

# Community Governance And Disability Empowerment: Evidence From Makassar City, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study examines the implementation of community governance principles in disability empowerment through a case study of the Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare in Makassar City, Indonesia. Using qualitative case study methodology with in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, this research analyzes how disability communities operationalize community leadership, empowerment, and ownership frameworks in their empowerment initiatives. The study involved 15 purposively selected informants from the Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare members, government officials, and supporting stakeholders. Findings reveal that the Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare has successfully implemented comprehensive community governance approaches across multiple dimensions. Community leadership manifests through advocacy participation in policy forums, grassroots organizing activities, and strategic network development with government agencies and civil society organizations. Community empowerment encompasses economic capacity building through entrepreneurship training, political empowerment via rights advocacy, educational inclusion promotion, and social support systems. Community ownership is demonstrated through autonomous program management, self-reliant operations, collective enterprise ownership, and democratic governance structures. Despite these achievements, the research identifies significant structural constraints including limited government responsiveness, inadequate funding support, persistent social stigma, and weak coordination mechanisms between community initiatives and formal institutional frameworks. The study concludes that while the Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare effectively demonstrates community governance principles internally, external recognition and institutional integration remain insufficient to maximize broader impact. These findings contribute to understanding community-driven disability empowerment models and highlight the need for enhanced institutional frameworks that balance community autonomy with formal policy integration in Indonesian urban governance contexts.

**Keywords:** Community Governance, Disability Empowerment, Participatory Development, Inclusive Governance, Community Leadership

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## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive development has become a critical agenda in achieving social justice worldwide, particularly for persons with disabilities who constitute approximately 15% of the global population (WHO, 2023). Recent studies highlight persistent barriers faced by disabled communities in accessing education, employment, and public services across developing nations (Menezes et al., 2024; Saran et al., 2023). In Indonesia, persons with disabilities continue to encounter structural obstacles despite progressive policy frameworks, reflecting broader challenges in translating inclusive policies into meaningful community-level empowerment (Bappenas, 2020). The gap between policy intention and implementation necessitates innovative approaches that position disabled communities as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries of development programs.

Indonesia's commitment to disability rights is codified in Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which establishes comprehensive protection and empowerment mechanisms (Government of Indonesia, 2016). However, recent evaluations reveal significant implementation gaps, particularly at the local government level where resource allocation and institutional capacity remain inadequate (Hermawan & Anggoro, 2024). Studies across Indonesian cities demonstrate that policy effectiveness largely depends on active community participation and local ownership of disability programs (Salim & Drenth, 2020). This reality underscores the need for community-driven governance models that can bridge the gap between national policies and grassroots implementation.

Community governance has emerged as a promising framework for empowering marginalized groups through participatory decision-making and local ownership (Palmer et al., 2022). Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis (2005) define

community governance as encompassing community empowerment, community leadership, and community ownership of social change processes. Recent research demonstrates that community governance approaches significantly enhance program sustainability and effectiveness compared to top-down interventions (Latupeirissa et al., 2025). This framework is particularly relevant for disability communities who have historically been excluded from decision-making processes affecting their lives and well-being.

Modern public administration has witnessed a paradigm shift from bureaucratic top-down approaches toward participatory governance models that emphasize citizen engagement (Park et al., 2025). The New Public Governance framework emphasizes collaboration, networks, and empowerment in public service delivery, positioning communities as co-producers rather than mere recipients (Bovaird & Löffler, 2003). Contemporary studies in Indonesian public administration highlight the growing importance of civil society organizations in complementing and monitoring state functions, particularly in serving vulnerable populations (Rusfiana & Kurniasih, 2024). This evolution aligns with democratic principles that prioritize citizen empowerment and inclusive governance practices.

Table 1. Disability-Related Demographics and Infrastructure in Makassar City

Indicator	Data	Source
<b>Total Population of Makassar</b>	1,423,877	BPS Makassar, 2023
<b>Estimated Persons with Disabilities</b>	42,716 (3% of population)	Dinsos Makassar, 2023
<b>Disability Organizations Registered</b>	12 active organizations	Dinas PMD Makassar, 2024
<b>Government Budget for Disability Programs</b>	Rp 2.4 billion (2024)	APBD Makassar, 2024
<b>Employment Rate among PWDs</b>	23%	Survey PerDIK, 2023
<b>Access to Public Facilities (Accessible)</b>	34% of public buildings	Accessibility Audit, 2024

Sources: Compiled from various government agencies and community surveys, 2023-2024

Makassar City represents a significant case for examining community governance in disability empowerment, with substantial disabled population yet limited institutional support. Recent assessments reveal inadequate budget allocation and infrastructure accessibility, creating dependency on community-based initiatives (Municipal Social Affairs Office, 2024). Local disability organizations, particularly grassroots movements, have emerged as crucial actors in filling service gaps and advocating for rights implementation (Kiling et al., 2022).

The Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare (PerDIK) in Makassar exemplifies community-driven disability empowerment through grassroots organizing and participatory leadership. Established by and for persons with disabilities, PerDIK has demonstrated innovative approaches to capacity building, advocacy, and social-economic empowerment within the local context (PerDIK, 2023). The organization's activities span from skills training and entrepreneurship development to policy advocacy and rights awareness campaigns. However, comprehensive academic analysis of how PerDIK implements community governance principles remains limited, despite its significant impact on local disability movements.

Despite progressive policies, disability communities in Makassar face persistent structural and cultural challenges that limit effective empowerment (Deswanti et al., 2023). Key obstacles include insufficient institutional support from local government, limited access to funding and facilities for community-led programs, and absence of systematic coordination between government agencies and disability organizations (Municipal Planning Agency, 2024). Recent studies indicate that community-based empowerment programs often lack sustainable funding mechanisms and technical assistance, resulting in fragmented and temporary interventions (Ardianuari et al., 2024). These challenges highlight the need for more comprehensive understanding of how community governance can address structural barriers while building internal organizational capacity.

While existing literature extensively covers institutional approaches to disability policy and macro-level inclusive development, limited research examines community governance specifically within disabled communities in Indonesian local contexts. Previous studies by Pertiwi et al., (2022) focused primarily on policy implementation from governmental perspectives, while Setijaningrum et al., (2024) analyzed service delivery models without examining internal community dynamics. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how PerDIK operationalizes community governance principles—community empowerment, leadership, and ownership—in its empowerment processes. The research aims to: (1) analyze the implementation of community governance principles within PerDIK's

empowerment programs; (2) evaluate the effectiveness of community-driven approaches in addressing structural barriers faced by persons with disabilities; and (3) provide insights for developing more inclusive and sustainable disability empowerment models in Indonesian urban contexts.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach with deductive reasoning to examine community governance in disability empowerment within Makassar City. The research adopts a naturalistic inquiry framework, utilizing PerDIK (Indonesian Disability Movement for Welfare) as the primary case study to verify community governance principles in real-world contexts (Creswell, 2010). Data collection employs triangulation through in-depth interviews with 15 purposively selected informants across three categories: PerDIK community members (founders, core activists, and general members representing various disability types), government officials (Social Affairs Office, Regional Development Planning Agency, Regional Disability Commission, and Labor Office), and supporting stakeholders (academics and disability advocacy NGOs). Additional data sources include participant observation of community activities and document analysis of organizational records, government policies, and program reports. The analytical framework follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification to systematically examine how PerDIK operationalizes community leadership, empowerment, and ownership principles.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Community Leadership

The implementation of community leadership within PerDIK demonstrates a multi-dimensional approach to disability advocacy and organizational governance. The organization has established itself as a prominent voice in policy advocacy forums, actively participating in formal discussions ranging from municipal to provincial levels. This advocacy-driven leadership manifests through strategic positioning in policy spaces, ensuring that disability perspectives are represented in decision-making processes that directly affect the community.

PerDIK's community-based organizing activities reveal a systematic approach to capacity building and member engagement. The organization regularly conducts community discussions, entrepreneurship training, and informal educational initiatives that mobilize persons with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. These grassroots organizing efforts serve as foundational elements for building collective consciousness and shared identity within the disability community, creating a platform for sustained social action.

The strategic network development undertaken by PerDIK illustrates sophisticated understanding of collaborative governance principles. The organization has cultivated relationships with government agencies including the Labor Office, Regional Development Planning Agency, and other relevant departments, while also establishing connections with academics, local media, and national NGOs. This multi-stakeholder engagement strategy amplifies the organization's influence and creates multiple channels for advocacy and program implementation.

Despite these achievements, PerDIK's community leadership faces significant structural constraints that limit its effectiveness. Government responsiveness to community-led initiatives remains inconsistent, with limited follow-through on collaborative discussions and policy commitments. The organization also struggles with leadership regeneration, as active participation tends to concentrate among established members while younger or newer members remain less engaged in leadership roles.

**Table 1. Community Leadership Manifestations in PerDIK**

Leadership Dimension	Implementation	Outcomes	Challenges
<b>Advocacy Leadership</b>	Policy forum participation	Disability voice in formal spaces	Limited government responsiveness
<b>Grassroots Organizing</b>	Community discussions & training	Enhanced member engagement	Concentrated participation
<b>Network Building</b>	Multi-stakeholder relationships	Expanded channels	Resource dependency

<b>Internal Governance</b>	Democratic decision-making	Collective ownership	Leadership regeneration gaps
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The community leadership practiced by PerDIK aligns with Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis's (2005) conceptualization of community governance, where leadership transcends individual figures to encompass collective capacity for social change and collaborative problem-solving. However, the research reveals that while internal leadership capacity is strong, external structural barriers continue to constrain the full realization of community governance principles. Enhanced institutional mechanisms for sustained government-community collaboration, as recommended by recent studies on participatory governance (Fu et al., 2024), could significantly strengthen the impact of community-led disability advocacy.

### Community Empowerment

PerDIK's approach to community empowerment encompasses multiple dimensions of capacity building that address the holistic needs of persons with disabilities. The organization's entrepreneurship training programs demonstrate a comprehensive strategy for economic empowerment, offering skills development in areas such as fashion design, printing services, and book publishing. These initiatives not only provide technical capabilities but also foster self-confidence and economic independence among community members, addressing both material and psychological aspects of empowerment.

The rights advocacy and equality promotion activities conducted by PerDIK represent a critical component of political empowerment within the disability community. Through legal literacy discussions and discrimination support services, the organization equips members with knowledge and tools necessary to navigate systemic barriers and assert their rights. This approach transforms individual experiences of marginalization into collective action for social justice and policy change.

Educational facilitation and literacy promotion efforts by PerDIK challenge segregated educational models while advocating for inclusive alternatives. The organization's rejection of segregated special education systems reflects a broader commitment to mainstreaming disability inclusion within standard educational frameworks. These educational advocacy efforts contribute to long-term empowerment by addressing structural discrimination in educational access and quality.

The psychological support and mentoring systems established by PerDIK address the emotional and social dimensions of empowerment often overlooked in formal service provision. Through informal peer support networks and psychological assistance programs, the organization creates safe spaces for members to process experiences of stigma and discrimination while building resilience and community solidarity.

**Table 2. Community Empowerment Dimensions in PerDIK**

Empowerment Type	Programs	Outcomes	Constraints
<b>Economic</b>	Entrepreneurship training, business support	Skill development, income generation	Limited government funding
<b>Political</b>	Rights advocacy, legal literacy	Increased rights awareness	Persistent discrimination
<b>Educational</b>	Inclusive education advocacy	Mainstreaming promotion	Systemic segregation
<b>Social</b>	Peer support, mentoring	Enhanced confidence	Social stigma
<b>Cultural</b>	Arts programs, public awareness	Identity strengthening	Limited recognition

The empowerment strategies implemented by PerDIK reflect the multi-dimensional framework proposed by Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis (2005), which emphasizes community capacity building across social, economic, and political spheres. The organization's holistic approach to empowerment demonstrates sophisticated understanding of intersecting barriers faced by persons with disabilities, while simultaneously revealing persistent structural constraints that limit empowerment outcomes. Strengthening government-community partnerships through formal recognition mechanisms and sustained funding commitments, as advocated by recent disability empowerment research (Saran et al., 2020), could enhance the sustainability and impact of community-driven empowerment initiatives.

### Community Ownership

Community ownership within PerDIK manifests through comprehensive member control over program design, implementation, and evaluation processes. All training programs, advocacy initiatives, and publication activities are conceptualized and executed by community members themselves, ensuring that interventions remain grounded in lived experiences and authentic community needs. This autonomous program management demonstrates the organization's commitment to self-determination and collective decision-making principles.

The self-reliance demonstrated in PerDIK's activity implementation reflects strong community ownership values, with members contributing labor, ideas, and resources through voluntary participation and collective effort. This self-sufficient approach reduces dependency on external funding while fostering internal capacity and organizational resilience. The community's ability to mobilize internal resources demonstrates sophisticated organizational maturity and shared commitment to collective goals.

PerDIK's collective enterprise ownership, particularly in printing and publishing ventures, exemplifies economic democracy and community control over productive assets. These collectively-owned businesses serve multiple functions: generating income for sustainability, providing learning opportunities for members, and creating platforms for disability advocacy through publication activities. This model of collective ownership creates tangible benefits while reinforcing community solidarity and shared responsibility.

The democratic governance structures within PerDIK facilitate meaningful participation in organizational decision-making, with regular consultations and consensus-building processes ensuring that all members have voice in shaping community direction. This participatory governance model extends beyond formal meetings to encompass ongoing dialogue and collaborative planning that strengthens community cohesion and shared ownership of outcomes.

**Table 3. Community Ownership Indicators in PerDIK**

Ownership Dimension	Manifestation	Benefits	Limitations
<b>Program Control</b>	Member-designed initiatives	Authentic community needs	Limited external recognition
<b>Resource Management</b>	Self-reliant operations	Organizational resilience	Resource constraints
<b>Economic Assets</b>	Collective enterprises	Sustainable income, learning	Scale limitations
<b>Decision-Making</b>	Democratic governance	Inclusive participation	Activist fatigue
<b>Knowledge Production</b>	Community-generated content	Authentic narratives	Limited dissemination

The community ownership principles demonstrated by PerDIK align closely with Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis's (2005) emphasis on community control over change processes and collective responsibility for outcomes. The organization's comprehensive approach to ownership encompasses economic, social, and political dimensions while maintaining democratic governance structures that ensure broad-based participation. However, the research reveals tension between strong internal ownership and limited external recognition, suggesting that formal acknowledgment mechanisms and institutional integration are necessary to amplify community ownership impacts. Developing hybrid governance models that balance community autonomy with institutional collaboration, as recommended by contemporary community development research (Elsner, 2004), could enhance the broader influence of community-owned disability initiatives.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that PerDIK has successfully implemented comprehensive community governance principles in disability empowerment within Makassar City, effectively operationalizing community leadership, empowerment, and ownership frameworks despite significant structural constraints. The organization's multi-dimensional approach to community leadership through advocacy participation, grassroots organizing, and strategic network development has positioned it as a crucial intermediary between the disability community and formal governance structures. Community empowerment initiatives spanning economic, political, educational, and social dimensions have created

tangible capacity-building outcomes while fostering collective consciousness and rights awareness among members. The strong community ownership demonstrated through autonomous program management, self-reliant operations, and democratic governance structures reflects sophisticated organizational maturity and commitment to self-determination principles. However, the research reveals persistent gaps between community-driven initiatives and formal institutional recognition, with limited government responsiveness, inadequate funding support, and weak coordination mechanisms constraining the broader impact of community governance efforts. These findings highlight the need for enhanced institutional frameworks that formally recognize and integrate community-led disability initiatives into municipal governance systems, while maintaining the autonomy and authenticity that characterize effective community governance. The PerDIK case provides valuable insights for developing more inclusive and sustainable disability empowerment models that bridge grassroots community action with formal policy implementation, ultimately contributing to more equitable and participatory governance approaches for marginalized populations in Indonesian urban contexts.

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