

THE SHOCKING TRUTH: WHY RENEWABLE ENERGY IN MALURIWU VILLAGE IS FALLING TO MEET PUBLIC NEEDS

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ABSTRAK

Tantangan energi terbarukan ditingkat pedesaan menyisahkan permasalahan yang belum optimal dalam praktiknya guna memfasilitasi kebutuhan publik khususnya di Desa Maluriwu Kabupaten Sikka, Nusa Tenggara Timur, meskipun penyediaan energi terbarukan ini mendukung penyediaan layanan publik, faktanya tidak signifikan. Lebih lanjut, metode yang diadopsi yakni kualitatif deskriptif guna memaknai permasalahan energi terbarukan sebagai wujud penyediaan kebutuhan publik ditingkat pedesaan. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara melalui penentuan informan yang dianggap kompeten guna memberikan informasi terkait tema penelitian. Temuan mengungkapkan, bahwa adanya kesenjangan partisipasi masyarakat dan ekspektasi masyarakat dengan kongkretisasi program. Lalu, kurangnya representasi masyarakat pada forum diskusi yang diinisiasi, dimana adanya kekhawatiran serta ketidakpuasan dari program yang dijanjikan pemerintah. Secara umum, temuan ini perlu adanya atensi khusus dari pemerintah kepada penduduk desa untuk menyediakan layanan publik melalui kebijakan yang tepat.

ABSTRACT

The challenges of renewable energy at the village level leave problems that are not yet optimal in practice to facilitate public needs, especially in Maluriwu Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Although the provision of renewable energy supports the provision of public services, the facts are not significant. Furthermore, the method adopted is descriptive qualitative to understand the problem of renewable energy as a means of providing public needs at the village level. Data were obtained through interviews by identifying participants competent in providing information related to the research theme. The findings reveal that there is a gap between community participation and community expectations when planning programs. There is a lack of community representation in the discussion forums that were initiated, where there are concerns and dissatisfaction with the program promised by the government. In general, these findings require special attention from the government to village residents to provide public services through appropriate policies.

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of village generally has a different purpose and context if traced from several existing studies. Villages in European countries are indicated as communities or communes that carry out their jurisdiction with existing members such as kings, village councils, and existing institutions (Blum, 1971).

This is certainly different from the context in Indonesia, where the village is synonymous with the term government, a formal institution with the authority to carry out tasks and functions in meeting public needs (Antlöv et al., 2016; Madjid et al., 2022). Therefore, the concept and meaning of villages in European countries and Indonesia are undoubtedly different.

Based on the illustration above, villages in Indonesia are certainly a central and essential part of meeting public needs or public services. These two aspects are important in improving existing public services, especially for people living in villages (Junaedi, 2023). In this regard, access to public services certainly has a fundamental role because the primary goal of public services is to provide services to the community so that basic needs may be met and, of course, impact people's lives (Karyana, 2021).

As one portrait of the challenges of public services in villages, especially in the renewable energy sector such as Solar Power Plants (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya*), which is still a challenge in providing access to public services so that people can use the facilities provided to support the activities and mobility of life in their area (Pangaribowo & Iskandar, 2023).

In this regard, the findings from the cases investigated, especially Maluriwu Palu'e Village, located in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, still do not fully accept the progress achieved, especially in providing electricity services (Donovan, 2023).

For this reason, in the last few years around 967 residents in the village are still disconnected from the electricity network, which of course, is a basic need in this contemporary era, as illustrated in the following data on the number of existing and affected resident:

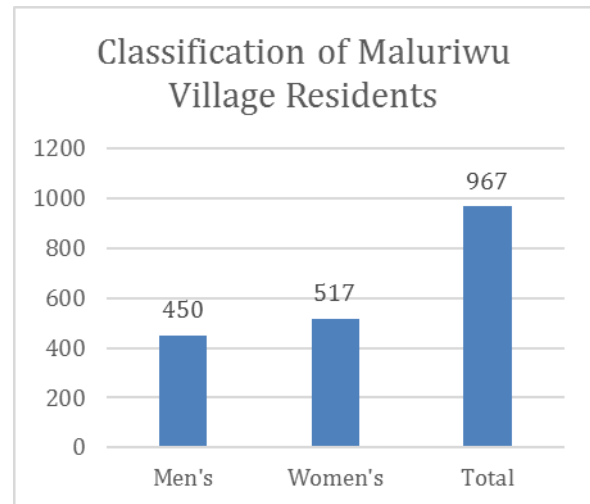


Figure 1. Total Population In Maluriwu Village In 2023

Source: Sikka Regency Central Statistics Agency (Data Processed, 2024)

Then, to support these findings, this is in line with the statement from the former village head, Silestinus, which is told by the Flores Tribune electronic media:

“...The current priority need for the people of Palue is electricity. That society, Palue thanked President Joko Widodo. With the existence of the District program Today, after 77 years of Indonesia's independence, we, the people of Palue, can enjoy light electricity with a solar power plant. There must be a Solar Power Plant (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya). This Solar Power Plant is not only to serve lighting needs but can support household economic activities and educational activities starting from the level PAUD (Early Childhood Education)- SMAK (Catholic High School) supports health service activities at Polindes (Village Maternity Center), Pustu (Subsidiary Health Center) and Puskesmas (Community Health Center), then supports religious service activities, government administration activities at the village and sub- district levels, as well as basic needs, unfortunately, the existing Solar Power Plant (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) cannot serve the maximum requirements of the community have disappointed us, as the people”.

Consequently, the residents are trying to make payments related to the electricity installations provided by the regional government to the village government. Still, the promised electricity services have yet to be

realized. It becomes a concern that the existing community's basic needs must be met. Emanuel Lengo also supports this reality in the same article, who stated:

“...Electricity in the area is not yet optimal because it always goes out during the day. Meanwhile, in the afternoon or night, it will turn back on depending on the natural weather. If it's bright and the sun is good. So at night, the electricity went out for a while at around 22.00 WITA (Central Indonesian Time). If not before then it will be gone. This is the condition, so the day goes out, the night just comes back on, it hasn't been 24 hours, many electronic devices can't be used, the rice cooker can't be used, especially carpentry tools can't be used”.

Based on the explanation above, the challenge of access to renewable energy in the public service sector has yet to produce a tangible impact. It raises critical questions regarding public services and ensuring equal distribution of services to the community in the context of Maluriwu Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

Therefore, this is undoubtedly related to customer expectations and customer perception felt by the community (Meeks et al., 2023). Thus, the steps that need to be followed up are the need to resolve the challenge of access to energy as a (supply) to the community in meeting basic public needs. Apart from that situation, we realized that access to renewable energy is part of a public service that the community needs to have (Roesler, 2019).

However, the practices need more time to ensure effectiveness. First, there is a need for careful planning and efficient resource allocation, considering that villages generally have limited resources and infrastructure (Hartwig & Nguyen, 2023; Zulmasyhur & Avianto, 2019). Therefore, cautious planning strategies must be the main focus to ensure public energy services renewables are spread evenly and provide maximum benefits. Then, the active involvement of the community in the entire process, from planning to implementation of renewable energy projects, is a critical aspect that needs to be noticed.

Therefore, this direct participation can increase community acceptance of the project and simultaneously reduce the potential for resistance or conflict (Sabir & Torre, 2023), which means the government and stakeholders

must ensure that information related to renewable energy projects is conveyed transparently to the community so that they have a clear understanding proportional regarding the benefits, risks and environmental impacts that may occur (Shani et al., 2023). As a response to public services in the renewable energy sector in villages, it needs to be emphasized that this approach is not only about providing clean energy sources but also includes creating long-term positive impacts for society. By overcoming these challenges, public services in the field of renewable energy can become a fundamental basis for achieving sustainable development at the village level (Mazzone et al., 2023).

Moreover, in an understanding of how the challenge of access to renewable energy has not yet been resolved for several reasons, which have been illustrated above, this research adopts the theory of community participation to observe how the challenge of access to renewable energy can be overcome with a community participation approach.

Then, a community participation relationship also means the involvement of an individual or community group in development. It includes the contribution of ideas, effort, time, expertise, capital, or materials and the benefits obtained from development results. It showed that active participation can support and enjoy the development process, which consists of several indicators: community participation forum, community involvement, and access to decision-making (Naku et al., 2021). By looking at several indicators, this research will investigate the challenges of renewable energy in Maluriwu Village, Sikka Regency, with the theory of community participation in accessing public services in the energy sector where the village government provides renewable materials.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research focuses on the challenges of achieving the rights of local communities through renewable energy in the context of the public service sector in Maluriwu Village, Sikka District, East Nusa Tenggara.

The existence of solar power plants does not provide public services to facilitate activities and mobility that are, of course, part of the current needs of the contemporary era while ensuring the content of the analysis carried out is divided into several indicators such as

community participation forum, community involvement, and access to decision-making that are included in the analysis carried out. In addition, this research uses descriptive qualitative research (Cole, 2023; Wallwey & Kajfez, 2023), to understand existing problems and to use understand them in the context of solar power plants, which are part of renewable energy in rural communities that need access to energy for daily mobility and life activities.

Furhermore, the data were collected through interviews and observations with various sources such as village head (*Kepala Desa*) and villagers. To simplify the description of the respondents, the following is an overview:

Table 1. Classification of Informants

Informants	Total
Village Head (<i>Kepala Desa</i>)	1
Villagers	3

Source: Processed by researchers

According to tables and classifications of existing informants, they have links; for instance, village head are defined as regional heads responsible for the needs of all communities, especially Maluriwu villages, where the village is a state or local government according to applicable rules and regulations in Indonesia, then villagers are defined as residents living in areas who interact with their communities and with the government or local government.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Even though it has been acknowledged that renewable energy is a core aspect in achieving sustainable development in villages, in reality, it still leaves hope that it cannot be said to be prosperous in having an impact on society, especially in towns.

It is a challenge that needs to be resolved, therefore the results. The analysis in this research uses the theory of community participation and the challenges faced, especially access to renewable energy in serving public needs in a rural context. Next, we will discuss the research findings systematically from this theoretical concept.

Community Participation Forum

Community participation forum refers to efforts driven by consensus in various series of

activities to promote rights and obligations that have implications for mutually agreed agreements Naku et al., (2021). Based on these, the researchers exploring deep-interview with village head that conveyed:

“...In fulfilling this forum, it is related to how community participation has been facilitated through the village government through community forums, but in reality, the condition of this community regarding electricity is a very basic need. As an illustration, it has been almost 78 years since the people of Palu'e have longed for the presence of electricity because it is crucial for them. Starting in 2021, the central government allocated part of the allocation for installing PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) electricity, so for us, this is the first step toward the interests that are our community's rights. Meanwhile, during the process of installing the PLTS, the community was very ready in a concrete form, namely, by giving away some of their rights through land and being willing to free up their land for the installation of the PLTS, and the land that had been freed was immediately followed up by installing electricity poles as the first infrastructure”. (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Therefore, the researcher attempted to confirm this through a one of the people (villagers) that expressed:

“...In my opinion, there is a forum for discussion, and indeed it is carried out by involving only a few representatives but not all, especially the parties involved, both village heads and community leaders in each village, because for PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) this is an important need for us, because we really need it especially in the current era, seeing this, it also planned by the central government for every region that still has limited access to electricity, so that there is a forum for community participation. However, I saw that at the beginning, the community was supportive, and that was a positive response for us, and this is what we really need, considering that we have long wanted our rights and needs to be served well. Of course, this can be felt by all of society, and we are very supportive”. (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Meanwhile, researchers are attempting to dig deeper into the problems that the village head dared to express:

“...My poin of view, as a suggestion, especially for PLNs (Perusahaan Listrik Negara), an alternative generator with sufficient and maximized capacity. Finally, I also leave a message that even though we already enjoy electricity, one village on Palu'e island still does not have electricity for its people. Their village is Lidi village in the eastern region of Palu'e island, so follow-up action from PLN and the local government of Sikka Regency is needed to fulfill their rights because this is part of a public service that needs to be realized”. (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

In the end, this is in accordance with the words of a local person (villagers):

“...My way of thinking, it would be good if the capacity of this PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) was increased and a generator was given as an alternative to overcome the problems we feel, and the fuel costs related to this generator were added so that it doesn't burden us because this is our right and management is given to each village through the Village Head and perhaps us. as a community, we can help in the form of joint contributions to finance the fuel for this generator so that we can support our rights as a community”. (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Based on the observation results, several crucial problems were found in constructing (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) in Maluriwu Village. Although the village government has initiated a community participation forum, there is still a gap between community expectations for basic electricity needs and the implementation of the (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) project. In addition, although funds from the central government have been allocated since 2021, the expected impact has not been fully achieved through discussion forums. Then, efforts were initiated by the community to provide some rights and free up land for the construction of (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*), followed by delivering alternative compensation with capital distributed to the affected districts.

However, the less-than-optimal capacity of the (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) that was built can only serve some villages, including Maluriwu Village. This obstacle requires further handling. For example, the dependence of (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) on the weather is also a significant problem that requires a more careful evaluation of the technology.

On the other hand, differences in community views on the efficiency of (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) indicate the need for further consideration when choosing renewable energy technology appropriate to local needs and conditions. So, this strengthens the idea that participation in a forum, especially in the context of consensus in development, requires proactive and consistent efforts without justifying formal actions and material (Sabet & Khaksar, 2024). It needs to be consistently pursued so that every right owned by the community can be followed up proportionally.

Therefore, this analysis encourages the need to improve the (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) installation strategy by considering these aspects to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of renewable energy provision at the village level through community participation.

Community Involvement

Community involvement highlights individuals and groups' active and continuous participation in activities to improve the quality of life in specific environments. It focuses on aspects from social cohesion to economic empowerment and catalyzes positive social changes at the community level Naku et al., (2021). As a result, community involvement has become a fundamental aspect of development and policy-making. Based on these, the researchers exploring deep-interview with village head that conveyed:

“...In 2019, we held a discussion to express our thoughts on the soon availability of PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya), considering it a very basic need. The community has struggled to attend forums held by the subdistrict and village governments. From the results of the forum, we agreed to immediately make a proposal addressed to ring 1 (one), namely, the President and relevant ministries. This is an initiative form of struggle seeking opportunities and is based on government

policy, as outlined in the bright sub-district program. This is what we have tried through administrative mechanisms, namely, proposals to related parties, namely, the President and related ministries". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Therefore, the researcher attempted to confirm this through a one of the people (villagers) that expressed:

"...At the beginning of this planning process, my experience was that it was published through a discussion that included village heads and community leaders. However, as I said, not everyone who attended this process was present; only a few were involved. Indeed, this does not represent the entire community. The process of community involvement does not fully proceed according to what was discussed through the forum". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Meanwhile, researchers are attempting to dig deeper into the problems that the village head dared to express:

"...First, the purpose of the PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) was to provide the necessary information, which was also connected to the PLN as the person responsible for the technical aspects. However, the dreamed presence of PLN was particularly related to the economic and educational sectors as well as other matters concerning the community's activities and mobility. Unfortunately, the PLTS has not yet met the community's expectations, and we feel dissatisfied. This means that our rights have not been fulfilled; for example, when electricity access is available all day, but at night, we only have approximately 1-2 to hours of access, which is not optimal. This sentiment is shared by Village Heads and the community as a whole". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Ultimately, this aligns with the statement of a person (villagers) in the area, as per their words:

"...I believe that, initially, the PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) program was beneficial, but its current state did not meet our community's expectations. At the outset, we were under the impression that it would be satisfactory with a response time of

24 h. However, after a few weeks, issues began to arise that affected both life and death. As a society, we are deeply troubled and dissatisfied with our current state of affairs, as the original plan did not align with our current feelings". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

The second analysis concerns installing a Solar Power Plant (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) in Maluriwu Village, which illustrates the complex dynamics of community participation and project implementation. In the existing process, the community has taken a positive initiative by proposing and submitting it to the central government. Still, the project performance is partially in line with expectations.

Then, participation, which previously involved community leaders and village heads in discussion forums that had been held, gave rise to concerns regarding the need for a more comprehensive representation based on the results of the observations analyzed.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between the government's promise of Solar Power Plant services for all villages, including Maluriwu Village, still needs to be improved, and the reality of implementing existing projects has created disappointment among the community. These underscore the need for higher accountability to ensure that government commitments and promises can be realized in line with community expectations (Rijal, 2023).

Therefore, this analysis shows the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the community participation model and implementation of Solar Power Plant projects to achieve results that align with the needs and expectations of the community as the primary stakeholder.

Access to Decision Making

Access to decision-making is a policy focus, emphasizing the need for equal access to ensure the success of all people's programs. It is expected that equal access will produce logical ideas and perspectives, thus increasing the depth and diversity of the resulting decisions Naku et al., (2021). Based on these, the researchers exploring deep-interview with a village head to convey the following:

"...In fact, the community is very enthusiastic about accepting this, and through the process that was conveyed at the beginning, they are willing and willing to

undertake this PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) program because this is what our community needs, and through several approaches that have been discussed, the community agrees and has no problem; for this reason, the community is very positive about accepting it". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Therefore, the researcher attempted to confirm this through a group of people (villagers) that expressed:

"...I see that the decision made can also be said to be good because it is quite positive. This will also be important in the future because it is our basic need. Then, in the decision process, it was agreed that the community would provide some of the land to be used as a PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) construction project with the agreement that the Sikka Regency regional government, as the person responsible, would compensate for the losses related to this, considering that the land given was customary land and was also a place for the community to earn a living by gardening as their job". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

Moreover, researchers are attempting to dig deeper into the problems that the village head dared to express:

"...When the proposal was sent, we waited almost 1 (one) year after it was submitted, and luckily, I was the first person contacted by PLN (Pembangkit Listrik Negara) Maumere as a representative for this PLTS (Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya) program. Then, through the telephone discussions obtained, I immediately tried to look for related land. This PLTS program is in Palu'e, and more than that, it takes quite a long time (approximately 1 (one) year, because it is technically slow". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

So on, this aligns with the statement of a person (villagers) in the area:

"I think there is not enough access because it does not represent the entire community from each village, so only a few representatives and not all of each village are present, and many village heads are not present at the discussion; therefore, the existing access is insufficient and

inadequate". (Interview results on June 10, 2024).

The findings revealed that village heads expressed strong community support for the initiative, citing agreement and willingness to participate. However, challenges emerged related to the decision-making process and its implementation. Here, village heads noted administrative delays and constraints, such as long waiting times for responses and technical delays, which more broadly reflect concerns about access and representation in decision-making.

Theoretically, access to decision-making still needs to be strengthened formally and materially, both representatively and technically optionally, through a decision-making mechanism (Abouhawwash & Jameel, 2023).

Interestingly, villagers also expressed similar sentiments, pointing out the lack of inclusivity in discussions that excluded many village heads, thus limiting comprehensive community representation.

CONCLUSION

In general, the results of the problem-study review can be concluded that even though a community participation forum has been initiated, there is a gap between community expectations and implementing the Solar Power Plants (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) program in Maluriwu Village.

Meanwhile, community involvement shows positive initiatives, but a lack of comprehensive representation and a mismatch between government promises and project implementation create disappointment.

Thus, a thorough evaluation of the program participation and implementation model is required to ensure that the results align with expectations. Finally, challenges in decision-making access describe technical obstacles and imbalances between regulated mechanisms and community realities (agreement).

Therefore, it is vital to emphasize transparency and program effectiveness as key to the success of this solar power plant (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya, PLTS*) program. In this way, we can ensure equal community participation and meet local needs in Maluriwu Village.

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