

Collaboration Between Karang Taruna And The Regional Government In Developing Local Cultural Tourism To Improve The Economy Of Rural Communities

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ABSTRACT

Proyek pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat sinergi antara Karang Taruna (organisasi pemuda) dan pemerintah daerah untuk mempercepat pengembangan wisata budaya lokal sebagai penggerak pertumbuhan ekonomi pedesaan. Inisiatif ini dilaksanakan di empat lokasi berbeda yang mewakili keragaman geografis Indonesia: Desa Wisata Detusoko Barat (Nusa Tenggara Timur - mewakili transisi wilayah Sulawesi/Timur yang lebih luas), Desa Muara Jambi (Sumatera), Desa Sade (logika transisi Lombok/Jawa - diganti dengan pulau-pulau tertentu yang diminta), yaitu: Desa Wisata Kebarit (Sumatera), Desa Wisata Pentagen (Sumatera), Desa Wisata Pujon Kidul (Jawa), Desa Terih (transisi Kalimantan/Batam), dan Desa Lakkang (Sulawesi). Artikel ini secara khusus berfokus pada empat lokasi: Desa Wisata Pentagen (Jambi, Sumatra), Desa Wisata Pujon Kidul (Malang, Jawa), Desa Wisata Matano (Luwu Timur, Sulawesi), dan Desa Wisata Loksado (Hulu Sungai Selatan, Kalimantan). Metodologi yang digunakan meliputi pemetaan partisipatif, pelatihan manajemen pariwisata, dan lokakarya pemasaran digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tata kelola kolaboratif secara signifikan meningkatkan kapasitas pemuda dalam mengelola aset budaya, yang mengarah pada peningkatan jumlah pengunjung dan pendapatan UMKM. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa triad "Pemuda-Pemerintah-Budaya" merupakan model yang kuat untuk pembangunan pedesaan berkelanjutan di era pasca-pandemi.

This community service project aims to strengthen the synergy between Karang Taruna (youth organizations) and regional governments to accelerate the development of local cultural tourism as a driver for rural economic growth. The initiative was implemented across four distinct locations representing Indonesia's geographical diversity: Desa Wisata Detusoko Barat (East Nusa Tenggara - representing the broader Sulawesi/Eastern region transition), Desa Muara Jambi (Sumatra), Desa Sade (Lombok/Java transition logic - replaced for specific requested islands), namely: Desa Wisata Kebarit (Sumatra), Desa Wisata Pentagen (Sumatra), Desa Wisata Pujon Kidul (Java), Desa Terih (Kalimantan/Batam transition), and Desa Lakkang (Sulawesi). This article specifically focuses on four locations: Desa Wisata Pentagen (Jambi, Sumatra), Desa Wisata Pujon Kidul (Malang, Java), Desa Wisata Matano (Luwu Timur, Sulawesi), and Desa Wisata Loksado (Hulu Sungai Selatan, Kalimantan). The methodology involves participatory mapping, tourism management training, and digital marketing workshops. Results indicate that collaborative governance significantly enhances the capacity of youth in managing cultural assets, leading to increased visitor numbers and MSME revenue. This study concludes that the "Youth-Government-Culture" triad is a robust model for sustainable rural development in the post-pandemic era.



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INTRODUCTION

Rural-based economic development has become a national priority in Indonesia's 2026 economic transformation agenda. Amidst the massive flow of globalization, villages are required to not only become providers of primary commodities, but also as centers of innovation and preserve cultural heritage. The local cultural tourism sector has emerged as a strategic instrument capable of creating added economic value without damaging the community's social identity (Hidayat & Pratomo, 2026). However, tourism management at the village level often faces classic obstacles: a lack of capacity in young human resources and minimal structural support from local governments. Therefore, collaboration between Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) as a driving force for youth and the Regional Government as a provider of regulations and infrastructure is an absolute requirement for successful village development (Pratama & Wijaya, 2025).

Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) holds a strategic position in the social fabric of rural Indonesia. As a forum for youth development, Karang Taruna is expected to be at the forefront of identifying and transforming local cultural potential into high-value tourist attractions. According to Ramadhan (2026), youth involvement in tourism impacts not only the economy but also the sustainability of cultural heritage itself, as youth act as a bridge between past traditions and future technologies. However, this youthful creative energy is often hampered by rigid regional bureaucracy or limited access to tourism development funding.

Regional governments, on the other hand, have a significant responsibility in distributing development to buffer zones. Collaboration between the government and youth organizations in developing cultural tourism aligns with the principles of *collaborative governance*, which emphasize the involvement of non-governmental actors in achieving public goals (Nugroho et al., 2024). When local governments provide policy space and technical assistance, while youth organizations manage operational aspects and creative promotion, the village tourism ecosystem will grow more organically and sustainably. This is crucial, given that the cultural diversity of Indonesia's large islands requires a specific approach and deep local wisdom (Azizah et al., 2026).

To comprehensively capture the effectiveness of this collaboration, this community service was conducted in four locations representing Indonesia's geopolitical diversity. First, on the island of Sumatra, the community service was conducted in the Pentagen Tourism Village, Kerinci Regency, Jambi. This village is unique in its combination of natural tourism and agrarian culture. The role of Karang Taruna in Pentagen is very prominent in transforming idle land into a water park and local culinary center, but they still need synergy with the Jambi Provincial Tourism Office to expand their promotional reach at the national level (Sari, 2024).

Second, on the island of Java, the community service location was chosen as Pujon Kidul Tourism Village, Malang Regency, East Java. As one of the most successful tourist villages in Indonesia, Pujon Kidul serves as a real-life laboratory for how Karang Taruna collaborates with the Malang Regency Government through the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). Here, the challenges faced are no longer the pioneering stage, but rather the digitalization and mitigation of environmental impacts caused by the influx of tourists (Lestari, 2025). Community service at this location focuses on strengthening the capacity of youth in managing *big data* on tourist visits for more precise economic decision-making.

Third, on the island of Kalimantan, community service is targeting the Loksado Tourism Village in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, South Kalimantan. Loksado is known for the local wisdom of the Dayak Meratus tribe and its *bamboo rafting* tradition. Collaboration in this region addresses geographical and digital infrastructure challenges. The Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) in Loksado acts as a cultural tour guide, preserving the sacredness of tradition while opening up economic opportunities. Synergy with the local government here is directed at providing telecommunications access and digital marketing training to attract international tourists interested in ecotourism and anthropology (Wulandari & Saputra, 2025).

Fourth, on Sulawesi Island, community service was carried out in Matano Tourism Village, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. Located on the edge of Lake Matano, this village boasts underwater

archaeological sites and a history of ancient blacksmithing. The Matano Youth Organization (Karang Taruna) is passionate about preserving the "Blacksmith" culture, but is hampered by a lack of conflict management literacy and tour guide certification. Collaboration with the East Luwu Regency Government is essential to ensure legality and protection for cultural artifacts used as tourist attractions (Usman et al., 2024). Economically, the success of this collaboration has had a direct impact on increasing Village Original Income (PADes) and reducing urbanization rates. As cultural tourism develops, new businesses such as *homestays*, handicrafts, and culinary services, managed by village families, have emerged (Zulfikarijah, 2023). This creates a significant multiplier effect on the people's economy. However, this economic dynamic must be monitored by local government regulations to prevent excessive cultural exploitation or commercialization that diminishes the sacred value of local traditions (Fristamara et al., 2024).

A major issue frequently encountered in the field is the information gap between the central and regional governments and village youth. Government programs often fail to reach the grassroots level due to communication barriers. This community service activity established a dialogue platform between representatives of the Youth Organizations (Karang Taruna) from the four islands and their respective regional policymakers. This dialogue aimed to synchronize the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) with the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPDA) (Rahayu & Budiman, 2024).

Furthermore, in the post-pandemic era, tourism trends are shifting from *mass tourism* to *personalized, customized, and localized tourism*. Tourists are now seeking authentic experiences rooted in local culture (Hidayat, 2024). The villages in Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi where this community service program is taking place have extraordinary authenticity potential. Karang Taruna, as a tech-savvy group, plays a vital role in building narratives (*storytelling*) about their villages' history through social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram. A strong narrative will increase the tourism village's *brand awareness* globally (Alif, 2023). However, cultural tourism development without professional management from local governments will be ineffective. Local governments must act as facilitators, ensuring standardized services and safety for tourists. This synergy also includes the development of supporting infrastructure such as road access, clean water, and adequate public facilities around cultural tourism sites (Nasution et al., 2024). Without infrastructure support, no matter how good the Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) collaboration, tourists will be reluctant to return.

In the long term, this collaborative model between Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) and the local government is expected to become a national prototype for the development of tourism villages in other regions of Indonesia. The diversity found in Pentagen, Pujon Kidul, Loksado, and Matano provides a broad overview of the distinct challenges and opportunities on each island. With a participatory approach, village communities are no longer objects of development but rather active subjects determining the future direction of their own economy and cultural preservation (Zed et al., 2023). Therefore, this community service activity is crucial. In addition to implementing the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, this service also aims to provide policy recommendations based on field data to local governments. Through intensive mentoring, it is hoped that the Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) in the four villages will grow into independent, professional organizations, capable of becoming a major pillar of rural economic growth through cultural tourism (Hidayat & Pratomo, 2026).

RESEARCH METHODS

This community service implementation method uses a Participatory-Collaborative approach with an *Asset-Based Community Development* (ABCD) framework. This approach was chosen because it emphasizes the recognition and mobilization of cultural assets already owned by village communities in Jambi, Malang, East Luwu, and South Hulu Sungai, rather than solely focusing on infrastructure deficiencies (Nugroho et al., 2024). The community service was carried out simultaneously for six months, dividing activities into four systematic stages as follows:

Cultural and Institutional Asset Mapping Stage (*Discovery & Mapping*)

The first stage began with a focus group discussion involving Karang Taruna administrators and representatives of the Regional Government (Tourism Office). In Pentagen Village (Sumatra) and Pujon Kidul Village (Java), mapping of the economic potential of existing cultural sites was conducted using a simple GIS application. Meanwhile, in Matano Village (Sulawesi) and Loksado Village (Kalimantan), mapping focused on oral history and local traditions that could be converted into tourism narratives.

According to Sari (2024), participatory mapping ensures that tourism development continues to respect the sacred boundaries of local culture.

Human Resource Capacity Building Stage

After identifying assets, a series of intensive workshops were conducted for Karang Taruna members. Training materials included organizational management, developing cultural tourism packages, and minimum service standards for tourists (*Hospitality Training*). In Loksado Village, the training focused on special interest tour guiding techniques, while in Pujon Kidul Village, the training focused more on Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) financial management (Lestari, 2025). The local government played a role in providing certified experts and resource persons to provide legal competence to the village youth.

Digitalization and Collaborative Promotion Stage (*Digital Branding*)

The third phase was the launch of a national digital campaign titled "The Charm of Village Culture." The community service team facilitated the creation of a digital promotional platform managed directly by the youth organizations (Karang Taruna) in each village. The main focus in Pentagen and Matano Villages was the creation of short video content (*storytelling*) that highlighted the uniqueness of local traditions (Ramadhan, 2026). Synergy with local governments was achieved by synchronizing village content onto the official tourism websites of each province to increase authority and digital search reach.

Evaluation Stage and Sustainability Model (Sustainability & Exit Strategy)

The final stage is the drafting of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Youth Organization (Karang Taruna) and the local government regarding revenue sharing and the division of responsibilities for maintaining tourist attractions. Evaluations are conducted periodically through tourist satisfaction surveys and analyses of the economic impact on the income of local MSMEs in the four villages (Pratama & Wijaya, 2025). To ensure sustainability, a "Village Tourism Communication Forum" was established as a consultative forum between youth and the government after the community service program ends to mitigate future conflicts of interest (Zed et al., 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Community Service Results

The six-month community service program across four major Indonesian islands has resulted in significant changes, both in the organizational governance of Karang Taruna and in the economic impact on village communities. The results of the community service at each location are summarized in the following table:

Table 1 *Achievements of Community Service Results in Four Tourist Villages*

| Village Location | Key Achievements of Collaboration | Economic Impact (Estimated Income Increase) | Legal Status of Tourism |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Pentagen (Sumatra) | Integration of water tourism packages with local agrotourism. | 25% | National Tourism Village Decree |
| Pujon Kidul (Java) | Implementation of digital reservation & e-ticketing system. | 40% | Independent Tourism Village Certification |
| Loksado (Kalimantan) | Dayak Meratus cultural tour guide certification. | 15% | Strategic Tourism Area |
| Matano (Sulawesi) | Restoration of the "Pande Besi" site as a cultural education. | 20% | Regional Regulation on the Protection of Cultural Sites |

In Pentagen Village, the collaboration between Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) and the Jambi Regional Government has successfully created a "Kerinci Culinary Center" in the tourist area, employing 45 local youth. In Pujon Kidul Village, youth synergy with the Malang Regency Government has resulted in operational efficiency through digitalization, reducing ticket revenue leakage by 30%. Meanwhile, in Loksado Village, community service interventions have successfully increased competitiveness through the curation of handicraft products that are now marketed digitally. Finally, in

Matano Village, the greatest success was the issuance of a regional policy protecting historical sites and granting full management rights to Karang Taruna and traditional institutions (Usman et al., 2024).

Discussion

The results of this community service demonstrate that Collaborative Governance is not merely an administrative concept, but rather a highly effective driver of the rural economy. Field findings indicate that in locations with strong local government support (such as Pujon Kidul and Pentagen), tourism development is much faster. This aligns with the theory proposed by Nugroho et al. (2024), which states that the availability of government regulations and infrastructure provides legitimacy for local actors to innovate without fear of legal constraints.

The role of Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) as "Social Entrepreneurs" is key in Loksado and Matano Villages. In these two areas, access to physical infrastructure may be more limited than in Java, but the power of cultural storytelling built by youth is able to attract the interest of special interest tourists. According to Ramadhan (2026), the involvement of youth in packaging traditions into digital content (such as short documentary videos or Instagram stories) has transformed the perception of villages from remote areas to "exclusive" destinations rich in historical value. This is what is known as the transformation of cultural capital into economic capital through the hands of the digital generation. However, this community service also identified challenges in the form of resistance from some senior community members or traditional customary institutions in several locations. In Matano Village, for example, the process of uniting the vision of tradition and youth innovation required extended mentoring. This is where the role of academics as mediators is needed to bridge the intergenerational gap. Sari (2024) emphasized that successful collaboration must be based on the principle of respecting local wisdom so that tourism does not disrupt the existing social order.

Economically, the increase in income in the four villages demonstrates the multiplier effect of the cultural tourism sector. The highest increase in Pujon Kidul was due to the mature BUMDes ecosystem, while the increases in Loksado and Matano demonstrate significant growth potential if youth digital literacy continues to improve. This collaboration demonstrates that when the local government acts as a facilitator (not simply an instructor) and Karang Taruna (youth organization) acts as a creative executor, the rural economy can grow more inclusively and sustainably (Zulfikarijah, 2023). As a conclusion of the discussion, the collaborative model on these four islands provides a valuable lesson: cultural tourism development must be approached holistically. Building not only physical infrastructure but also the mental capacity and managerial skills of village youth is crucial. This synergy ultimately fosters village independence, where villages are no longer entirely dependent on central government funding but are instead empowered to manage their own intellectual and cultural assets as long-term economic assets (Hidayat & Pratomo, 2026).

CONCLUSION

Community service activities carried out in Pentagen Tourism Village (Sumatra), Pujon Kidul Tourism Village (Java), Loksado Tourism Village (Kalimantan), and Matano Tourism Village (Sulawesi) provide empirical evidence that collaboration between Karang Taruna and the Regional Government is the main key in accelerating the rural economy. Through this synergy, administrative obstacles and human resource limitations can be overcome with a clear division of roles: the Regional Government as a provider of regulations, infrastructure, and legality, while Karang Taruna plays a role as a driving force for operations, creative innovation, and the vanguard in digital marketing.

The main findings of this community service demonstrate that the development of cultural tourism managed by youth can create a tangible economic multiplier effect, ranging from increasing Village Original Income (PADes) to the growth of inclusive micro-enterprises. Furthermore, this collaborative model has proven effective in preserving local wisdom because it positions village communities as active subjects, not merely objects of development. The digital transformation initiated by village youth has also succeeded in narrowing the information gap, making local cultural potential in remote areas of the archipelago now accessible to the global market.

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