

Strategic governance and adaptive community empowerment for human capital development

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ABSTRACT

Community empowerment strategies are often conceptualized as linear processes from planning to evaluation, despite evidence that rural governance operates under complex structural constraints. This study analyzes how the Garut Regency Government's strategy to improve human resource quality operates in Cisewu District and assesses its effectiveness within a structurally limited rural context. A qualitative case study design was employed, drawing on document analysis, in-depth interviews, and field observation. The findings demonstrate that the strategy functions not as a linear cycle but as an interdependent adaptive system linking strategic goals, environmental constraints, policy direction, local implementation capacity, and learning mechanisms. Clearly articulated planning indicators do not automatically translate into substantive impact, as implementation is mediated by geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations, uneven village capacity, and leadership variation. Program effectiveness varies across villages, while output-oriented monitoring constrains outcome-based learning and strategic recalibration. This study advances public strategy scholarship by extending Mulgan's framework and conceptualizing rural empowerment strategy as an adaptive governance loop rather than a sequential planning model. Practically, it highlights the need for outcome-based evaluation, differentiated village assistance, and institutionalized feedback mechanisms to enhance sustainable human resource development.

Keywords:

strategy; adaptive governance; capital development; empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Persistent regional inequality remains a structural challenge in Indonesia's national development trajectory. Although macro-level indicators show improvement, disparities between urban and rural areas continue to manifest in unequal access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, economic opportunities, and institutional capacity (Mahri et al.,

2021). In rural regions, limited administrative resources and weak governance capacity often constrain the effective delivery of public services (Kiss et al., 2022). These conditions directly affect the formation of human capital, which remains a critical determinant of sustainable development. Community empowerment has been promoted as a strategic approach to address these structural disparities. Beyond infrastructure provision, empowerment emphasizes strengthening human resource capacity, institutional resilience, and local economic participation (Siregar et al., 2025). Empirical evidence demonstrates that village funds, BUMDes development, participatory governance, and collaborative innovation can stimulate rural economic activity and resilience (Guha & Chakrabarti, 2019; Harinurdin et al., 2025; Hilmawan et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives varies significantly across regions, raising questions about how local governments design and align their strategies.

National data from the Village Development Index (IDM) illustrate this paradox. Although the number of independent villages increased substantially between 2019 and 2024, a large proportion of villages remain classified as “developing,” indicating incomplete structural transformation (Kementerian Desa PDTT, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). Improvements in administrative status do not necessarily correspond with substantive improvements in human resource quality, employment diversification, or institutional capacity. This discrepancy is evident in Cisewu District, Garut Regency, West Java, even though this area is located in the southwest of Garut Regency, known for its fertile mountainous region dominated by agriculture, which has the potential to improve human resource quality. However, villages in Cisewu District continue to face uneven infrastructure development, as evidenced by the data below.

Tabel 1. Analysis of the social, economic, and environmental resilience index of villages in Cisewu District in 2024

No	Village Name	IKS	Category	IKE	Category	IKL	Category	IDM Value	Resilience Diagnosis
1	Cisewu	0,89	Strong	0,85	Strong	0,73	Good	0,824	Balanced
2	Girimukti	0,83	Good	0,56	Rendah	0,73	Good	0,711	Weak Economy
3	Pamalayan	0,89	Strong	0,78	Good	0,86	Strong	0,847	Balanced
4	Cikarang	0,80	Good	0,73	Good	0,6	Low	0,713	Weak Environment
5	Sukajaya	0,86	Strong	0,73	Good	0,6	Low	0,732	Weak environment
6	Nyalindung	0,79	Average	0,61	Average	0,8	Good	0,737	Weak Economy
7	Karangsewu	0,75	Average	0,63	Average	0,8	Good	0,729	Weak social and economic
8	Mekarsewu	0,81	Good	0,73	Good	0,86	Strong	0,803	Superior environment
9	Panggalih	0,86	Strong	0,68	Average	0,6	Low	0,715	Weak Environment & Economy

Source: the results of the researcher's analysis in 2024 based on IDM Data <https://idm.kemendesa.go.id/rekomendasi>

Based on the 2024 Village Development Index (IDM) data, the villages in Cisewu Subdistrict, Garut Regency, are generally classified as *Developed Villages*, with relatively stable average scores (Kementerian Desa PDTT, 2024). The Social Resilience Index (Indeks Ketahanan Sosial/IKS) shows high values across most villages, indicating that access to basic services, social cohesion, and community participation are relatively well established. This reflects a fairly strong social foundation to support local development.

However, considerable variation in the Economic Resilience Index (Indeks Ketahanan Ekonomi/IKE) and the Environmental Resilience Index (Indeks Ketahanan Lingkungan/IKL) reveals structural disparities among villages. Lower IKE scores in several villages suggest that the local economic structure remains dominated by traditional agriculture with limited productivity, minimal business diversification, and possible constraints in access to capital and digital connectivity. This condition contributes to the slow transformation of the rural economy toward higher value-added activities and innovation-driven growth (DPMD Kabupaten Garut, 2019; Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Garut, 2019). Meanwhile,

differences in IKL scores indicate uneven distribution of basic infrastructure, such as sanitation, environmental management systems, and sustainability-supporting facilities (Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Garut, 2019). These disparities may also reflect limitations in village institutional capacity, particularly in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies. These conditions suggest that empowerment initiatives may exist programmatically but lack strategic coherence and adaptive alignment with local socio-economic realities.

Existing studies on rural empowerment in Indonesia have made important contributions, yet they predominantly operate within segmented analytical frames. Research on institutional performance (Bi'Arfin et al., 2023; Haridotama et al., 2023; Novita et al., 2024; Sugiantiningsih, 2023; Yuliana, 2019) evaluates governance effectiveness and organizational management, but tends to treat institutions as technical implementers rather than as strategic actors shaping long-term development trajectories. Meanwhile, sector-based analyses—covering ecotourism (Suhendri et al., 2023), creative economy initiatives (Purti et al., 2024; Rafika et al., 2023), and UMKM policy implementation (Kartani et al., 2024; Radiansyah et al., 2025)—demonstrate the impact of targeted economic interventions, yet confine their assessment to specific domains without examining cross-sectoral strategic alignment. Similarly, studies on training-based human resource development (Riza et al., 2023) emphasize skill enhancement programs but conceptualize empowerment primarily as a capacity-building activity rather than as a governance process embedded within broader structural constraints.

Taken together, these strands share a common limitation: they evaluate programs, sectors, or institutions in isolation while largely overlooking how local governments formulate strategic objectives, interpret contextual challenges, integrate policy directions, coordinate implementation mechanisms, and institutionalize adaptive learning. As a result, empowerment is frequently portrayed as a collection of discrete initiatives rather than as a coherent strategic process. This omission is particularly consequential in structurally constrained rural contexts—where uneven infrastructure, limited economic diversification, and institutional capacity gaps intersect—because in such settings, the effectiveness of empowerment efforts depends not merely on program presence but also on strategic direction and coherence.

Without a clear strategic direction, village development can stagnate, even if administrative indicators show improvement. Therefore, a well-defined strategy is crucial. In this context, a strategy refers to a systematically developed long-term plan to achieve specific goals, taking into account available resources and the surrounding environment, for the public good (Djua & Purwatiningsih, 2022; Suci, 2015; Yunus, 2016). This study addresses that gap by conceptualizing community empowerment as a strategic governance process rather than merely a set of development programs (Mustanir et al., 2021). Drawing on Mulgan's (2009; Suwarsono, 2016) strategic framework—comprising purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning—this research examines how the local government of Garut Regency formulates strategic objectives, interprets environmental constraints, operationalizes empowerment policies, and develops adaptive learning mechanisms in Cisewu Subdistrict.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of strategic governance theory with empirical analysis of rural empowerment at the subdistrict level. Unlike previous studies that focus on sectoral programs or institutional performance in isolation, this research provides a systematic analysis of strategic alignment across policy objectives, contextual realities, implementation practices, and adaptive learning mechanisms. By shifting the analytical focus from program evaluation to governance coherence, it demonstrates that

improvements in human resource quality depend on the degree of strategic integration rather than on the mere existence of empowerment initiatives.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How does the local government strategically design, align, and adapt community empowerment policies to improve human resource quality in a structurally constrained rural context?

By offering an integrated strategic analysis grounded in empirical evidence from Cisewu Subdistrict, this research contributes theoretically by operationalizing Mulgan's strategic framework within the field of rural governance, and practically by providing evidence-based insights for strengthening strategic coherence in village development policies.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative case study design to analyze how local government strategies are formulated, aligned, and implemented to improve the quality of human resources through rural community empowerment. A qualitative case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of governance processes within a limited institutional and territorial context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Flick et al., 2018; K. Yin, 2018). This research focuses on understanding how strategic governance operates in practice within a specific administrative environment. The design is policy-oriented, examining the translation of strategic objectives into empowerment programs and the interaction between policy direction and contextual constraints.

This research was conducted in Cisewu District, Garut Regency, West Java. Cisewu comprises nine villages administratively classified as advanced or independent villages according to the Village Development Index. However, regional development reports indicate persistent structural challenges, including uneven road infrastructure, limited telecommunications coverage, reliance on traditional agricultural production with low value-added processing, and limited access to health and education services (DPMD Kabupaten Garut, 2019; Pemerintah Cisewu, 2019). Cisewu was purposefully selected for three reasons. First, this area represents a paradox between its relatively positive administrative classification and persistent socio-economic limitations. Second, it is categorized as a structurally disadvantaged rural area in Garut Regency. Third, various empowerment initiatives have been implemented in the area, making it analytically relevant for examining the coherence of local strategic governance.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their formal involvement in the planning, implementation, or supervision of empowerment programs (Flick et al., 2018; K. Yin, 2018). Several informants participated in this study, consisting of officials from the Garut Regency Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) and Regional Development Planning Agency (DPMD), Cisewu District officials, village heads or members of village officials, and community leaders directly involved in empowerment activities. Selection criteria included formal responsibility in strategic planning or program implementation, a minimum of two years of involvement in empowerment-related activities, and a willingness to provide detailed information. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by recurring patterns across interviews and the absence of substantial new categories.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The interview guide was designed to align with the strategic governance dimensions examined in this study, allowing for flexibility while maintaining an analytical focus (Flick, 2018; K. Yin, 2018). Documentary sources included regional development

planning documents, village reports, and empowerment program records, which were used to triangulate the interview data.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions with verification (Emzir, 2021; Flick, 2014). Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and subjected to systematic coding. In the first stage, open coding was conducted to identify statements related to strategic objectives, contextual constraints, policy directions, implementation mechanisms, and evaluation practices. In the second stage, codes were grouped into analytical categories corresponding to the strategic governance dimensions. These categories were then synthesized to identify patterns of strategic alignment, gaps, and institutional constraints that influence human resource development outcomes. Triangulation through interviews, documents, and observations was conducted to increase credibility and reduce bias. Interpretive analysis was then conducted to explain how strategic coherence—or its lack thereof—shaped the effectiveness of empowerment initiatives in Cisewu District.

This research adhered to standard ethical procedures. Prior to data collection, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all informants. To ensure confidentiality, participant identities were anonymized and coded in the transcripts and analysis. Formal research permission was obtained from the Garut Regency Government and relevant district authorities before fieldwork began.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings based on document analysis, in-depth interviews, and field observations conducted in Cisewu District, Garut Regency. The findings are organized according to five dimensions of public strategy—purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning—to illustrate the interconnections between planning, contextual conditions, implementation, and policy evaluation in improving human resource (HR) quality.

Strategic Purpose: Articulation of Strategic Objectives

An analysis of the Garut Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2019–2024 and the Strategic Plan (RENSTRA) of the Community and Village Empowerment Agency (DPMD) indicates that human resource development is formulated through measurable indicators, including the Education Index, Health Index, poverty rate, and social participation indicators.

Table 2. Realistic target goals of Garut Regency 2019-2024

Objectives in the 2019-2024 Garut Regency RPJMD	Objectives in the DPMD Strategic Plan 2019-2024
a) Increased understanding of regional religious and cultural values;	a) Increasing the economic, environmental and social independence of the community;
b) Increased community life expectancy;	
c) Increased community education levels;	
d) Decrease in poverty and unemployment;	
e) Improved population control.	

Source: Researcher's Process, 2025.

These documents explicitly demonstrate alignment between the regional development vision and operational indicators, particularly in relation to community empowerment through strengthening village economic capacity and expanding access to basic services. Interviews with officials from the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA) and

DPMD confirm that these indicators serve as formal references in designing empowerment programs. Thus, at the planning level, strategic objectives are clearly defined and administratively structured around outcome orientation.

However, at the village level, informants reported that not all proposals collected through the Musrenbang (development planning forum) process are translated into priority programs due to budget constraints and alignment with regency-level priorities. This indicates that although objectives are systematically and formally formulated, policy selection remains hierarchical and selective. Consequently, while goal clarity exists at the document level, subsequent prioritization processes generate variation in how these goals are operationalized. This condition provides an entry point for understanding how institutional and structural contexts shape strategy realization.

Strategic Environment: Institutional and Structural Context

The articulated strategic objectives are implemented within specific institutional and structural contexts. The data reveal two layers of contextual influence on empowerment strategy. Internally, coordination among local government agencies (OPD) is relatively structured through routine planning forums and formal administrative mechanisms. However, village-level administrative capacity remains limited, particularly in digital reporting, program management, and data-based evaluation. These constraints affect villages' ability to operationalize established strategic priorities.

Externally, limited road infrastructure, difficult geographical terrain, and restricted telecommunications networks (only seven BTS towers with weak signal coverage) constrain program distribution and access to public services. The village economic structure, still dominated by low value-added primary agriculture, further limits the impact of productive economic programs.

For example, we can see in several villages in Cisewu District, such as Girimukti Village, that the road conditions are still poor and require serious improvements to enable residents to move around and increase their productivity. In fact, this road access is a connecting access to the southern region of Garut which is connected to the connecting route between sub-districts and an alternative route to the south coast, which is very crucial for economic mobility and accessibility of tourism and social potential of the community, considering that this access is a supporting route to the tourism potential of the south coast such as Ranca Buaya Beach and Puncak Guha.



Figure 1. Condition of the Girimukti village road in Cisewu District
Source: Researcher documentation, 2025

A similar situation also exists in Cikarang Village. The substandard condition of the village road makes it ineffective for travel, especially for potential mobility. This road,

however, is a vital strategic route connecting the provincial access from Pamalayan Village to the national road network. This means that this route is crucial for community mobility, agricultural product distribution, and economic strengthening in South Garut.



Figure 2. Condition of the Cikarang village road in Cisewu District
Source: Researcher documentation, 2025

Similarly, the village road in Pamalayan Village, strategically located as it connects the Cisewu area (provincial route) to the national road network, still faces challenges due to inadequate accessibility. Improving this road's accessibility is crucial for facilitating community mobility and boosting economic activity in South Garut.



Figure 3. Condition of the Pamalayan village road in Cisewu District
Source: Researcher documentation, 2025

Thus, Cisewu's strategic environment reflects a combination of institutional and structural constraints that define the operational boundaries of policy implementation. Empowerment strategy operates within a complex structural context that is not fully controllable by the local government. This environment subsequently influences how policy direction is formulated and coordinated.

Policy Direction and Coordination Mechanisms

Within the dimension of direction, the Musrenbang mechanism functions as a formal participatory channel for articulating policy direction. Planning processes proceed hierarchically from neighborhood (RT/RW) to district and regency levels.

This mechanism enables the aggregation of community aspirations into formal planning documents. However, interviews indicate that proposals submitted through these forums undergo filtering at sub-district and regency levels. This selectivity is shaped by fiscal constraints, alignment with regional priorities, and technical feasibility considerations.



Figure 4. 2019-2024 regency musrenbang activity forum and 2025 Village Musdes

Source: Processed results of researchers sourced from: <https://bappeda.jabarprov.go.id/> and documentation processed by researchers 2025

Technical support instruments—such as training and facilitation—are provided to translate policy direction into concrete action. Nevertheless, the intensity and continuity of such support vary across villages. Some villages receive sustained assistance, while others experience interruptions or limited technical backing. Therefore, although policy direction is procedurally structured, implementation support demonstrates uneven intensity. This variation is reflected in differing patterns of program implementation at the village level.

Strategic Action: Patterns of Program Implementation

Empowerment programs in Cisewu include strengthening Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) based on local commodities such as coffee and palm sugar, developing village tourism initiatives, and promoting household-based food security programs.

Observations and interviews reveal significant variation in implementation across villages. Villages with proactive leadership and stronger organizational capacity demonstrate program continuity, product innovation, and systematic marketing efforts. In contrast, villages with limited managerial capacity and inconsistent technical support tend to implement programs administratively without sustained development.

These patterns indicate that strategic action is shaped not only by policy design but also by local capacity and coordination support. In other words, there is a clear interconnection between environmental constraints, policy direction, and implementation effectiveness. These implementation dynamics subsequently influence how monitoring and learning processes unfold.

Strategic Learning: Monitoring and Policy Learning

Monitoring and learning processes are conducted through annual reporting and periodic five-year evaluations. Evaluation documents indicate that performance indicators remain predominantly output-oriented, such as the number of training sessions conducted or facilities provided.

Interviews suggest that long-term impact measurement—such as changes in economic behavior or managerial capacity improvement—has not been fully integrated into the evaluation system. Evaluation practices emphasize administrative compliance rather than comprehensive strategic effectiveness reflection. Although Garut Regency's Human Development Index (HDI) shows improvement over the past decade, this study finds no direct causal evidence linking macro-level indicator changes to specific empowerment programs in Cisewu.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the five strategic dimensions—purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning—are interconnected within a single policy cycle. Goal clarity at the document level interacts with structural constraints, shapes coordination mechanisms, produces variation in implementation, and is ultimately reflected in monitoring practices that remain administratively oriented.

The findings indicate that community empowerment strategy for improving human resource quality in Cisewu District cannot be understood as a linear progression from goal formulation to implementation and evaluation. Instead, the five strategic dimensions — *purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning*— operate in an interdependent pattern, forming a dynamic adaptive cycle.

At the normative level, strategic objectives are clearly articulated through measurable indicators in regional planning documents. However, these goals do not function autonomously. They are continuously negotiated by structural conditions and institutional capacity. Contemporary public strategy literature emphasizes that policy objectives are context-embedded and not purely products of technocratic rationality (Bryson et al., 2010, 2018; George & Bryson, 2025). In Cisewu, infrastructure limitations, geographic constraints, and uneven administrative capacity directly shape the operational feasibility of formally articulated objectives. Purpose and environment therefore exist in a dialectical relationship: goals guide action, but context determines realizability.

This relationship is mediated through the dimension of direction. The Musrenbang mechanism demonstrates that policy direction is not merely a vertical transmission of regency priorities but a negotiation arena between community aspirations and fiscal or administrative constraints. Governance studies highlight that participatory systems frequently generate selective prioritization processes (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Torfing et al., 2019; Torfing & Sørensen, 2019). The Cisewu case confirms this dynamic: not all village proposals are translated into programs due to filtering based on performance indicators, budget limitations, and political considerations. Direction thus actively reshapes priorities rather than mechanically implementing purpose.

Interdependence becomes increasingly apparent at the action stage. Variations in implementation across villages indicate that program effectiveness is determined not only by policy design or coordination direction, but also by local capacity and village leadership. Villages with stronger adaptive leadership and organizational capacity are able to develop innovations and sustain poverty programs. Conversely, villages with managerial limitations tend to implement programs administratively without substantive transformation. Recent policy implementation literature emphasizes that local capacity and adaptive leadership are critical factors in the success of community-based empowerment (Olsson et al., 2014; Poister et al., 2010). Thus, actions are not simply the end result of directives but also a source of feedback that influences the legitimacy of objectives and trust in coordination mechanisms.

The learning dimension emerges as the pivotal integrative mechanism within this interdependent cycle. Monitoring practices remain output-focused, limiting outcome-based feedback and adaptive recalibration. Adaptive governance literature emphasizes reflective learning as essential for sustainable public strategy (Duit & Galaz, 2008; Dunlop & Radaeli, 2018). Without substantive learning mechanisms, the linkage between action and purpose weakens, and strategy risks becoming procedurally compliant rather than transformative.

Thus, the five strategic dimensions in the Cisewu case do not form a linear chain, but rather an adaptive governance loop. Goals appear to be influenced by the environment; policy direction mediates the two; actions appear to be influenced by local capacity; and learning should be a corrective mechanism that reconnects actions to goals. However, when

learning is not fully strategic, the cycle becomes less reflective and tends toward administrative ones.

These findings reinforce the view in the public strategy literature that local government strategy is dynamic, contextual, and dependent on institutional capacity (Bryson et al., 2018; George & Bryson, 2025). In the context of a rural area with structural constraints like Cisewu, empowerment strategies are more like an adaptive process that is continually negotiated rather than a rational plan that progresses straight from planning to results.

Theoretically, this research demonstrates that the effectiveness of community empowerment depends not only on the clarity of objective indicators but also on the simultaneous integration of all five strategic dimensions. When one dimension—particularly learning—does not function optimally, the overall cohesion of the strategy is weakened. Therefore, a sustainable empowerment strategy requires strengthening reflective learning mechanisms so that the relationships between the dimensions are not merely procedural but truly adaptive and transformative.

This study advances public strategy scholarship by demonstrating that the five strategic dimensions—purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning—function as an interdependent system rather than a linear planning sequence. Drawing on the framework of Geoff Mulgan, the findings show that strategic purpose in decentralized rural contexts is context-embedded and continually shaped by structural constraints and institutional capacity.

The study bridges participatory governance and public strategy by conceptualizing participatory planning as an adaptive mediating arena, where priorities are negotiated under fiscal and administrative limitations. It further positions local capacity and reflexive learning as integrative variables that determine whether implementation generates meaningful strategic feedback. Without outcome-oriented learning, strategy risks devolving into procedural compliance. Conceptually, the research proposes that rural community empowerment strategies are better understood as an adaptive governance loop rather than a linear strategic cycle. Consistent with the theoretical finding that community empowerment operates as an adaptive governance loop, policy reform in Garut Regency requires a systemic rather than sectoral approach. Strengthening empowerment strategies cannot rely on isolated improvements in performance indicators or budget expansion alone; it demands simultaneous alignment of purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning.

First, strategic goals should incorporate intermediate, capacity-based indicators tailored to rural contexts. Second, investment in basic infrastructure and village administrative capacity is essential to enable implementation. Third, participatory planning mechanisms such as Musrenbang should adopt transparent, impact-oriented prioritization criteria to enhance strategic coherence. Fourth, village assistance models should be differentiated according to organizational capacity levels. Finally, monitoring systems must shift from output reporting to outcome-based and reflexive evaluation. By reinforcing the interdependence among strategic dimensions, local government can move beyond procedural compliance toward a more adaptive and sustainable model of rural governance and human resource development.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes how the Garut Regency Government's community empowerment strategy is implemented in Cisewu District and evaluates its level of effectiveness through Mulgan's five strategic dimensions: purpose, environment, direction, action, and learning. The findings indicate that the strategy does not operate as a linear policy cycle but rather as

an interdependent adaptive governance system in which each dimension mutually shapes and constrains the others.

Although strategic objectives are clearly formulated through measurable indicators in regional planning documents, their realization is strongly mediated by structural context. Geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations, weak digital connectivity, and uneven village administrative capacity significantly influence implementation outcomes. Thus, this study affirms that in structurally constrained rural contexts, goal clarity is a necessary but insufficient condition for effectiveness. Strategy does not function as technocratic execution but as context-embedded adaptation.

Empirically, the strategy demonstrates procedural coherence but uneven substantive impact. Participatory mechanisms such as Musrenbang provide legitimacy and formal coordination channels; however, fiscal constraints and selective prioritization limit the translation of community aspirations into sustainable programs. Variation in implementation across villages is strongly influenced by organizational capacity and the quality of local leadership. Villages with adaptive leadership and strong managerial capacity are able to transform programs into sustained economic activities, whereas villages with weaker capacity tend to implement programs administratively without long-term transformation. Meanwhile, output-oriented monitoring systems weaken outcome-based feedback and constrain strategic learning.

Theoretically, this study offers three main contributions. First, it extends Mulgan's framework by demonstrating that the five strategic dimensions are mutually constitutive rather than sequential. Second, it conceptualizes rural empowerment strategy as an adaptive governance loop, challenging linear models of strategic planning. Third, it highlights the learning dimension as the integrative mechanism determining whether strategy becomes transformative or merely procedurally compliant. Accordingly, effectiveness lies in the dynamic integration of strategic dimensions rather than administrative alignment between documents and programs.

Policy implications call for a systemic approach: institutionalizing outcome-based evaluation, differentiating assistance according to village capacity, investing in enabling infrastructure, and integrating evaluation results into the planning cycle. Without strengthening the learning dimension, improvements in goal formulation or budget allocation will not generate sustainable transformation. This study is limited by its single-case design and qualitative approach, which restrict generalizability and long-term causal claims. Future research employing comparative and longitudinal designs is needed to assess the sustainability of adaptive integration in other rural contexts. Overall, the effectiveness of rural empowerment strategy is determined not by policy linearity but by the adaptive integration of interdependent strategic dimensions within structurally constrained environments.

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