locally rooted adaptations.

Participatory and Global Development Perspectives

The participatory approach in development emerged as a response to critiques of top-down, technocratic, and decontextualized development paradigms. A key figure in this discourse is Robert Chambers (1997), who advocated for positioning local communities as active subjects of development rather than passive objects of intervention. This approach emphasizes the importance of community inclusion throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of development programs, while also recognizing local knowledge as a legitimate and valuable foundation for policy-making (Cornwall, 2008; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). In the context of rural Indonesia, participatory development is particularly relevant due to the country's socio-cultural, geographic, and economic diversity, which cannot be adequately addressed by uniform policies imposed from the center (Khadijah et al., 2023). Local communities—such as smallholder farmers, fishers, and rural women—often possess deep contextual knowledge of ecological cycles, social practices, and community needs that may be overlooked by central government bureaucrats (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Consequently, failing to involve these actors in development processes can result in poorly targeted policies, or worse, exacerbate existing inequalities (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Participation is also closely linked to empowerment. Through forums such as village deliberations (*musyawarah desa*) or participatory planning processes, communities are given a platform to articulate their needs, set development priorities, and monitor program implementation. These practices not only enhance the legitimacy of development interventions but also strengthen social accountability (Gaventa, 2006). Studies across various developing countries show that meaningful participation can improve program effectiveness, foster social capital, and build trust between communities and the state (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Nonetheless, participation is not without its challenges. In many instances, local social hierarchies such as elite capture, gender bias, or limited technical capacity can restrict genuine participation. This often results in participation being reduced to mere formalities or symbolic gestures (Williams, 2004; Cleaver, 1999). Therefore, successful participatory processes require facilitation, accompaniment, and mechanisms to strengthen community capacities, ensuring that participation is truly inclusive and equitable (Bebbington, 2006). On a broader scale, global perspectives on rural development have evolved through the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiated by the United Nations. The SDGs offer a global vision of development that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions, including Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 13 (Climate Action) (United Nations, 2015). This framework urges countries to incorporate principles of inclusion, sustainability, and multi-stakeholder collaboration into both national and local development agendas (Sachs et al.,

2019). International institutions such as the UNDP, World Bank, and IFAD play a pivotal role in promoting development agendas that are inclusive and evidence-based. These organizations support initiatives that link rural development with local institutional strengthening, climate resilience, and efforts to address structural inequalities (Clemens & Moss, 2005). Nevertheless, critiques persist regarding the dominance of global actors in setting development standards and indicators, which are often perceived as overly technocratic and insufficiently grounded in local contexts (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990). To bridge this gap, the localization of global agendas is essential. Global indicators—such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) or climate resilience indices—must be translated and adapted in ways that meaningfully reflect the diverse realities of Indonesia's rural communities (Kharas & McArthur, 2019). This process requires ongoing dialogue and negotiation among local, national, and global actors, not only in policy design but also in implementation. Global perspectives have also introduced new approaches to development planning and measurement, such as resilience, sustainable well-being, and inclusive governance. These concepts are gaining traction in public policy and development research, as they challenge older paradigms that overly emphasize economic growth. Instead, they promote integration of socio-ecological resilience, social capital, and political participation (Béné et al., 2014; Leach et al., 2010). By combining participatory approaches with global development perspectives, rural development can be guided in a way that is both contextually grounded and aligned with global aspirations. This integrative approach fosters policies that are not only technically sound but also socially just and sustainable in the long term (Scoones, 2016). Within this framework, the state plays a facilitative role—bridging resources and interests between local communities and the international community—while communities themselves are empowered to be the primary agents of their own development (Fox, 2015). Ultimately, a multi-stakeholder development model becomes crucial to ensure synergy among policy frameworks, local needs, and global commitments. Collaboration among governments, communities, academics, the private sector, and international institutions is essential to address the complex and systemic nature of rural poverty in a fair and equitable manner (Durose & Richardson, 2016; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Each actor contributes a distinct perspective and set of capacities, yet together they co-create solutions that are more contextual, inclusive, and sustainable. When local communities are meaningfully engaged within an inclusive global development framework—and when the state acts as a facilitator of this collaboration—the potential to produce responsive, adaptive, and transformative policies for rural poverty alleviation becomes significantly greater.

3. Methodology: A Literature-Based Inquiry

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to examine how rural poverty in Indonesia is understood and addressed by three key actors: rural communities, the government, and the international community. The review is qualitative and exploratory in nature, aiming to map diverse perspectives and provide a narrative analysis of literature published over the past two decades (2003–2023).

3.1. Sources and Selection Criteria

The sources used in this review encompass a wide array of relevant literature designed to offer a comprehensive understanding of rural poverty in Indonesia from a multi-actor perspective. The selected literature includes peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in both national and international databases such as Scopus, SINTA, and Google Scholar. These academic works provide strong theoretical and empirical foundations for analyzing rural poverty dynamics. In addition, official reports from government agencies such as Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the Ministry of Villages, and the Ministry of Social Affairs offer up-to-date quantitative data on rural conditions. Complementing these are publications from international organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, and OECD, which contribute critical global

perspectives on poverty reduction strategies. The inclusion criteria for the literature emphasize works that explicitly focus on rural poverty, particularly in the Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts. Moreover, selected sources must reflect the roles and perspectives of the main actors involved—communities, governments, and international stakeholders. All literature included in the review comes from credible and verifiable sources to ensure analytical rigor and data reliability. As part of the exclusion criteria, the study omits opinion-based pieces that lack empirical grounding. Through this carefully designed selection process, the review aims to offer not only a robust evidence-based analysis of rural poverty but also a broader understanding of the efforts made to address this pressing issue. Ultimately, the study seeks to enrich the existing body of literature while offering fresh insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in the field.

3.2. Data Collection and Analytical Procedure

The process of gathering and analyzing literature was conducted systematically to explore how discourses on rural poverty in Indonesia have been constructed and contested. Literature searches employed a series of relevant keywords such as "kemiskinan pedesaan Indonesia", "poverty and rural development", "community perspectives on poverty", "poverty policy Indonesia", and "international development and rural poverty". These keywords were used across various reputable academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, as well as national repositories and university libraries, to capture both local and global perspectives.

After collection, the literature was filtered based on thematic relevance, methodological soundness, and publication reputation. Selected documents were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. This involved iterative reading, coding, and thematic categorization to identify emerging narrative patterns, key concepts, and dominant discursive structures. Through this method, the study mapped how various actors—ranging from local communities and state institutions to NGOs and global development agencies—are positioned within the discourse on rural poverty. This analysis forms the basis for understanding the power relations and shifting meanings embedded in rural development policy and practice in Indonesia.

3.3. Limitations of the Study

As a literature-based inquiry, this study does not rely on primary data collection. Instead, it draws on secondary sources such as academic articles, policy documents, and both conceptual and empirical studies related to rural poverty. Consequently, the strength of the findings depends on the credibility, diversity, and comprehensiveness of the literature examined (Snyder, 2019). The selection and synthesis process was conducted with methodological rigor to ensure balanced representation of global and local perspectives in understanding the dynamics of rural poverty in Indonesia.

Although the study does not aim to generate empirical generalizations, its conceptual approach contributes meaningfully to the development of analytical frameworks and critical insights into the social construction of poverty, the power dynamics among actors, and the dominant narratives shaping development agendas (Jessop, 2004; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). A literature review of this nature allows for in-depth exploration of the complex interplay between macro-structures (such as global institutions and policy frameworks) and local dynamics in rural contexts, while also evaluating the spaces available for community actors to engage in contextual responses to poverty (Chambers, 1995; Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

Thus, despite the absence of primary data, this study offers a theoretically grounded and conceptually rich contribution to the understanding of rural poverty as a multidimensional, dynamic, and meaning-laden phenomenon viewed through the lenses of diverse actors and interests.

4. Perspectives of Three Actors: Rural Communities, Government and Global Community

4.1. Perspectives of Rural Communities on Poverty

4.1.1. Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Poverty

Within rural communities, poverty is rarely understood solely as a matter of low income or inadequate consumption, as framed by conventional economic approaches. Rather, it is often perceived in a more layered and holistic manner encompassing social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. As Chambers (1995) suggests, villagers frequently experience poverty as a condition of social exclusion, loss of dignity, and a limited ability to exercise agency over their lives. From this perspective, poverty is not only about “having less,” but also about “being less recognized” marked by a lack of social acknowledgement and diminished visibility in community life.

Ethnographic studies across various rural regions in Indonesia reveal that local communities apply their own criteria for defining poverty. For instance, one is considered poor not merely for lacking a steady income, but for being unable to host guests, send children to school, or participate in customary events (Yulida, 2017; Adi, 2010). The inability to own rice fields or livestock often serves as a locally recognized sign of poverty, closely tied to social identity and personal honor. This reflects the inseparability of material and symbolic dimensions of poverty in rural life.

Poverty, in local terms, is also deeply embedded in the fabric of social relationships. An individual’s social standing within the village is largely determined by their capacity to perform certain communal roles, such as hosting gatherings or contributing to religious ceremonies. When these roles cannot be fulfilled, the person not only loses social prestige but also faces symbolic exclusion from communal life (Narayan et al., 2000). In this sense, poverty becomes a form of social marginalization, rather than simply an economic shortfall. This condition is further complicated by the existence of unequal power relations within rural societies. In many instances, poverty is structural in nature—resulting from inequitable distribution of resources, limited access to education and healthcare, and the dominance of local elites in decision-making processes (Scott, 1976; Hickey & du Toit, 2007). Such realities challenge the notion that poverty is merely the outcome of individual incapacity, emphasizing instead its roots in unjust and exclusionary socio-political systems. This understanding aligns with the multidimensional poverty approach developed by the UNDP (2020) through the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which argues that poverty must be assessed not only through income but also through indicators of education, health, and living standards. In the rural Indonesian context, these indicators may be extended to include access to land and clean water, social participation, and the preservation of local values. A multidimensional lens is crucial for capturing the lived complexity of poverty as experienced by rural populations. Interestingly, not all individuals who face material deprivation identify themselves as “poor.” Research shows that the label of poverty can carry stigma and diminish one’s sense of dignity, leading some rural residents to reject such an identity even in conditions of scarcity (Rigg, 2006). Instead, many uphold narratives of honor, resilience, and solidarity embodied in practices such as gotong royong (mutual cooperation), informal savings groups (arisan), and seasonal mutual aid. These social and cultural strategies serve not only as survival mechanisms but also as symbolic forms of resistance against poverty. In local traditions, gotong royong is more than cooperation, it is an affirmation of equality and social belonging. Through such practices, communities create spaces where they can withstand economic hardship without relinquishing their social dignity (Wong, 2003). Thus, the meaning of poverty in rural settings also reflects the creative social agency people exercise in navigating material constraints. In several cases, local narratives of poverty may even contradict the logic of formal policy. Government poverty alleviation programs often fail to address the cultural and symbolic dimensions of poverty, as they tend to focus narrowly on direct assistance and economic indicators. As a result, such interventions can appear irrelevant or even offensive to the values and dignity of rural communities (Li, 2007). This disconnect between technocratic approaches and local realities represents a major challenge in designing policies that are genuinely participatory and socially just. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that

rural poverty is not merely an economic phenomenon but also a social, political, and cultural one. A reductive understanding of poverty risks producing policies that overlook the root causes of deprivation. In contrast, approaches that take into account local meanings and social relationships are more likely to respond effectively to the real needs of rural people. In this context, the active participation of communities in defining and addressing poverty becomes crucial (Chambers, 2005; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). This literature review suggests that rural poverty must be understood as a multidimensional and dynamic social construct. The perspectives of local communities, with all their cultural and contextual richness, deserve central attention in both analysis and policymaking. Rather than being treated merely as recipients of aid, rural people should be recognized as active subjects capable of interpreting, negotiating, and even rejecting the externally imposed label of “the poor.” Such an approach not only fosters fairness but also strengthens the foundation for community-based empowerment.

4.1.2 Access to Basic Services

Access to basic services such as education, healthcare, clean water, and public infrastructure remains a major challenge in efforts to alleviate rural poverty. Despite various government initiatives including the Village Fund (Dana Desa), the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan), and rural infrastructure development the disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of service quality and affordability remains significant. In the healthcare sector, for example, a World Bank (2020) study found that rural households are 30 – 40 percent less likely to access quality healthcare services than their urban counterparts. This highlights that, although many programs have been introduced in nominal terms, persistent structural inequalities continue to hinder equal access to essential services for rural communities.

Geographical barriers further exacerbate this inequality. Many rural areas, especially those located in remote or interior regions, are difficult to reach due to poor road conditions, limited transportation options, and a lack of adequate facilities. As a result, villagers often have to travel long distances to obtain proper medical care—an endeavor that requires not only time but also financial resources (World Bank, 2019). The shortage of medical personnel is another critical issue in remote villages. Human resources in the health sector remain extremely limited in many rural areas. Due to the scarcity of trained doctors and healthcare workers, rural communities frequently rely on informal health providers such as traditional birth attendants (dukun bayi) or religious figures like guru ngaji, whose medical knowledge is often insufficient to address complex health issues. Moreover, access to health education is limited, making communities more vulnerable to practices that fall short of accepted medical standards. In some areas, dukun bayi, parani (traditional midwives), and local religious leaders serve as the first point of contact for health-related concerns, despite lacking formal qualifications. This reliance on informal care carries significant risks, as it may worsen health problems that could otherwise be prevented or professionally treated (Nugroho, 2018).

Beyond infrastructure, the relevance and affordability of basic services also represent critical challenges. Many rural residents feel that the services available to them do not adequately meet their needs, either in terms of quality or type. For instance, most rural health facilities are only equipped to treat minor ailments and lack the personnel or medical equipment to handle more complex conditions. This forces villagers to seek treatment in urban centers—an option that inevitably involves higher financial and logistical costs (Setiawan, 2020). Trust in public service systems also plays a significant role in determining access to basic services. In some areas, low levels of confidence in the quality of government-provided services, coupled with a strong reliance on local social networks, lead communities to prefer informal providers whom they perceive as more dependable. This trust often arises from a mismatch between government policy and local realities, where social assistance or development programs are either not fully felt by the community or are seen as misaligned with their actual needs (World Bank, 2020).

Overall, the issue of access to basic services in rural areas is not solely about physical infrastructure. It also involves social and psychological dimensions. Providing more equitable, high-quality, and contextually appropriate services for rural populations requires a comprehensive approach—one that is grounded in local characteristics and supported by strengthened human resource capacity at the village level.

4.1.3. Local Resilience Strategy

In facing both chronic and seasonal poverty, rural communities in Indonesia are far from passive. On the contrary, they continuously build and reproduce a wide range of coping strategies rooted in the internal strengths of their communities—including cultural values and social solidarity. These strategies enable them to endure economic hardship, inadequate public services, and state policies that often fail to respond to local realities (Scott, 1976). One of the most prominent forms of resilience is the use of social capital in the form of kinship networks, patron–client relationships, and communal labor systems. These take concrete forms such as *arisan* (rotating savings groups), *kerja bakti* (voluntary communal work), informal food loans, and traditional collective labor systems like *sambatan* in Javanese culture (Nugroho & Prasetyo, 2016; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). These expressions of social capital are not only economic resources; they also serve as risk-sharing mechanisms that strengthen community resilience to economic shocks and natural disasters. Subsistence agriculture is another vital element in rural coping strategies. Farming for household consumption—through home gardens, small plots, or inherited rice fields—provides a relatively stable source of food. This practice reduces dependency on the market and helps households maintain food security during periods of price inflation or income loss (Ellis, 2000). In this context, agriculture is not merely an economic activity but a form of local wisdom that embodies a deep relationship with the land and ancestral heritage. Local ecological knowledge also plays a key role in shaping unique community-based survival strategies. Traditional governance systems such as *sasi* in Maluku, *lubuk larangan* in Sumatra, and *awig-awig* in Bali regulate when and how natural resources may be used. These customary norms not only protect ecosystems but also ensure fair distribution and resource sustainability for future generations (Thomson, 2007; Sirait, 2006). Far from being relics of the past, such local institutions reflect a dynamic and adaptive logic of survival that integrates ecological stewardship, communal ethics, and long-term resilience. These collective practices suggest that rural communities do not simply succumb to the forces of poverty. Rather, they actively create “spaces of empowerment” through local knowledge and adaptive social engineering. As Chambers (2005) argued, poor communities often possess a “wealth of knowledge” derived from lived experience and ecological relationships—knowledge that is frequently overlooked by top-down development frameworks. The strength of local coping strategies lies in their flexibility. For example, when facing crop failure or rising food prices, communities may collectively adjust consumption patterns—by increasing reliance on non-timber forest products, reducing purchases of external goods, or informally sharing resources. These practices demonstrate that coping strategies are not static; they are dynamic, context-sensitive, and embedded in social relationships (Bryceson, 2000). Beyond their practical utility, local strategies also serve symbolic functions that reinforce communal identity and a sense of belonging. Rituals such as *tahlilan*, *kenduri*, or *selamatan* are not merely religious ceremonies but also act as social spaces for the implicit redistribution of resources. During these gatherings, food is shared, social ties are strengthened, and solidarity is reaffirmed—effectively reinforcing informal social safety nets (Geertz, 1960). However, these locally grounded strategies are not immune to disruption. Economic globalization, land commodification, and the weakening of customary institutions increasingly threaten the social capital and traditional wisdom that have long underpinned rural resilience. As these informal mechanisms are displaced by market-based systems driven by individualism, the community's capacity to withstand poverty becomes more fragile (Rigg & Vandergeest, 2012). At the same time, many policy interventions fail precisely because they do not recognize or integrate these local coping mechanisms into program design. For instance, cash transfer

schemes or subsidized fertilizer distributions often overlook how communities organize consumption and resource-sharing collectively. Yet, when local strategies are acknowledged and supported, the effectiveness of such programs can increase significantly (Li, 2007; Mosse, 2005).

Therefore, coping strategies and locality must be understood as integral components of the rural socio-economic system. They are not merely survival tactics in times of scarcity, but affirmations of local values that sustain social cohesion and livelihood continuity. Ignoring these elements in poverty studies is to disregard the community's own capacity to navigate its challenges. Strengthening these local strategies should thus be recognized as a central pillar in inclusive and sustainable rural development frameworks.

4.2. Government Perspective on Rural Poverty

The Indonesian government has long positioned rural poverty as a central concern within its national development agenda. This commitment is evident in strategic planning documents such as the National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional – RPJMN), which explicitly prioritizes poverty reduction through an integrated approach. Poverty alleviation is not only viewed through an economic lens but is also framed as part of the broader effort to promote inclusive and socially just development (Bappenas, 2020).

Over the past two decades, a wide range of national programs have been introduced to address the persistent challenges of rural poverty. Conditional cash transfer programs such as the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), Bantuan Langsung Tunai (BLT), and the Non-Cash Food Assistance Program (BPNT) have aimed to enhance household purchasing power and overall well-being among the poor. In addition, cash-for-work schemes have been implemented to create temporary employment opportunities in village infrastructure projects, thereby increasing resilience to economic shocks (TNP2K, 2018).

One of the most significant policy innovations in rural poverty reduction has been the introduction of the Village Fund (Dana Desa) under Law No. 6/2014 on Villages. Since 2015, the government has directly transferred funds to village accounts to finance locally-driven development initiatives. This fiscal decentralization was designed to empower rural communities to design and implement programs that reflect their specific socio-economic realities (Sihombing, 2019; Ministry of Villages, 2020). The Village Fund has largely been allocated to improving basic infrastructure—such as rural roads, drainage systems, clean water facilities, health posts (posyandu), and educational services. Beyond physical development, the fund also supports rural economic initiatives through the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), which aim to stimulate local economic innovation and self-reliance (World Bank, 2021; Firman, 2020). Despite the promise of the Village Fund, its effectiveness depends heavily on the quality of village governance. Many regions still face significant challenges in participatory planning, budget transparency, and oversight. The limited capacity of human resources, along with restricted access to training and technical assistance, continues to hinder the optimal use of these funds (Antlöv et al., 2016; Wijaya & Sihombing, 2020). Institutional and coordination challenges across government levels also pose substantial obstacles. Overlapping mandates among ministries, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and poor data integration often result in fragmented and ineffective programs that fail to reach their intended targets, or worse, foster new forms of dependency at the local level (OECD, 2019; Sumarto & Bazzi, 2021). Targeting accuracy remains another concern in the implementation of poverty alleviation programs. The government's Unified Database (Basis Data Terpadu – BDT), now known as the Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS), has yet to fully capture the evolving dynamics of poverty. There are numerous instances where poor households are excluded, while better-off individuals are listed as beneficiaries. Such inaccuracies contribute to perceptions of injustice and diminish the credibility and impact of social programs (World Bank, 2022).

More broadly, critiques have been directed at the top-down orientation of many national policies. Uniform approaches are often applied without sufficient attention to the social, cultural, and geographical diversity of Indonesia's villages. As a result, programs may lack relevance to local needs and, in some cases, reinforce elite capture or deepen intra-village inequalities (Vel, 2016; Rahayu, 2018).

To address these challenges, scholars and practitioners have called for a transformation in rural development strategies—from charity-based approaches to empowerment-based models. This transformation requires institutional reform, improved village governance capacity, and enhanced community participation throughout the planning and implementation cycle. Involving marginalized groups such as women, youth, and Indigenous communities—is critical for ensuring inclusivity (UNDP, 2021; Sutoro, 2014). Moving forward, the state must strengthen its role as a facilitator of community-driven development, not merely a provider of assistance. Policy interventions should aim to cultivate an ecosystem that enables rural communities to build their own economic, social, and political autonomy. By integrating structural and cultural approaches and embedding local knowledge into policy frameworks, rural poverty alleviation can move toward greater sustainability and equity (Chambers, 2012; Li, 2007).

4.3. International Community Perspective

Rural poverty in Indonesia has long drawn the attention of the international community. This is due in part to Indonesia's strategic position as a developing country with the fourth-largest rural population in the world—after India, China, and Bangladesh (World Bank, 2020). International actors recognize that rural poverty in Indonesia is not merely a domestic issue, but a vital component of the global challenge to achieve sustainable development. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the first goal: Indonesia is considered a key player in the global effort to eradicate extreme poverty and improve rural well-being in the Asia-Pacific region (UNDP, 2021; Sachs et al., 2022). According to UNDP (2021), rural poverty in Indonesia cannot be separated from the broader, multidimensional nature of global poverty. This includes limited access to basic services, inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of local economic empowerment. International stakeholders argue that addressing rural poverty in Indonesia requires a comprehensive approach one that goes beyond income-based programs and instead targets long-term strategies for social and institutional transformation. Organizations such as the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNDP, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have been actively involved in analyzing and supporting rural development policies in Indonesia. These institutions consistently emphasize that poverty should not be narrowly defined as a lack of income, but rather as a condition shaped by structural inequalities in access to education, healthcare, land, technology, and social capital (IFAD, 2019; World Bank, 2020). As such, development strategies must center around social justice and community participation. Several international cooperation initiatives have been implemented to support these goals. Programs like the Rural Empowerment and Agricultural Development Strategy (READS) and the National Program for Community Empowerment (PNPM Mandiri), both of which received technical and financial backing from international donors, illustrate the importance of collaboration between national governments, local communities, and global partners. These initiatives underscore the value of community-based empowerment models and the strengthening of village-level institutional capacities (IFAD, 2020). IFAD, in particular, has focused its efforts on empowering smallholder farmers, women, and other marginalized groups. This approach is seen as key to fostering more inclusive and sustainable rural development, especially within the small-scale agricultural sector, which forms the backbone of village economies (IFAD, 2020). Meanwhile, UNDP has played a major role in enhancing local capacity through social innovation and participatory governance. These efforts reflect a development paradigm that prioritizes bottom-up strategies, rooted in the specific contexts and needs of local communities (UNDP, 2021). International actors have also highlighted the critical need to integrate

climate change into rural development agendas. Indonesia's rural communities are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, such as droughts, floods, and extreme weather that threaten food security and livelihoods (IPCC, 2022). In this context, ecologically grounded rural development becomes essential. This includes promoting sustainable agriculture, protecting local ecosystems, and advancing community-based climate adaptation strategies (FAO, 2021). FAO and the IPCC emphasize that global investment is needed to enhance the adaptive capacity of farmers and village communities to cope with environmental change. Research shows that when national policies are unresponsive to ecological challenges, they often exacerbate the vulnerability of rural populations (FAO, 2021; IPCC, 2022). Therefore, the synergy between domestic policymaking and international support is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of rural ecosystems and livelihoods in the face of a global climate emergency. Beyond technical interventions, the international community has also raised concerns about structural inequalities as root causes of rural poverty. The World Inequality Report (2022) underscores how unequal asset ownership, elite capture at the local level, and urban-centric development paradigms have contributed to significant spatial and social disparities. These imbalances have left rural areas systematically behind in access to investment, technology, and economic opportunities—reinforcing cycles of deprivation. From the perspective of international actors, structural reform is imperative. This includes more effective decentralization, equitable land distribution, and the strengthening of local institutions capable of managing resources in inclusive and sustainable ways. There is a growing call to shift national development strategies away from narrowly defined economic growth toward spatial justice—where rural regions are positioned as viable and vital centers of alternative development (Sachs et al., 2022; World Bank, 2020). In this light, the international community's perspective on rural poverty in Indonesia encompasses three interrelated dimensions: technical interventions through development projects; advocacy for domestic policy reform that is pro-rural; and a framing of poverty as an outcome of deeper global injustice. According to this view, rural development in Indonesia can only succeed through a holistic approach—one that combines local capacity building, inclusive national policymaking, and global solidarity rooted in social justice and ecological sustainability (UNDP, 2021; Sachs et al., 2022; IFAD, 2020).

DISCUSSION

The rural community's perspective on poverty reflects a complex and lived reality that is often not fully captured by formal statistical definitions. For many villagers, poverty is perceived through social and cultural experiences—such as the inability to host guests, send children to school, or own rice fields that symbolize autonomy and social status (Chambers, 1995; Yulida, 2017; Adi, 2010). Beyond material deprivation, poverty is often experienced as a loss of dignity and exclusion from community decision-making processes (Setiawan, 2020). These perceptions underscore the importance of dignity and agency in understanding poverty from the ground up. In contrast, the government tends to adopt an administrative and technocratic approach. Programs such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (PKH), Direct Cash Assistance (BLT), Village Fund (Dana Desa), and Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) are designed within formal frameworks aimed at reducing poverty levels as defined by national poverty lines (Bappenas, 2021; Ministry of Social Affairs, 2023). These policies have shown statistically significant outcomes—the rural poverty rate declined from 20.75% in 2003 to 12.22% in 2023 (BPS, 2023). However, critics argue that such approaches fall short of addressing the structural roots of poverty, such as unequal land access, limited productive investment in rural areas, and policy bias toward urban regions (Hadiz, 2018). International actors offer a more structural and global perspective. Institutions such as the World Bank, IFAD, and UNDP view rural poverty as a product of systemic inequality, infrastructural deficits, and the pressures of climate change. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Indonesia is encouraged not only to reduce poverty rates but also to build community resilience through access to education, healthcare, and

sustainable development pathways (UNDP, 2021; IFAD, 2020). Initiatives such as the READSI program and sustainable agriculture partnerships highlight the critical role of international institutions in strengthening local capacities. These three perspectives converge in recognizing poverty as a multidimensional issue. Yet, their approaches differ: local communities emphasize lived experience and dignity; the government relies on quantitative, data-driven interventions; and international institutions advocate cross-sectoral, structural solutions. While these differences can serve as a source of strength through collaborative synergy, they also pose challenges particularly when state-led programs fail to align with local needs or when donor agencies impose “one-size-fits-all” interventions (Olivier de Sardan, 2005; Scott, 1998). Ultimately, the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts hinges on the ability of these actors to work together. For instance, the Village Fund program, which initially prioritized infrastructure, has gradually shifted toward participatory and empowerment-based approaches partly in response to global discourses and local civil society pressure (Antlöv et al., 2016). Similarly, international agencies have begun to acknowledge the value of local knowledge and socio-cultural diversity in designing context-sensitive interventions. Failing to integrate these perspectives risks producing ineffective or even counterproductive policies. Therefore, the future of rural poverty alleviation in Indonesia must center on a collaborative approach that weaves together local legitimacy, national institutional capacity, and international solidarity. Governments must establish two-way feedback channels between villages and central policymakers; international actors must become more adaptive to local contexts; and communities must be empowered as active agents of development rather than passive recipients of policy. Only through such cross-actor and inter-sectoral integration can we realize a vision of poverty alleviation that is not only sustainable but also grounded in dignity and justice (Sachs et al., 2022; World Bank, 2022).

Focus 1: Tensions and the Potential for Synergy Among Actors

Tensions between community members, government institutions, and international organizations in addressing rural poverty often arise from divergent worldviews, interests, and approaches. Local communities tend to perceive poverty through relational and socio-cultural lenses, emphasizing dignity, social inclusion, and agency. In contrast, governments frequently adopt administrative frameworks grounded in quantitative indicators. Meanwhile, international actors promote global development paradigms that may not always align with local realities. These mismatches can create policy gaps that undermine the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts. The central government, for instance, prioritizes national poverty reduction targets but often overlooks the specific contexts of remote or underdeveloped villages. As a result, programs such as Conditional Cash Transfers (PKH) or Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) tend to be standardized and insufficiently responsive to local conditions. From the perspective of rural communities, these forms of assistance frequently fail to address their actual needs and may even reinforce dependency and patron-client relationships. The lack of meaningful community participation in program planning and evaluation exacerbates these tensions. International organizations further complicate and potentially enrich this landscape. On one hand, they contribute long-term visions and emphasize sustainability. On the other, their policies can become overly normative or technocratic as seen in certain SDG-driven initiatives risking the erasure of local socio-cultural complexity. When development programs are donor-driven and lack genuine community engagement, they may provoke resistance or be misperceived as foreign agendas imposed from the outside (Mosse, 2005; Olivier de Sardan, 2005). Despite these tensions, there is room to foster synergy among the three actors. Many international organizations are increasingly adopting participatory approaches, in which local communities are not mere beneficiaries but partners in planning and implementation. Village governments, empowered through the Village Fund (Dana Desa), have begun to create more inclusive spaces for deliberation, though this remains uneven across regions.

When communities are empowered as active agents, it becomes more feasible to bridge the gap between local needs and national policy.

Such synergy can be further enhanced through multilevel governance mechanisms that connect local, national, and global actors in data-informed planning grounded in local narratives. For instance, integrating locally generated data with global indicators can strengthen the evidence base for more responsive policy. This approach enables greater flexibility, where governments provide general policy frameworks while allowing implementation to be tailored to each community's specific characteristics. Some community-based food security initiatives have already begun to experiment with such models (IFAD, 2020).

In this light, tensions among actors should not be viewed as obstacles to be eliminated, but as productive spaces for dialogue and negotiation. These tensions are vital to ensure that policies do not operate in a vacuum and that all actors have the opportunity to challenge, refine, and complement each other's roles. The key lies in fostering openness, equitable communication channels, and a willingness to shift development paradigms from top-down prescriptions to collaborative, bottom-up processes.

Focus 2: Rethinking the Future Direction of Policy

Considering the interplay among community, government, and international actors in tackling rural poverty, there is a growing urgency to critically reflect on the future direction of development policy. Lessons from the past two decades reveal that the most effective programs are those that successfully bridge local aspirations, national strategies, and international support. Yet, many policies still struggle to build functional connections among these actors, leading to uneven and unsustainable outcomes. One of the main challenges ahead is to strengthen planning systems that are genuinely grounded in the real needs of rural communities. This calls for reinforcing the institutional capacity of villages—not only in participatory planning, but also in financial management and public accountability. The central government must move beyond merely allocating funds toward investing in strong local governance. Evidence suggests that the success of the Village Fund (Dana Desa) hinges largely on the quality of local leadership and participation (Antlöv et al., 2016).

At the same time, social protection policies like Conditional Cash Transfers (PKH) and Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) must evolve beyond safety nets into instruments of empowerment. This means integrating social assistance with programs that promote productive economic activities, vocational training, and market access. Policy coherence and inter-agency coordination are crucial to avoid fragmentation or redundancy. Initiatives such as Desa Berdaya (Empowered Villages) or Kampung Mandiri (Self-Reliant Communities) offer promising models for combining protection with promotion-based approaches. International actors must also recalibrate their strategies to better align with Indonesia's local diversity. Global agendas such as the SDGs should be translated into indicators that reflect village-level realities—not just macro-level metrics. Donor engagement should focus on capacity building, institutional mentoring, and long-term investments rooted in learning rather than short-term outcomes. Cross-sector collaboration—through public-private-community partnerships—offers a compelling direction for the future.

Equally important is the need to develop community-based monitoring and evaluation systems. Current evaluation mechanisms tend to be centralized and overly administrative. Rural communities should be enabled to assess for themselves how development programs are affecting their lives. This approach fosters a sense of ownership, enhances transparency, and generates more context-sensitive feedback for policymakers. Some NGOs and international programs have begun piloting such models, but wider national support is needed to scale them up.

The future of rural poverty policy should not be confined to merely “reducing poverty rates.” It must focus on building resilient, empowered, and equitable rural communities. This requires an endogenous development approach—one that grows from within the community's own strengths, supported by enabling

structures from the state and the international community. Such a reflection is not merely a retrospective evaluation of past efforts, but a critical stepping stone toward shaping a new, more humane, collaborative, and sustainable paradigm for addressing rural poverty in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights that rural poverty in Indonesia cannot be understood through a singular or isolated lens. From the perspective of rural communities, poverty is not merely an economic issue—it is a deeply social and cultural experience rooted in structural inequalities, limited access to basic services, and the erosion of sovereignty over local resources. Meanwhile, the government often frames poverty within administrative and statistical parameters, which, while useful for policy formulation, tend to overlook local nuances. Programs such as the Village Fund (Dana Desa), Conditional Cash Transfers (PKH), and Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) have played significant roles in addressing disparities, yet they remain constrained by top-down implementation logic. On the other hand, the international community emphasizes rights-based approaches, climate justice, and global interconnectedness but often struggles to translate these global standards into meaningful local practice.

A key finding from this review is the presence of both disconnections and potential synergies among the three main actors. Tensions between the government's technocratic approach, the normative character of global agendas, and the lived realities of rural communities can become obstacles when not addressed in a deliberative and inclusive manner. However, when these diverse perspectives are consolidated by listening to community voices, strengthening local institutions, and localizing global frameworks poverty reduction policies can become more contextual, sustainable, and impactful. This requires creating equitable and participatory spaces of interaction, supported by flexible and collaborative governance structures.

Therefore, integrating perspectives is essential in designing and evaluating future poverty reduction policies. The central government must craft more adaptive policies tailored to the rural context—not only through fiscal transfers, but through strengthening the local ecosystem: from critical education and appropriate technology to safeguarding agrarian rights. International actors should serve as learning partners and facilitators, not merely as donors. Rural communities, meanwhile, must continue to be empowered as autonomous agents of development, not passive recipients of aid.

Looking ahead, stronger cross-sectoral and multi-level coordination is recommended, including the active involvement of customary institutions, community-based organizations, and local NGOs in planning and evaluation processes. Policy design should be more responsive to geographical and cultural contexts and capable of anticipating multidimensional challenges such as climate change, rural economic transitions, and demographic shifts. Community-based monitoring mechanisms should also be reinforced to ensure that local voices are embedded in policy feedback systems.

From an academic standpoint, more interdisciplinary research is needed to connect the social, political, and ecological dimensions of rural poverty. In-depth studies on local practices, social capital, and empowerment narratives can enrich the predominantly macroeconomic perspectives. Furthermore, collaborative research involving local scholars, development practitioners, and policymakers will strengthen the knowledge base and foster policy innovations rooted in field realities.

Ultimately, building rural poverty alleviation policies should go beyond reducing statistical poverty rates. It is about creating dignified, just, and empowering living spaces for all village residents. Equal collaboration among communities, the state, and the global community is the cornerstone for achieving sustainable and inclusive rural transformation.

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