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A Community Engagement-Based Social Innovation Model in the Ybm Pln Desa Cahaya Program for Rural Economic Self-Reliance

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a community engagement-based social innovation model and examines how the YBM PLN Desa CAHAYA Program contributes to community empowerment and economic self-reliance in Jeruk Manis Village. A qualitative case-study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis from April to June 2026 and analysed interactively through data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and open, axial, and selective coding. The findings identify four mutually reinforcing stages: social innovation development, community engagement, community empowerment, and economic self-reliance. Continuous facilitation, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and stronger CAHAYA Business Groups constitute the central mechanisms. The resulting model is participatory, collaborative, adaptive, and potentially replicable in village empowerment programmes grounded in Islamic philanthropy.

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INTRODUCTION

Rural development is a multidimensional process that cannot be assessed solely in terms of economic growth. It must also be evaluated by the extent to which communities can make meaningful life choices, gain access to resources, participate in decision-making, and independently manage local potential. The capability perspective positions local people as principal development actors rather than passive beneficiaries (Sen, 1999). This orientation is consistent with the sustainable development agenda and Indonesia's village policy, which emphasise poverty reduction, reduced inequality, inclusive institutions, and community initiative (United Nations, 2015; Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014).

In practice, rural development continues to be constrained by limited human-resource capacity, low business productivity, weak local economic institutions, and restricted access to finance, markets, technology, and business networks. Programmes dominated by short-term assistance may perpetuate dependency when they are not accompanied by capacity development and stronger community organisations. An approach is therefore required that can reshape social relations while generating economic solutions suited to the local context.

Social innovation addresses this need through new ideas, services, and mechanisms that respond to social needs while creating more effective relationships and forms of collaboration (Mulgan et al., 2007; Phills et al., 2008). It is not synonymous with technical novelty; its value lies in generating social benefits, strengthening community capabilities, and transforming relationships among stakeholders. In Islamic philanthropy, the productive utilisation of zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf (ZISWAF) can shift assistance from a charitable model towards more sustainable economic empowerment (Kasri, 2016).

The effectiveness of social innovation is strongly shaped by community engagement. Engagement encompasses access to information, consultation, participation in planning and implementation, partnership, and the sharing of decision-making authority. Arnstein (1969) conceptualised participation as a continuum from non-participation and tokenism to citizen power. The quality of engagement must therefore be assessed not merely through attendance, but through the community's influence, sense of ownership, responsibility, and capacity to sustain programme outcomes.

The YBM PLN Desa CAHAYA Program in Jeruk Manis Village, Sikur District, East Lombok Regency, integrates productive ZISWAF funding, needs assessment, local-potential mapping, facilitation, and the establishment of CAHAYA Business Groups (Kelompok Usaha CAHAYA, KUCs). The village possesses economic potential in processed agricultural products, Tibu Bunter nature tourism, and quail farming. Prior to the programme, however, local actors faced constraints in business management, financing, marketing, and the productive use of local assets. This case demonstrates how a philanthropic institution, village government, facilitators, business groups, and community members jointly construct a process of change.

Previous studies have more frequently assessed programme outcomes or examined social innovation, participation, empowerment, and philanthropy as separate domains. Limited research explains how social innovation is formed at community level and integrates these four elements into a single conceptual model

grounded in empirical practice. This study therefore analyses the social innovation process within Desa CAHAYA, explains community engagement as an empowerment mechanism, identifies its contribution to economic self-reliance, and formulates a conceptual model for comparable programmes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Innovation

Social innovation involves developing and implementing solutions that address social needs more effectively, efficiently, equitably, or sustainably than previous approaches. Mulgan et al. (2007) emphasised that social innovation also creates new social relationships and forms of collaboration. Murray et al. (2010) described it as a staged process encompassing prompts and diagnosis, proposal development, prototyping, sustainability, scaling, and systemic change. Social innovation is consequently an adaptive process that requires iterative learning.

Within rural empowerment, social innovation is characterised by the alignment of solutions with community needs, the mobilisation of local assets, capability enhancement, collaboration, and sustainability. Critical scholarship cautions that social innovation may become an organisational instrument when communities lack meaningful influence over the direction of change (Beckman et al., 2023). Participation and the distribution of authority must therefore be embedded in innovation design.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is the process of building collaborative relationships between communities and organisations to identify problems, make decisions, implement action, and evaluate outcomes. Its central principles include recognition of local knowledge, two-way communication, trust, inclusiveness, transparency, and long-term commitment (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Meaningful engagement strengthens programme legitimacy and enables solutions to evolve as community needs change.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder distinguishes symbolic participation from partnership and citizen power. This framework helps determine whether communities merely receive information, are consulted, or genuinely share authority. In this study, community engagement is conceptualised as the mechanism linking social innovation to empowerment through information and communication, consultation, participation, multi-stakeholder collaboration, partnership, institutional strengthening, and joint decision-making.

Empowerment and Economic Self-Reliance

Empowerment is the process through which individuals and groups strengthen their ability to access resources, make decisions, and influence the conditions that shape their lives (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 2000). It encompasses enhanced knowledge and skills, access to finance and markets, stronger organisations, and the capacity for collective action. Empowerment extends beyond the provision of inputs by repositioning community members from passive recipients to principal actors.

Economic self-reliance is a gradual outcome of empowerment. Its indicators include the growth of productive enterprises, increased and diversified income, the capacity to manage capital, the productive use of local potential, stronger economic institutions, and business continuity. The sustainable livelihoods approach underscores that community resilience depends on the ability to combine human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital (Scoones, 1998).

Islamic Philanthropy as an Empowerment Instrument

Islamic philanthropy through ZISWAF can serve as an instrument for poverty reduction and expanded economic opportunity when it is productively managed and accurately targeted. A productive approach combines capital support with capability development, facilitation, market access, and institutional strengthening. Its effectiveness should be measured not only by the amount disbursed, but also by changes in beneficiaries' capabilities and the sustainability of their livelihoods (Beik, 2016; Kasri, 2016).

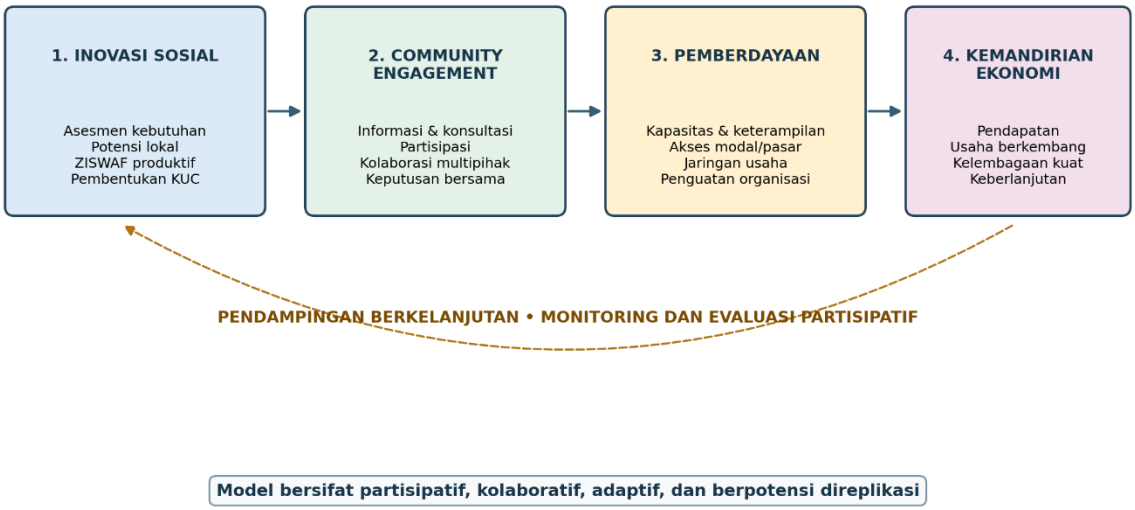


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The framework positions social innovation as the foundation for solutions, community engagement as the transformative mechanism, empowerment as the process of strengthening capabilities and access, and economic self-reliance as a gradual outcome. Facilitation and participatory evaluation create feedback loops that enable the model to adapt to changing business and community dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a constructivist paradigm, a qualitative approach, and a single embedded case-study design. The principal case was the YBM PLN Desa CAHAYA Program in Jeruk Manis Village, with embedded units of analysis comprising YBM PLN's West Nusa Tenggara Regional Unit administrators, the village government, programme facilitators, KUC managers, and beneficiaries. The site was purposively

selected because the programme combines productive ZISWAF, facilitation, local economic development, and business-group institution building. Fieldwork was conducted from April to June 2026.

Data were obtained through non-participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, document analysis, and field notes. Informants represented the deputy chair and amil of YBM PLN's West Nusa Tenggara Regional Unit, the head of Jeruk Manis Village, the Desa CAHAYA facilitator, business-group leaders, and programme beneficiaries. With informed consent, interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysed documents included the Desa CAHAYA Grand Design, proposals, activity reports, monitoring and evaluation records, KUC and beneficiary data, meeting minutes, village archives, and activity documentation.

Data analysis adapted the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014) and proceeded concurrently with data collection. It involved organising and transcribing the data, data condensation, open coding to identify meaning units, axial coding to form categories, selective coding to establish core themes, data display, conclusion drawing and verification, and conceptual-model synthesis. The model was developed inductively and was not intended as a statistical causal model.

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through source, method, and temporal triangulation, prolonged observation, and member checking. Transferability was supported through rich contextual description; dependability through systematic documentation of the research process; and confirmability by linking interpretations to interview, observational, documentary, and reflexive evidence.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Programme Context and Local Potential

Jeruk Manis Village is located in Sikur District, East Lombok Regency, on the lower slopes of Mount Rinjani. Desa CAHAYA develops three main sectors: micro and small enterprises producing cassava, banana, and taro-based foods; Tibu Bunter nature tourism; and egg-laying quail farming. These sectors are organised respectively into the MSME, Tourism, and Quail-Farming KUCs. The implementation structure involves YBM PLN as resource provider and programme sponsor, the village government as facilitator, the programme facilitator as liaison and field mentor, and the KUCs and beneficiaries as the principal programme actors.

The programme emerged from an effort to shift zakat utilisation from predominantly consumptive assistance to productive empowerment. Before support was disbursed, facilitators mapped community conditions, assessed prospective beneficiaries, prepared the Grand Design, and developed programme proposals. Assistance was subsequently integrated with group meetings, training, business visits, monitoring, and evaluation.

Table 1. Stages of the Community Engagement-Based Social Innovation Model

Stage	Core Components	Resulting Change
1. Social innovation	Needs assessment; local-potential mapping; Grand Design; productive ZISWAF; KUC formation; facilitation	Context-appropriate solutions and an institutional foundation
2. Community engagement	Information; consultation; deliberation; participation; partnership; collaboration; joint decisions	Ownership, trust, and collective responsibility
3. Empowerment	Training; skills; access to capital, markets, and networks; organisational strengthening	Community members shift from recipients to principal actors
4. Economic self-reliance	Productive enterprises; income; use of local potential; institutions; continuity	Capacity to manage enterprises and reduce dependency

Social Innovation Development

The first finding indicates that social innovation extends beyond the provision of capital. Its novelty lies in combining needs assessment, mobilisation of local potential, KUC formation, productive ZISWAF management, inter-organisational collaboration, and continuous facilitation. Activities are not standardised; instead, they are tailored to local assets and the characteristics of each business group.

The division of roles is comparatively clear. The village government provides preliminary information and facilitates coordination without unilaterally selecting beneficiaries. Facilitators verify eligibility, connect community members with YBM PLN, and monitor business development, while YBM PLN provides policy support, resources, and guidance. This arrangement shifts the donor–recipient relationship towards a collaborative relationship oriented to long-term change.

Continuous facilitation distinguishes the programme from conventional economic assistance. Regular meetings serve not only to evaluate businesses but also as spaces for collective learning. Topics include basic bookkeeping, production, packaging improvements, branding, digital marketing, and business problem-solving. Field visits enable programme actors to respond to group-specific constraints.

Community Engagement and Empowerment

Community members are involved in needs identification, operational planning, product proposals, activity implementation, group management, monitoring, and evaluation. This process strengthens ownership and trust among YBM PLN, the village government, facilitators, KUCs, and beneficiaries. Nevertheless, participation has not fully reached the level of citizen control because certain strategic decisions remain with YBM PLN and programme facilitators.

Community engagement expands access to capital, training, markets, business networks, and organisational support. Enhanced capabilities are evident in

beneficiaries' ability to maintain basic accounts, develop products, improve packaging, use social media, and formulate business plans. KUC formation provides an arena for collective action and strengthens the community's position in managing local economic activities.

Economic effects emerge gradually and unevenly. Several beneficiaries reported higher income, greater ability to manage capital independently, reduced reliance on interest-bearing loans, and the allocation of earnings to household needs, working capital, savings, and infaq. Progress in the Quail-Farming KUC remains more limited because of production risks and the need to reinvest revenue in capital recovery. These differences underscore the importance of facilitation intensity, member capability, business type, market access, and institutional strength.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of the Desa CAHAYA Program

Dimension	**Principal Findings**
Strengths	Productive ZISWAF; regular facilitation; support from YBM PLN and the village government; diverse local potential; KUCs as institutional platforms.
Weaknesses	Some groups remain dependent on facilitators; uneven management capacity; predominantly local markets; limited digital literacy.
Opportunities	Supportive village and MSME policies; community-based tourism; digital marketing; collaboration with universities, businesses, and village-owned enterprises; replication.
Threats	Product competition; raw-material price volatility; changing purchasing power; aid dependency; weak group succession.

Synthesis of the Conceptual Model

Open, axial, and selective coding generated four sequentially related themes. Social innovation provides the foundation through needs identification, productive ZISWAF, and KUC institution building. Community engagement activates solutions through communication, consultation, participation, partnership, and joint decision-making. Engagement then enables empowerment by strengthening capabilities and access. Empowerment subsequently supports economic self-reliance, reflected in business growth, higher income, more productive use of local potential, stronger institutions, and continuity.

Relationships among the stages are dynamic rather than closed and linear. Participatory monitoring and evaluation provide feedback for assessment, facilitation design, and programme decisions. The model can therefore be adapted to differences in business characteristics and group maturity.

DISCUSSION

Social Innovation as a Transformation of ZISWAF Utilisation

Desa CAHAYA exhibits the defining characteristics of social innovation because it addresses economic constraints while creating new social and institutional relationships. This finding is consistent with Mulgan et al. (2007) and Phills et al. (2008), who identify social-value creation and relational change as central to social innovation. ZISWAF is not treated merely as a resource transfer; it triggers assessment, organisation, learning, and enterprise development.

The model demonstrates that the productivity of philanthropic funds depends heavily on the surrounding support ecosystem. Capital without facilitation may be depleted or fail to grow, whereas facilitation without access to resources may constrain community action. The combination of capital, capability, institutions, and markets explains why programme effects extend beyond the initial economic assistance. This finding supports Kasri (2016) and Beik (2016) regarding the potential of productive zakat to reduce vulnerability when its management is targeted and measurable.

Community Engagement as a Transformative Mechanism

The study's principal theoretical contribution is its positioning of community engagement as the mechanism linking social innovation to empowerment. New solutions do not automatically empower communities. They become transformative when community members receive information, participate in needs identification, shape activities, operate enterprises, and assess outcomes. This process creates ownership, trust, practical knowledge, and collective capacity.

Viewed through Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, practice in Jeruk Manis has moved beyond one-way information and consultation towards partnership in operational activities. However, not all strategic decisions are controlled by the community. Rather than being interpreted solely as a weakness, this finding identifies a transition agenda: facilitators should progressively transfer authority, strengthen KUC governance, and prepare leadership succession to prevent renewed dependency.

The findings also align with Ramdani et al. (2020), who demonstrated the importance of community-engagement strategies in self-reliance programmes. In Desa CAHAYA, facilitators act as social brokers who translate institutional policy into contextually appropriate activities and communicate community needs to programme decision-makers. This role is effective when it strengthens community capability rather than permanently substituting for group functions.

Empowerment and Self-Reliance as Gradual Processes

Empowerment is evident in stronger business-management capabilities, improved resource access, and organisational development. This finding accords with Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), who conceptualise empowerment as a process of gaining control, competence, and influence. KUCs provide an organisational arena that links individual capability with collective action: training can be applied, problems jointly addressed, and networks developed through the groups.

Economic self-reliance does not emerge simultaneously across groups. Variation in outcomes confirms that business type, production cycles, risk, member capability, facilitation intensity, and market access influence the pace of change. Programme

indicators should therefore distinguish outputs, intermediate outcomes, and impacts. Capital disbursement and training frequency are outputs; enhanced skills, bookkeeping, and market access are intermediate outcomes; and business continuity, income growth, and reduced dependency are impacts.

The sustainable livelihoods perspective further explains this process. The programme mobilises financial capital through ZISWAF, human capital through training, social capital through KUCs and collaboration, and natural capital through agriculture and tourism (Scoones, 1998). Economic resilience will be stronger when these forms of capital develop in balance and livelihoods do not depend on a single income source.

Managerial and Policy Implications

For YBM PLN, the findings indicate the need for assessment standards, tiered facilitation plans, group graduation indicators, and an exit strategy. Facilitation can be structured into incubation, growth, and self-reliance stages, each with differentiated intensity and targets. Digital bookkeeping and marketing should be aligned with member readiness and accompanied by support for product quality, packaging, licensing, and logistics.

For local and village governments, the model can be integrated with MSME development, village-owned enterprises, rural tourism, food security, and adaptive social protection. Collaboration with universities, businesses, Islamic financial institutions, and regional markets can broaden technical support and access. Replication should reproduce the process—assessment, participatory planning, facilitation, organisational strengthening, monitoring, and evaluation—rather than copy particular business types.

For philanthropic institutions, success measures should shift from fund absorption towards changes in capability and self-reliance. Transparent governance should be accompanied by beneficiary-feedback mechanisms and context-sensitive evaluation. Productive philanthropy can thereby function as a form of social investment that strengthens community resilience.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the Desa CAHAYA social innovation model comprises four mutually reinforcing stages: social innovation development, community engagement, community empowerment, and economic self-reliance. Social innovation is manifested through the transformation of ZISWAF from consumptive assistance into productive support, needs assessment, local-potential mapping, KUC formation, and continuous facilitation. Community engagement serves as the transformative mechanism by creating ownership, trust, collaboration, and learning spaces. Empowerment is reflected in enhanced skills, access to capital and markets, and stronger organisations, while economic self-reliance develops gradually through business growth, higher income, productive use of local assets, and reduced dependency.

YBM PLN should strengthen facilitator capacity, establish staged facilitation and an exit strategy, improve digital marketing and bookkeeping, and adopt measurable performance indicators. Local government should facilitate certification, marketing, infrastructure, and cross-sector partnerships. Community members and KUCs should strengthen governance, leadership succession, product innovation, and market diversification so that continuity does not remain dependent on facilitators.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The study is limited to a single case and its findings are not intended for statistical generalisation. Future research could compare several Desa CAHAYA sites, test the model using quantitative or mixed-methods designs, develop measures of community engagement and economic self-reliance, and conduct longitudinal research to assess continuity after facilitation intensity declines. Social cost–benefit analysis and comparisons across business sectors would also strengthen replication decisions.

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