

Assessing the Effectiveness of Communication Management in Local Government: A Study of the Slum-Free City Programme in Indonesia

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Abstract

The “Slum-Free City” (KOTAKU) programme represents a strategic effort by the Bima City Government to revitalize settlement areas following the flash floods in 2016. According to the Bima City Government’s 2023 reports, the programme has successfully rehabilitated approximately 310.56 hectares of slum areas. This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of communication management implemented by the local government in supporting the success of the KOTAKU program. Using a descriptive approach with approach with mixed methods. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and a questionnaire survey involving 100 respondents comprising key stakeholders and residents affected by the programme. The findings reveal that the success of the programme is significantly influenced by two main factors: (1) the application of adaptive and inclusive communication management strategies by the government, and (2) the social conditions of the community, which urgently require improvements in their living environment post-disaster. The Bima City Government’s communication management in implementing the KOTAKU program has helped build physical infrastructure by adapting to local needs and post-disaster urgency, but it has failed to promote behavioral change and long-term community empowerment. This study concludes that the effectiveness of governmental communication is pivotal in mobilizing public participation and accelerating sustainable slum settlement revitalisation.

Keywords: Communication Management, KOTAKU, Development Communication, Bima City, Slum Areas

INTRODUCTION

Fast urbanization has helped slum regions to flourish all around, particularly in emerging nations. More than one billion people live in slum conditions defined by overcrowding, poor sanitation, and limited access to basic amenities, claims UN-Habitat. Aiming at bettering infrastructure and quality of life for the urban poor, governments and international organizations have responded with varied urban regeneration and slum eradication campaigns. But the success of these projects relies not just on money and physical development but also on the degree of government, stakeholder, and community communication effectiveness. (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010).

Weak public program communication has sometimes led to misunderstandings, a lack of openness, low public engagement, and beneficiary opposition globally. Clear, timely, participative methods define effective communication, which can help community involvement, guarantee greater coordination, and foster confidence. (Graham, 2014; Seebauer & Babicky, 2018). In the framework of local government initiatives, particularly those aiming at difficult socioeconomic concerns like slum elimination, effective and sustained results depend on good communication management (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). This emphasizes the need to assess local government plans, execution, and adaptation of communication tactics to assist inclusive urban development. (Sanders & Canel, 2015).

The challenges present in slum areas are a significant issue in urban development in Indonesia. The government faces the challenge of providing a decent, safe, and sustainable living environment for its citizens. Slum areas, often located along riverbanks or in disaster-prone regions, generally lack adequate basic infrastructure such as clean water access, sanitation, and electricity. A slum area is characterized by inadequate infrastructure and a lack of basic services (Husain, M., Smith, R., & Thompson, 2018). The impact of this situation not only affects the quality of life for the residents but also increases their vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and fires (BPS, 2023b; Suryani, 2017)

The reality of life in slums is strikingly evident: it reduces the quality of life, increases health risk, and contributes to social inequality and poverty. This has been clearly illustrated in the case of Kampung Pulo

in Jakarta, where the government's attempt to relocate residents for flood mitigation faced strong public resistance due to ineffective communication strategies. (Nur Kholisoh & Yuventus Newin Bylmoreno, 2020) Explain that Governor Ahok's communication was marked by inconsistent promises, labeling of residents as "illegal," and a lack of cultural sensitivity, which ultimately led to public clashes and social unrest. In this context, media literacy and the effectiveness of public communication management become crucial in bridging information, shaping collective awareness, and encouraging citizen participation. As (Awal et al., 2025) Explain, media allows individuals to choose and filter the messages that they receive, ultimately enhancing communication effectiveness through better understanding, active participation, and critical engagement. This aligns with (McQuail, 2010a) View, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of public communication depends on how accessible, credible, and capable the information is in fostering active public participation in the development process.

Media literacy-based communication enables communities not only to understand development information, including slum area revitalization, but also to respond actively according to local conditions and needs. In this regard, (McQuail, 2010b) Underscores that public communication must consider accessibility, message comprehension, and audience response to achieve the expected social effectiveness. Effective communication is a fundamental activity in human life and organizations, including government organizations. (Sanders & Canel, 2015). Success in delivering messages, influencing behavior, and organizing community participation heavily relies on well-structured communication effectiveness. (McQuail, 2010a) Also highlights that communication in public organizations must be understood as a strategic process that not only conveys messages but also builds legitimacy and social trust.

Communication is understood as a process of sharing information that creates relationships between participants (Seebauer & Babicky, 2018). This perspective emphasizes that communication is reciprocal and plays a vital role in establishing social relationships in various contexts, including development programs. Communication is not limited to message delivery, but also involves efforts to influence attitudes and behaviors of the audience. This emphasizes the importance of selecting the appropriate media to ensure that communication achieves the desired outcomes. (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010)

In the context of slum area development and urban revitalization programs like KOTAKU, effective communication becomes critical. To achieve optimal results, it is not only necessary to have the right channels but also an approach that combines the message, media, and audience appropriately. For this reason, widely recognized communication models, such as Lasswell's communication model, offer a systematic and comprehensive framework to understand and evaluate the communication process (Saliu, 2020). The effectiveness of communication management in the KOTAKU program (Slum-Free City) can be systematically analyzed through Lasswell's communication model, which identifies five key components: Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and with what effect. In this context, the government of Bima City plays the role of the communicator (Who), delivering messages (What says) related to policies on slum area revitalization, citizen participation calls, and the desired behavioral changes.

These messages are conveyed through various communication channels (In Which Channel), such as direct outreach, local media, community meetings, and socialization forums. The target audience for these messages (To Whom) includes residents of both slum and non-slum areas, who are expected to respond by improving their understanding, engaging actively, and participating in the urban revitalization program (With What Effect). As (McQuail, 2010a) Emphasizes, the success of communication in development contexts is determined by the alignment between the message, the communication channel, and the audience's needs and perceptions. This alignment was notably absent in the Jakarta case, where the top-down, unilateral communication approach taken by the local government failed to address residents' lived realities, highlighting the dangers of excluding community voice (Nur Kholisoh & Yuventus Newin Bylmoreno, 2020)

In this regard, the Lasswell model is not only used as a theoretical lens but also as an evaluative tool to assess the extent to which communication strategies are strategically aligned and operationally effective. (van Ruler, 2018). This model highlights that the success of communication in development programs relies on proper audience segmentation, the selection of appropriate channels, and the feedback

mechanism. (van Ruler, 2018). This alignment strengthens the credibility of the institution, encourages collective action, and ultimately increases the impact of slum alleviation programs like KOTAKU.

Bima City, with its complex geographical and social conditions, faces significant challenges in addressing slum settlements. Surrounded by mountains and intersected by three major rivers, the city is highly vulnerable to natural disasters such as flash floods, as evidenced by the major flooding event in 2016. According to data from (BPS, 2023c). The population of Bima City stands at 157,362 people, spread across five sub-districts and 41 urban villages. Low levels of education and strong local cultural traditions are critical factors that must be considered in the formulation of development communication strategies. Although many studies have focused on the physical and policy aspects of slum restoration, few studies have methodically investigated the success of public communication management in urban renewal projects, especially in developing nations like Indonesia. Research already in publication sometimes ignores how operationalized strategic communication models, such as Lasswell's, are in actual slum upgrading projects. Furthermore, despite the KOTAKU program's implementation in several Indonesian cities, few studies have particularly concentrated on the role local government communication strategies play in obtaining participatory and sustainable results, particularly in geographically and culturally complex areas like Bima City. Employing a communication model framework, this study aims to close this gap by assessing the alignment of message, media, and audience in the KOTAKU program, thereby enhancing program outcomes and fostering community involvement.

In response to these challenges, the Bima City Government implemented the "Slum-Free City" (KOTAKU) program as part of the National Urban Slum Upgrading Program (NUSSP). This program was progressively carried out from 2017 to 2023 and successfully revitalized approximately 310.56 hectares of slum areas (BRIDA Kota Bima, 2023). This achievement cannot be separated from the communication strategies employed by the city government. Therefore, this study aims to examine the communication management practices of the Bima City Government in implementing the KOTAKU program. A comparative reflection on Jakarta's case reinforces the importance of such strategies. The failure of coercive communication in Jakarta's slum eviction efforts stands in contrast to Bima's participatory approach, underscoring how communication can determine whether urban revitalization initiatives foster cooperation or trigger conflict (Nur Kholisoh & Yuventus Newin Bylmoreno, 2020).

As emphasized by (Zerfass, A., & Volk, 2018) "Communication is not merely a functional activity; it is a strategic element embedded within the decision-making processes of organizations." This statement underlines the essential role of communication in all aspects of organizational management and policymaking, including slum area revitalization efforts. Accordingly, this research is titled: "*Government Communication Management in Pursuit of a Slum-Free Bima City (KOTAKU Program).*"

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Urban development discourse has increasingly recognized that infrastructural interventions alone are insufficient to resolve the deep-rooted social and spatial inequalities prevalent in slum settlements. Rapid urbanization in developing countries, such as Indonesia, has contributed to the proliferation of informal settlements, often in ecologically vulnerable zones, compounding risks for marginalized populations. (Husain et al., 2018; UN-Habitat., 2020). In these settings, poor access to basic services and heightened exposure to natural hazards have made slum dwellers especially susceptible to environmental and health crises. (BPS, 2023a).

While governments and international agencies have launched slum upgrading programs aimed at improving physical infrastructure and living standards, many of these initiatives fall short due to weak or misaligned communication strategies. (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010). Communication breakdowns have led to resistance, misinterpretation, and ultimately, the derailment of well-intentioned public policies (Graham, 2014; Seebauer & Babcicky, 2018). These outcomes challenge the conventional assumption that technical solutions alone can generate social acceptance and sustained impact.

In light of these challenges, a growing body of literature emphasizes the importance of strategic communication management that is inclusive, culturally grounded, and dialogic. Lasswell's communication model remains a foundational yet underutilized analytical framework that facilitates evaluation of communication efficacy through five dimensions: communicator, message, medium,

audience, and effect. (Saliu, 2020). However, as (van Ruler, 2018) Critically observes, applying this model in complex sociopolitical environments demands a reflexive approach that accounts for asymmetries of power, information access, and audience agency.

(McQuail's, 2010) and (Zerfass, A., & Volk, 2018) Reinforce this position by asserting that communication in public policy is not merely transactional but fundamentally strategic—shaping legitimacy, enabling participation, and mediating public trust. This becomes particularly salient in post-disaster contexts, where urgency can tempt governments to revert to top-down directives at the expense of inclusion.

The Jakarta case study offers a cautionary tale. (Nur Kholisoh & Yuventus Newin Bylmoreno, 2020) Examined the relocation of Kampung Pulo residents under Governor Ahok, revealing that inconsistent messaging, coercive rhetoric, and neglect of cultural dynamics sparked public outrage and violent conflict. Their findings underscore the consequences of excluding community voices in development efforts. By contrast, participatory models such as those deployed in the KOTAKU program suggest a more viable path forward, though empirical evaluations remain limited.

Despite the implementation of the KOTAKU program in numerous Indonesian cities, scholarly attention has disproportionately focused on physical outputs rather than the communicative processes underpinning program legitimacy and success. This study addresses that critical gap by analyzing how the Bima City Government operationalizes strategic communication principles in the context of post-disaster urban recovery. It seeks to determine whether communication strategies are merely instrumental or genuinely participatory and whether they foster community empowerment beyond infrastructural transformation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches within a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach is utilized to explore in depth perspectives on the effectiveness of the Bima City Government's communication management in implementing the slum free city (KOTAKU) program. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is used to obtain statistical data that supports and strengthens the study's findings. A descriptive design was chosen to provide a clear depiction of the steps taken by the local government in managing communication within the context of slum area revitalization.

1.1. Respondents and Research Location

This study was conducted in Bima City, the implementation site of the Slum-Free City (KOTAKU) program. The research focused specifically on areas categorized as slum settlements. Two groups of respondents were involved in the study:

a. Bima City Government Officials

In-depth interviews were conducted with seven government officials directly involved in the implementation of the KOTAKU program, namely 1) Mayor Of Bima, 2) Head of the Office of Spatial, Housing, and Settlements, 3) Head of the Environmental Agency, 4) Head of the Environmental Agency, 5) Sub-district Head of Rasanae Timur, 6) Village Head of Rontu, and 7) Village Head of Rabadompu Barat.

b. Community Leaders

Seven community leaders residing in slum areas of Bima City were also interviewed to gain their perspectives on the KOTAKU program and the communication management carried out by the local government.

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using the following techniques:

a. In-Depth Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents from both government officials and community leaders. These interviews were designed to explore their understanding of communication management and community involvement in the KOTAKU program. The interviews followed a pre-developed guide, while also allowing for open-ended questions to enable respondents to express their experiences and perspectives more freely. (Kvale, 2007)

b. Questionnaires:

To obtain quantitative data, questionnaires were distributed to 100 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. This technique was employed to ensure balanced representation between respondents living within and outside the KOTAKU project areas. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed to measure public perceptions of the program's success and the effectiveness of the government's communication. Of the respondents, 70 were residents within the project areas and 30 were from outside the project zones.

c. **Field Observation:**

The researcher also conducted direct observations of both physical and social conditions in the slum areas targeted by the KOTAKU program. These observations aimed to assess the impact of the program's implementation, particularly in terms of infrastructure improvement and the communication dynamics between the government and the community. Observations were carried out over two months at various locations across Bima City.

d. **Document Analysis:**

In addition to interviews and questionnaires, the researcher collected data from official government documents related to the implementation of the KOTAKU program, such as annual reports, action plans, and published policies. These documents were analyzed to gain deeper insights into the policy context and the communication strategies employed.

2.3. Data Analysis Technique

The data obtained from interviews and questionnaires were analyzed using two analytical approaches:

a. **Thematic Analysis:**

Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. (Creswell, 2021) This approach enabled the researcher to identify key themes emerging from interviews with government officials and community leaders regarding the effectiveness of communication management and the role of communication in the implementation of the KOTAKU program. Each interview transcript was inductively analyzed to identify patterns and relationships among themes.

b. **Descriptive Statistics:**

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to measure public perceptions of the government's communication success in the KOTAKU program. This technique allowed the researcher to present data distribution based on respondents' answers, such as frequencies and percentages, and to identify general trends in community responses.

2.4. Research Ethics

This study placed strong emphasis on research ethics. Before conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires, all respondents were provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and their rights to confidentiality and privacy. The researcher ensured that all collected data were used solely for research purposes and processed anonymously to protect the identities of the participants. Furthermore, this study adhered to the established ethical guidelines for social research. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RESULT

Government Communication Management in the Implementation of the KOTAKU Project

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of communication management conducted by the Bima City Government in implementing the City Without Slums (KOTAKU) program. Based on the communication management framework, the analysis includes planning, organizing, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes, covering key communication elements such as the sender (communicator), message content, distribution media, audience (receiver), and feedback.

Strategic Planning

The Bima City Government designated 36 urban villages as intervention targets for the KOTAKU program, based on local development planning forums and data from the Housing and Settlement Agency (Perkim). The total slum area targeted for intervention was 310.50 hectares, implemented gradually from 2017 to 2023.

The program's main focus was on infrastructure improvement and the prevention of new slum formations. It addressed seven aspects: (1) housing conditions, (2) neighborhood roads, (3) drainage systems, (4) household sanitation, (5) clean water provision, (6) waste management, and (7) fire protection. Outcomes included the rehabilitation of 3,151 housing units, the construction of 42,251 meters of concrete roads, 60,195 meters of drainage, the installation of 275 household latrines, clean water access for 1,009 households, waste facilities, and the addition of four fire trucks.

Communication Strategies and Community Participation

Interviews with the Mayor of Bima indicated that the communication strategy played a vital role in garnering public support. A critical success factor in project implementation was the active community involvement from the planning stage. Obstacles such as building relocation for road expansion were resolved through persuasive and familial approaches:

"Obstacles did arise during relocation processes, but with familial communication, the community was able to understand and fully support this project."

(Interpersonal interview with the Mayor of Bima)

The government developed its communication strategy by segmenting audiences into three categories: the general public, internal government apparatus, and community-based groups such as BKM (Community Self-Reliance Agency) and direct beneficiaries. The messages conveyed included policy information, funding details, implementation techniques, participation mechanisms, and monitoring procedures.

Organization and Coordination

Although the primary coordinator of the project was the Housing and Settlement Agency (Dinas Perkim), its implementation involved cross-sectoral collaboration with agencies including Public Works, Environment, Health, Cooperatives, and village-level authorities. Information management and inter-agency coordination are aimed at ensuring a consistent understanding and preventing information gaps in the field. At the local level, Community Self-Reliance Agencies (BKM) were established through community deliberations. BKM was tasked with identifying community aspirations, coordinating participation, and monitoring project implementation, supported by local government-appointed consultants.

Message Distribution and Communication Channels

Message delivery strategies were tailored to audience segments. For the general public, information was disseminated via online and print media and through neighborhood leaders (RT/RW). For internal government staff, official letters and coordination meetings were employed. For local community groups, face-to-face communication, visualization, and participatory planning (e.g., co-creating project designs) were used.

As explained by (Awal et al., 2025) Enhancing public communication effectiveness requires message dissemination through appropriate media channels. Audience-tailored distribution ensures optimal message reception and promotes two-way communication, fostering active public involvement. Media, in this context, plays a crucial role in ensuring the message is not only received but also understood and acted upon, in alignment with local contexts and program goals.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Communication Effectiveness

To assess the effectiveness of government communication in the implementation of KOTAKU, this study conducted a survey using questionnaires distributed to 100 respondents across 36 urban villages. The results show that the majority (93%) rated government communication as "Effective" to "Very Effective," and 95% stated that the KOTAKU project positively impacted their environment and quality of life. However, the data also reveal a lack of significant community capacity-building programs, such as skills training or local regulation dissemination. This presents a critical note for sustainability efforts.

Theoretical Discussion: Correlation Between Findings and Communication Models

The findings reinforce the participatory development communication model. (Servaes, 2008), where communication is not merely a top-down directive tool but also a means of building public awareness and cohesion. The presence of 'noise' in communication can hinder message comprehension. In this context, the tiered communication strategy implemented by the Bima City Government serves as a mechanism to reduce noise and ensure message clarity. However, the analysis shows that government messages remain

focused on physical project achievements, with insufficient attention to long-term capacity building. Social and behavioral change is essential for preventing the recurrence of slum areas.

Communication Effectiveness Aspects

To measure communication effectiveness, the study conducted a quantitative survey using random sampling. Respondents included 70% from within slum areas and 30% from outside. The questionnaire assessed key indicators such as public knowledge of the program, media sources, understanding levels, communication effectiveness perceptions, perceived benefits, environmental and life quality impact, and capacity-building activities.

One significant element supporting communication effectiveness is the facilitation of efficient and constructive meetings, where clear objectives and active citizen participation are maintained. Starting a meeting with a clear objective ensures that it remains on track,” transforming meetings into productive organizational tools. Furthermore, communication here is not merely a functional activity but a strategic element embedded in organizational decision-making. (Zerfass & Volk, 2018).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the communication management employed by the Bima City Government in implementing the KOTAKU program is pivotal to the program’s success. The approach taken emphasizes participatory communication, integrating both top-down and bottom-up flows of information. The effective public communication is not merely about message delivery but about accessibility, audience comprehension, and responsiveness. (Jeffres, 2015).

Furthermore, the study shows that media literacy plays a crucial role in the revitalization of slum areas. Communities with higher media literacy levels are more likely to engage critically with development messages, participate in public forums, and take ownership of the transformation process. As (Awal et al., 2025) Explain, media literacy enables individuals to filter and interpret messages in ways that enhance understanding and engagement. This is particularly relevant in disaster-prone areas where misinformation and communication gaps can hinder community resilience.

The qualitative findings indicate that the government’s communication strategies—through social media, community forums, and public information campaigns—are effective in reaching diverse audiences. However, there are still challenges related to the digital divide and accessibility, particularly among low-income and older populations. This echoes (Husain, M., Smith, R., & Thompson, 2018), who emphasize the need for an inclusive communication infrastructure that bridges technological and educational gaps (Hofmann et al., 2013). In addition, the synergy between local government and community leaders strengthens trust and facilitates smoother program implementation. This partnership-based approach enhances message credibility and encourages active feedback loops, reinforcing the model of dialogic communication advocated in development communication theories (van Ruler, 2018).

Bima City Government matched its post-disaster urgency with local sociocultural dynamics using communication strategies. The convincing, friendly strategies applied in delicate circumstances like relocation revealed that this alignment helped create public support. Key tenet of Lasswell's communication model, the split of target audiences into general public, internal stakeholders, and community-based groups enabled message and channel tailoring, hence lowering noise and improving message clarity. (Sapienza et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding these achievements, the findings point to a significant void in long-term social and behavioral change. Although most respondents said government communication was good and observed noticeable changes in their living environment, vocational training, local regulation distribution, and empowerment programs were rare. This reveals a disproportionate focus on physical infrastructure over human development, which could compromise efforts at slum clearance. (Camacho et al., 2024). Future communication strategies have to go beyond one-way, project-based communication since the KOTAKU program of Bima City accomplished initial public support and infrastructure transformation. For inclusive urban development and long-term slum prevention, they should inspire public involvement, dialogue, and behavioral changes. (Mendis et al., 2023).

Some previous studies show that this communication strategy can distinguish these notions better than current transdisciplinary approaches. (Saliu, 2020). The slum is again government territory. Postcolonial

territory must address past complicity and mass development dreams. (Roy, 2014). At the city level, slum rehabilitation with private developers has major limitations, calling into question its focus on sustainable housing for the urban poor. (Dupont & Gowda, 2020). The Shelter dynamics and their impact on catastrophe emergency response and urban system complexity (Uddin et al., 2018).

This study presents an innovation by showing that the strategic integration of participatory communication management determines not only the effectiveness of the KOTAKU program in Bima City but also the infrastructural enhancement capability. Emphasizing audience segmentation, media literacy, and dialogic interaction as fundamental factors, this study puts communication as a major driver of program effectiveness, unlike earlier research that sometimes regards it as a supplemental role. Moreover, it shows how the government's adaptation strategies—blending top-down directions with culturally relevant interpersonal communication—effectively match post-disaster urgency and local sociocultural dynamics. Significantly, the study draws attention to the understudied lack of infrastructure-oriented communication and the necessity of continuous behavioral change and capacity-building, implying that long-term urban resilience calls for communication strategies transcending project promotion to support empowerment, inclusivity, and community ownership. (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010) Furthermore, this study reinforces the notion that communication management is not a peripheral activity but a central component in urban development programs. The success of KOTAKU in Bima is partly attributed to how well the government manages messages, engages the public, and adapts communication strategies to local conditions.

CONCLUSION

The communication management of the Bima City Government is considered effective in implementing the KOTAKU program, as it can develop communication strategies that are adaptive to both community needs and the local context. The physical success of the KOTAKU program was significantly influenced by the post-disaster momentum following the flash floods, which created a strong sense of urgency and acceptance among the local population. Government communication efforts have primarily focused on ensuring the smooth execution of physical infrastructure projects and have yet to fully address behavioral transformation and community capacity-building. To prevent the reemergence of slum areas in the future, the government must integrate community empowerment and education initiatives into its communication strategies from the earliest stages of program planning.

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