

EMPOWERMENT PARADIGM SHIFT IN INDONESIA: FROM CHARITY TO SUSTAINABLE PARTICIPATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment has long been understood as a state-driven initiative where citizens receive aid from the government through social assistance or direct subsidies. However, the new administration in Indonesia introduces a paradigm shift—transforming from a charity-based approach to one centered on empowerment, participation, and collaboration. This paper explores this new empowerment paradigm, examines the socio-economic challenges Indonesia faces, and discusses the strategies implemented to promote inclusive and sustainable development in the digital age. The establishment of the Coordinating Ministry for Community Empowerment (Kemenko PM) symbolizes a structural and philosophical transformation, positioning the people as active agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

Keyword: Empowerment Paradigm, Inclusive Development, Sustainable Development, Digital Era Empowerment, Public Policy Transformation

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, the concept of community empowerment in Indonesia was dominated by a top-down approach. During the New Order era, the state functioned as the central actor in development, driving change and progress through centralized control. Citizens were often perceived as passive recipients of governmental aid rather than participants in shaping their own future. Following the reform period, Indonesia experienced a major political and institutional transformation that redefined the role of the state. Empowerment has evolved into a democratic ecosystem where the government, civil society, academia, and the private sector collaborate to promote national progress.

The new government embraces this transformation by rejecting purely *karitatif* (charity-based) policies and adopting an empowerment-oriented model that emphasizes participation, inclusivity, and sustainability. This paradigm is not merely administrative—it reshapes the collective consciousness of empowerment in Indonesian society.

2. METHOD

1. Approach and Design

This community service program employs a Participatory Empowerment Approach, which shifts the focus from charity-based assistance to sustainable community-driven participation. The approach integrates digital transformation, capacity strengthening, and collaborative co-creation to ensure long-term empowerment.

The methodological principles include:

1. Active Participation – involving community members in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation.
2. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration – engaging local government, micro and small enterprises (MSMEs), youth groups, and digital platforms.
3. Sustainable Self-Reliance – prioritizing skill enhancement and institutional strengthening rather than direct aid.

2. Target Beneficiaries

The program focuses on the following groups:

- Vulnerable or low-income households

- Local MSMEs needing digital literacy and market access
- Community leaders and village officials aiming to improve participatory governance

3. Location and Duration

Activities are conducted in communities with low digital literacy and limited engagement in participatory development. The program runs for 3–6 months, consisting of pre-implementation, implementation, and evaluation phases.

4. Implementation Stages

A. Pre-Implementation Phase

1. Needs Assessment

- Field observations
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
- Baseline surveys on digital literacy and community participation levels

2. Community Asset Mapping

- Identification of local resources, talents, and economic potential
- Mapping of MSMEs, youth communities, and local institutions

3. Co-Design Workshops

- Joint formulation of program priorities
- Agreement on shared indicators of success
- Development of participatory action plans

B. Implementation Phase

1. Training and Capacity Building

a. Digital Transformation Training

- Basic digital literacy
- Use of productivity apps
- Social media marketing and online marketplace onboarding

b. Community Institutional Strengthening

- Organizational management
- Participatory planning and budgeting
- Community-based monitoring and evaluation

c. Sustainable Entrepreneurship Training

- Digital business models
- Branding and content creation
- Digital finance (QRIS, e-wallets, digital bookkeeping)

2. Mentoring and Assistance

- MSME mentoring for digital business development
- Coaching for village officials in participatory governance

- Monthly coaching clinics to address challenges and monitor progress

3. Digital Tools and Innovation

- Development of a community digital platform (messaging groups, Google Workspace, or simple apps)
- Creation of a Participatory Digital Dashboard for community feedback and reporting
- Training in the use of collaborative digital tools

C. Evaluation and Sustainability Phase

1. Formative and Summative Evaluation

- Pre- and post-program assessments
- Measurement of skill acquisition and behavioral change
- Evaluation of community participation improvements

2. Community-Based Monitoring

- Establishment of local digital forums
- Identification and training of Community Digital Champions to sustain the initiative

3. Sustainability Strategies

- Partnership agreements with local governments and community organizations
- Follow-up mentoring for three months after the program
- Exploration of micro-financing opportunities (local crowdfunding, CSR, village-owned enterprises)

5. Expected Outputs and Outcomes

1. Improved digital literacy among community members
2. Formation of community working groups based on participatory empowerment
3. Local MSMEs integrated into digital marketplaces
4. A participatory village development plan document
5. Operational community digital dashboard
6. Academic publications and official community service report

The Global and National Context of Empowerment

Globally, more than 650 million people still live below the poverty line of USD 2.15 per day (World Bank, 2024). Indonesia, as the fourth most populous country in the world, remains committed to reducing poverty through measurable and sustainable empowerment strategies.

Domestically, three main challenges continue to hinder community empowerment:

1. **Poverty Challenge:** 23.85 million Indonesians (8.47%) remain poor, including 2.38 million living in extreme poverty (0.85%).
2. **Employment Challenge:** As of February 2025, 7.28 million Indonesians lack decent work opportunities.
3. **People's Economy Challenge:** Indonesia hosts 65.5 million MSMEs employing 119 million workers, yet the majority operate within the lowest income deciles (1 and 2).

To address these structural issues, President Prabowo initiated progressive and revolutionary measures, including the establishment of the **Coordinating Ministry for Community Empowerment (Kemenko PM)**—an institution designed to unify socio-economic policies into one integrated national empowerment ecosystem.

The New Empowerment Paradigm

The new paradigm reframes the government's role from the sole driver of development into one of several key actors within a collaborative network. Empowerment is now defined as the process of enabling people to take control of their own economic, social, and cultural destinies.

This paradigm shift is institutionalized through two major presidential decrees:

1. **Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 4 of 2025** on the National Empowerment and Community Resilience Strategy (DTSEN).
2. **Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 8 of 2025** on Poverty Alleviation and the Eradication of Extreme Poverty.

These instruments aim to transform welfare policies from temporary aid into long-term empowerment and self-reliance.

The core objectives of this new empowerment direction include:

- **Reducing household expenditures** through effective social protection mechanisms.
- **Increasing community income** by expanding employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Eradicating poverty pockets** via improved infrastructure and access to decent housing.

Through these strategic interventions, Indonesia envisions a **self-reliant, productive, and prosperous nation** where citizens actively contribute to sustainable development.

5. Fiscal Commitment and Digital Transformation

Indonesia's fiscal policy demonstrates strong commitment to social empowerment. Over **IDR 500 trillion** is allocated annually for social protection programs—one of the highest in the developing world. By 2026, this includes:

- **National Health Insurance (PBI JKN):** 96.8 million beneficiaries (IDR 66.5 trillion)
- **Family Hope Program (PKH):** 10 million families (IDR 28.6 trillion)
- **Basic Food Assistance (Bansos Sembako):** 18.3 million recipients (IDR 43.8 trillion)

The digital revolution has become a key enabler in optimizing these investments. Digital innovation not only improves administrative efficiency but also ensures targeted, transparent, and data-driven empowerment programs. However, digital progress must go hand-in-hand with inclusion—ensuring that no community is left behind.

Empowerment in the digital era will achieve maximum impact when:

1. A **digital-based empowerment ecosystem** is established;
2. Communities possess **strong digital literacy**; and
3. Innovation is encouraged and rewarded across sectors.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration for a Sustainable Future

Empowerment is not competition—it is collaboration. The government calls upon all stakeholders—universities, businesses, philanthropies, and global communities—to join forces in strengthening Indonesia's empowerment ecosystem. The 2025 International Conference on Community Development (ICCD) embodies this

collaborative spirit, serving not only as an academic forum but as a movement of collective action for inclusive empowerment.

As President Prabowo's vision articulates, "*Digital innovation will mean nothing without inclusion, and inclusion will mean nothing without empowerment.*" This statement underscores the essence of Indonesia's future development strategy—technological progress must be anchored in human empowerment and social equity.

4. CONCLUSION

Indonesia's shift from charity-based assistance to empowerment-driven participation represents a milestone in the nation's democratic and developmental journey. The establishment of Kemenko PM, reinforced by strong fiscal commitment and digital innovation, demonstrates a coherent and ambitious strategy for inclusive growth. By positioning citizens as active participants rather than passive recipients, Indonesia sets a precedent for sustainable and equitable development in the Global South.

Empowerment, in essence, is not about giving power—it is about unlocking potential. The success of this paradigm depends on continued collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure that every innovation leads to inclusion, and every inclusion leads to genuine empowerment.

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