



Comparative Analysis of Community Empowerment Approaches in NGOs: Case Studies of Lentera Desa in Indonesia and Saemaul Undong in South Korea

Zia Zalzilah Mazfufah¹, Uyu Wahyudin²

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

E-mail: ziazalilahmazfufah@gmail.com, dinpls@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

Community empowerment through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) has emerged as a growing trend in many developing countries. A prominent example is South Korea, which successfully transitioned from a developing to a developed nation, in part due to effective empowerment strategies implemented by NGOs. In practice, NGOs adopt a variety of implementation models that have been proven effective across different national contexts. This study aims to compare community empowerment models implemented by NGOs in Indonesia and South Korea and to explore their implications for future adoption of NGO models in Indonesia. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was employed. Data were collected using snowball sampling and triangulated through interviews, observations, document analysis, and literature review. The findings of this study reveal three key insights: (1) Both Indonesia and South Korea have adopted bottom-up empowerment models; (2) Indonesia has yet to consistently and clearly implement sustainable community empowerment through NGOs; and (3) Infrastructure has not been adequately prioritized in the planning and implementation phases of community empowerment programs by NGOs in Indonesia.

© 2024 UPI Journal and Publication Office

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 23 Sept 2024

First Revised 5 Nov 2024

Accepted 27 Nov 2024

First Available online 4 Dec 2024

Publication Date 30 Dec 2024

Keyword:

Community empowerment, non-governmental organizations, training, community education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a country's strategic efforts to develop and enhance the quality of its human resources, the three domains of education—formal, non-formal, and informal—serve as fundamental pillars that must work in synergy (Elice, Aseleno, & Pahrudin, 2023; Johnson & Majewska, 2022). These educational domains cannot function in isolation; instead, they must be integrated into a holistic national education system. Formal education provides a structured curriculum and academic foundation, non-formal education strengthens vocational skills and community empowerment, while informal education shapes character and social values through family and community environments. The collaboration among these three domains is crucial to producing adaptive, productive, and globally competitive human resources. Furthermore, this integration contributes to equitable regional development, reduces social disparities, and strengthens local capacities in addressing sustainable development challenges (Elice et al., 2023).

In the domain of formal education, every country typically implements compulsory education policies ranging from primary to upper secondary levels, as regulated through national curricula (Alnajjar, 2021). Meanwhile, in the realm of informal education, the state—together with its citizens—works collectively to foster a nurturing educational climate and a positive socio-environmental atmosphere, which serve to shape high-quality human resources (Schugurensky, 2000; Evans et al., 2015; Gower, 2012; Johansson, 2003). Lastly, within the sphere of non-formal education, governments in collaboration with various stakeholders strive to reach individuals who remain underserved by formal and informal education systems, primarily through diverse community empowerment initiatives (Farrow, Arcos, Pitt, & Waller, 2015).

Community empowerment is one of the key strategies for promoting sustainable development, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia (Malta, 2024). One common form of empowerment aimed at improving the quality and equitable distribution of human resources is through the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz, 2022; Islam, 2015). Various NGOs play a vital role in this initiative by adopting approaches that are contextually tailored to the social and cultural conditions of each country (Nugraha, Wilodati, & Asyahidda, 2024).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a strategic role in supporting community development in both developed and developing countries (Abiddin, Ibrahim, & Aziz, 2022; Islam, 2015). Amid the dynamics of globalization, the role of NGOs has become increasingly significant as catalysts for community empowerment that operate independently of, but complementarily to, government policies (Langmann, Bezemer, & Pick, 2024; Panampitiya, 2018).

In this context, studying empowerment models implemented by NGOs across different countries is essential for providing insights into best practices that can be adopted in Indonesia and for identifying key success factors in program implementation. Two notable examples are South Korea and, of course, Indonesia.

South Korea and Indonesia represent two countries with distinct experiences in community empowerment through NGOs. South Korea, having successfully transformed from a developing to a developed nation, adopts empowerment approaches grounded in technology and innovation (Lee, 2005). In contrast, Indonesia, with its cultural diversity and geographical challenges, utilizes more community-based approaches that are rooted in local wisdom and indigenous practices (Nugraha, Wilodati, & Asyahidda, 2024).

By employing this comparative approach, the article aims to contribute to the existing body of literature on community empowerment through NGOs, while also offering practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of empowerment models in both countries.

2. METHODS

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach, utilizing case study and literature review techniques. This method was chosen because it enables the researcher to obtain descriptive and in-depth data in its most authentic form, which is essential for conducting a comparative descriptive analysis. The researcher collected primary data from field observations and interviews, and complemented it with secondary data obtained through a literature review of relevant previous studies (Suharsini, 2010; Moleong, 2016).

Data Analysis

Primary data collection was conducted using the snowball sampling technique and data triangulation, which involved interviews with a key subject—namely, the founder of Lentera Desa—direct observation of the Lentera Desa organization, document analysis, and a literature review to obtain supporting data from previous studies or other highly credible sources. The data analysis technique employed in this study followed four key steps: (1) Data Collection; (2) Data Reduction; (3) Data Display, and; (4) Data Verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the first interview conducted with the founder of Lentera Desa, Marita Nur Sekti, the researcher categorized the initial findings into five key indicators: (1) Institutional profile, (2) Types of programs, (3) Legal foundation of operations, (4) Empowerment model adopted by the organization, and (5) Strengths and weaknesses of the empowerment model. These indicators were derived from interviews, direct observation, and document analysis, supported by several relevant materials provided directly by the founder.

Table 1.
Distribution of Average Infant Body Temperature Monitoring on Days 1 to 3 In the Working Area of the Loji Community Health Center, Karawang Regency

		2020 year	
No.	Characteristics	n(35)	%
1	Baby		
	Gender		
	Man	19	54,3
	Woman	16	45,7
		35	100.0
	Birth weight (grams)		
	2500-3000	13	37,1
	3100-4000	22	62,9
		35	100.00

Based on the table Table 1. Frequency distribution based on the characteristics of the respondents found that the most sex was male by 54.3 percent (19 respondents), the highest birth weight of newborns was between 3100-4000 grams as much as 62.9 percent (22 respondent).

The empowerment models implemented by Lentera Desa and Saemaul Undong, when analyzed through the lens of the empowerment cycle framework, reflect the core components proposed by Sudjana (2001) and Sugihartino (2007): (1) Raw Input, (2) Process, (3) Output, and (4) Impact. In practice, two additional supporting elements were identified—namely, environmental input and infrastructural input. Furthermore, as emphasized by Miranda et al. (2021) and Akimov et al. (2023), any empowerment or learning activity should begin with an assessment phase, which is a fundamental part of program planning.

An analysis of these four core components across both Lentera Desa and Saemaul Undong shows key similarities. Both empowerment models begin with needs assessments and target identification, serving as the "raw input" stage and aligning with the assessment component that marks the initial phase of empowerment. This is followed by the implementation process, leading to outputs—namely, trained participants—who are expected to generate sustainable, long-term impacts within their communities.

Moreover, based on the researcher's analysis, both models employ a bottom-up approach. This is evident in the inclusion of needs assessment activities in both cases, signaling a positive orientation in the implementation of community empowerment. Bottom-up approaches in empowerment design help program facilitators better understand community needs and also foster greater community participation (Witenstein & Iyegar, 2021; Hecht et al., 2022). Unlike top-down models, bottom-up empowerment approaches tend to yield different outcomes, often leading to higher engagement and more relevant solutions that address the root causes of local issues (Tang et al., 2018; Daskalakis, Gkalelis, & Mezaris, 2023; Sanchez Vazquez, Mifsud, & Callaghan, 2023). A study by Jiang et al. (2023) further supports this, showing that bottom-up community empowerment models can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of training programs by up to 50%, thereby enhancing the achievement of empowerment goals.

The final and most critical component of any empowerment model is the output and the long-term impact it generates for its target beneficiaries. Based on the previously discussed component model, a significant distinction emerges between Lentera Desa and Saemaul Undong. In the Lentera Desa model, the development of post-program sustainability is not yet as evident or impactful compared to the model used by Saemaul Undong. The Saemaul Undong framework exhibits a self-reinforcing cycle that implies a continuous and sustainable development loop, which is not yet visible in the Lentera Desa model. This insight can serve as a valuable recommendation for NGOs operating in Indonesia.

Sustainability as the final output of empowerment programs is crucial, as it represents a cumulative continuum from the micro to the macro level, influencing a nation's development through identifiable social impacts that serve as universal principles of empowerment (Kim & Shin, 2023; Vellani & Nanjee, 2023). Moreover, sustainable empowerment programs enable communities—particularly in rural areas—to improve their socio-economic conditions, which can then be translated into policies or government

regulations as a form of institutional reflection (Khirivskyi et al., 2020; Chidzungu & Wafer, 2023; Yusuf, Adekunmi, & Ayanda, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2020). Collaboration between empowerment programs and social sustainability has also been shown to enhance human capital development within communities, as sustained programs increase public participation and commitment within empowerment networks (Ihlebaek, Ånestad, & Nordbø, 2024; Marzo et al., 2023; Toniolo, Pieretto, & Camana, 2023).

In the context of tourism-based empowerment, sustainable development initiatives can significantly enhance community well-being by fostering social resilience and providing a comprehensive framework within society as a positive driving force (Hassan, Staszewska, & Bhartiya, 2024; Li, Kim, & Lee, 2021; Kangkhao, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis presented, the researcher concludes that both models—Lentera Desa and Saemaul Undong—demonstrate key elements of community empowerment, namely needs assessment, program implementation, and evaluation. However, Lentera Desa can draw valuable lessons from Saemaul Undong in terms of developing sustainable impact and adopting a cyclical model framework that enables empowerment processes to continue and evolve dynamically in response to future needs. This is particularly important as sustainable empowerment is considered vital for enhancing community participation and improving overall well-being.

From this study, the researcher recommends that future empowerment programs in Indonesia consider adopting a sustainability-oriented approach, as exemplified by Saemaul Undong, while maintaining sensitivity to local values and community needs. Additionally, infrastructure development should be prioritized during the planning phase to ensure that empowerment initiatives can be implemented without access barriers or limitations related to facilities and resources.

5. REFERENCES

- Abiddin, N. Z., Ibrahim, I., & Abdul Aziz, S. A. (2022). The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for community development: way forward. *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences*, 25(2), 1-10. ISSN: 1532-5806.
- Akimov, N., et.al. (2023). Component of Education 4.0 in Open Innovation Competence Framework: Systematic Review. *Jurnal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 9 (2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2023.100037>.
- Alnajjar, E. A. M. (2021). The Impact of a Proposed Science Informal Curriculum on Students' Achievement and Attitudes During the Covid-19. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 13(2), 882–896. <https://doi.org/10.9756/INT-JECSE/V13I2.211131> .
- Arikunto, S. (2010). *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu pendekatan Praktek*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Chidzungu, T., Wafer, A. (2024). Can Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) be a sustainable strategy to address the skills development gap and community sustainability challenges

- in Just Energy Transition (JET) policy decision-making? Evidence from the South African mining communities of Kriel and Carolina in Mpumalanga. *South African Geographical Journal*, 106 (1). 89-108. DOI: 10.1080/03736245.2023.2214537.
- Daskalakis, D., Gkalelis, N., Mezaris, V. (2023). Masked Feature Modelling for the Unsupervised Pre-training of a Graph Attention Network Block for Bottom-up Video Event Recognition. *IEEE International Symposium on Multimedia (ISM)*, Laguna Hills; United States; 11-13 December 2023, 247-250. DOI: 10.1109/ISM59092.2023.00047.
- Elice, D., Maselena, A., Pahrudin, A. (2023). Formal, Informal and Non Formal Education Systems. *Journal of Learning and Educational Policy*, 4 (41). 30-35. DOI: [10.55529/jlep.41.30.35](https://doi.org/10.55529/jlep.41.30.35).
- Evans, S. E., Beauchamp, G., & John, V. (2015). Learners' experience and perceptions of informal learning in Key Stage 3 music: A collective case study, exploring the implementation of Musical Futures in three secondary schools in Wales. *Music Education Research*, 17(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2014.950212>.
- Farrow, R., de los Arcos, B., Pitt, R., & Weller, M. (2015). Who are the open learners? A Comparative study profiling non-formal users of open educational resources. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-learning*, 18(2), 49-73. DOI: 10.1515/eurodl-2015-0013.
- Gower, A. (2012). Integrating informal learning approaches into the formal learning environment of mainstream secondary schools in England. *British Journal of Music Education*, 29(1), 13–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051711000490>.
- Hassan, V., Staszewska, A., Bhartiya, S. (2024). *Building Community Resiliency and Sustainability with Tourism Development*. IGI Global.
- Hecht, R.M., Liu, K., Garnett, N., Telpaz, A., Tsimhoni, O. (2022). From Bottom-Up, to Top-Down: Characterization of Training Process in Gaze Modeling. *47th IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing, (ICASSP)*, Singapore; 23- 27 May 2022, 4843-4847. DOI: 10.1109/ICASSP43922.2022.9747548.
- Hopkins, E., Tan, F.T.C., Chan, C.M.L., Leong, C., Wright, A. (2020). Digital platform-enabled community development: A case study of a private-public partnership sustainability initiative. *53rd Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, HICSS 2020; Maui; United States; 7-10 January 2020*. ISBN: 978-099813313-3.
- Ihlebaek, C., Ånestad, R., Nordbø, E.C.A. (2024). Bridging Discourses on Health Promotion and Social Sustainability Towards Healthy Community Development. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*. DOI: 10.1177/14034948241290282.
- Islam, M., R. (2015). Non-governmental organizations and community development in Bangladesh. *International Social Work*, 60 (2). DOI: 10.1177/002087281557413.
- Jiang, C., et.al. (2023). BUS: Efficient and Effective Vision-language Pre-training with Bottom-Up Patch Summarization. *IEEE/CVF International Conference on Computer Vision (ICCV)* ; Paris; France; 2- 6 October 2023, 2888-2898. DOI: 10.1109/ICCV51070.2023.00271.
- Johansson, I. (2003). Transition from School to After-school Day-care: Interplay Between Formal and Informal Learning Processes. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 11(1), 109–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2003.12016709>.

- Johnson, M., & Majewska, D. (2022). *Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal Learning: What are They and How Can We Research Them?*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press & Assessment.
- Kangkhaio, S. (2020). Community development and propulsion mechanism with the sustainability and co-creation: Sawankhalok master plan for tourism activities in world heritage areas of historical districts Sukhothai–Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 7 (1). DOI: 10.1080/23311983.2020.1832307.
- Khirivskiy, R., Cherevko, H., Yatsiv, I., Pasichnyk, T., Petryshyn, L., Kucher, L. (2020). Assessment and Analysis of Sustainability of The Socio-Economic Development of Amalgamated Territorial Communities of The Region. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 9 (2). 569-278. DOI: 10.14207/ejsd.2020.v9n2p569.
- Kim, J., Shin, Y.A. (2021). Achieving Sustainability at The Individual and Community Levels Through Development Assistance. *International Review of Public Administration*, 28 (4), 425-279. DOI: 10.1080/12294659.2023.2265120.
- Langmann, S., Bezemer, P., J., Pick, D. (2024). Local community capacity building: exploring non-governmental organizations approaches in Tamil Nadu. *Community Development Journal*, 59 (3). 438-456. DOI: [10.1093/cdi/bsad009](https://doi.org/10.1093/cdi/bsad009).
- Lee, S., J. (2005). Democracy and Polarization in Korean Society. *Asian Perspective*, 29 (3). 99-125. Retrieved from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42704516>.
- Li, X., Kim, J.S., Lee, T.J. (2021). Collaboration for community-based cultural sustainability in island tourism development: A case in Korea. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13 (13). DOI: 10.3390/su13137306.
- Malta. (2024). Community Development: Concepts and Implementation in Sustainable Development. *INFLUENCE: International Journal of Science Review*, 6 (1). Retrieved from: <https://influence-journal.com/index.php/influence/index>.
- Marzo, R.R., Chen, H.W.J., Anuar, H., Abdul Wahab, M.K., Ibrahim, M.H., Ariffin, I.A., Ahmad, A.I., Kawuki, J., Aljuaid, M. (2023). Effect of community participation on sustainable development: an assessment of sustainability domains in Malaysia. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 11 (2023). DOI: 10.3389/fenvs.2023.1268036.
- Miranda, J., et.al. (2021). The Core Components of Education 4.0 in Higher Education: Three Case Studies in Engineering Education. *Computer and Electrical Engineering*, 93. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compeleceng.2021.107278>.
- Moleong, L., J. (2016). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Jakarta: Rosdakarya.
- Nugraha, S., A., Wilodati, Asyahidda, F., N. (2024). The Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Poverty Resolution in Bandung City with a Sustainable Development Goals Approach: NGO Case Study Bantu Teman Id. *International Journal of Science and Society (IJSOC)*, 6 (2). DOI: [10.54783/ijsoc.v6i2.1139](https://doi.org/10.54783/ijsoc.v6i2.1139).
- Panampitiya W., M., G., N. (2018). Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Community Development Process – With Special Reference to the Empowerment of Livelihood Activities in Rural Areas in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 6 (3). 819-824. ISSN: 2348-3164.

- S., D. Sudjana. (2001). *Pendidikan Luar Sekolah, Wawasan, Sejarah Perkembangan, Falsafah & Teori Pendukung, Serta Asas*, Bandung: Falah Production.
- Sánchez-Vázquez, A., Mifsud, A., Callaghan, C. (2023). Training and Skills Development for the Circular Economy in the Current Geopolitical Context: A Bottom-Up Design Focused on Community Need and Social Enterprise. *9th International Conference on Sustainable Design and Manufacturing (SDM)*, Split; Croatia; 14-16 September 2022, 351-360. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-19-9205-6_34.
- Schugurensky, D. (2000). The Forms of Informal Learning: Towards a Conceptualization of the Field. *WALL Working Paper*, 19. 9. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.
- Sugihartono, et.al. (2007). *Psikologi Pendidikan*. Yogyakarta: UNY Pers.
- Tang, Q., Lei, Y., Laitochova, J., Maresova, H. (2018). A Bottom-Up ICT Training Approach for Teachers. *ACM International of Distance Education and Learning (ICDEL)*; Beijing; China; 26 May-28 May 2018, 150-156. DOI: 10.1145/3231848.3231867.
- Toniolo, S., Pieretto, C., Camana, D. (2023) . Improving sustainability in communities: Linking the local scale to the concept of sustainable development. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 101 (2023). DOI: [10.1016/j.eiar.2023.107126](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2023.107126).
- Vellani, F., Nanjee, N. (2023). Contextualized Sustainable Development: How Global University Systems Educate Sustainability Leaders and Impact Local Communities in Central Asia and East Africa. *World Sustainability Series*, 345-359. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-22856-8_20.
- Witenstein, M.A., & Iyegar, R. (2021). A Bottom-up Approach to Improve Women's Access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training in India: Examining a Non-formal Education Upskilling Programme. *International Review of Education*, 67 (4), 475-484. DOI: 10.1007/s11159-021-09890-1.
- Yusuf, O.J., Adekunmi, A.O., Ayanda, I.F. (2020). Community participation and sustainability of the community and social development projects in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 1 (2020). 138-147. DOI: 10.4314/jae.v24i1.14.