COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ARTICLE

Legalization and Leadership Strengthening of Karang Taruna Anjereuw: A Participatory Model for Youth Development

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Abstract

This community service project aimed to strengthen youth leadership capacity and organizational legitimacy through the establishment of Karang Taruna in Anjereuw Village, Papua. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, the program was conducted over 1.5 months in three phases: organizational initiation, cadre training, and legalization through a Village Head Decree issued by the Head of Anjereuw Village (No. 240/001/SK.KEL.ANJW/IX/2025), witnessed by the District Head. Thirty-five youths participated, representing most of the eligible youth in the village, with over 70 percent remaining actively engaged. Activities included participatory meetings, leadership workshops, and facility construction. The program produced three measurable results: (1) legal recognition of Karang Taruna, (2) a public stage for social–cultural events, and (3) a multifunctional youth space supporting small-scale creative business activities. These achievements improved leadership competence, strengthened institutional credibility, and encouraged local entrepreneurship. The findings indicate that combining participatory engagement, organizational development, and practical economic initiatives can provide a sustainable model for youth capacity building and community resilience in rural Papua.

Keywords

Karang Taruna; Youth Leadership; Legalization; Participatory Approach; Community Development.

Abstrak

Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat ini bertujuan meningkatkan kapasitas kepemimpinan dan legalitas organisasi pemuda melalui pembentukan Karang Taruna di Kelurahan Anjereuw, Papua. Dengan pendekatan Participatory Action Research (PAR), program dilaksanakan selama 1,5 bulan melalui tiga tahap: inisiasi organisasi, pelatihan kader, dan legalisasi melalui Surat Keputusan Kepala Kelurahan Anjereuw Nomor 240/001/SK.KEL.ANJW/IX/2025 yang disaksikan oleh Kepala Distrik. Sebanyak 35 pemuda berpartisipasi aktif dengan tingkat keterlibatan lebih dari 70 persen. Kegiatan meliputi pertemuan partisipatif, pelatihan kepemimpinan, dan pembangunan fasilitas publik. Hasil terukur meliputi: (1) pengakuan hukum Karang Taruna, (2) pembangunan panggung publik, dan (3) penyediaan ruang serbaguna yang mendukung kegiatan usaha kecil. Capaian tersebut meningkatkan kompetensi kepemimpinan, memperkuat legitimasi kelembagaan, serta menumbuhkan inisiatif ekonomi lokal. Integrasi antara partisipasi, pengembangan organisasi, dan kegiatan ekonomi praktis menjadi model berkelanjutan bagi penguatan kapasitas pemuda dan ketahanan komunitas di Papua.

Kata Kunci

Karang Taruna; Kepemimpinan Pemuda; Legalisasi; Pendekatan Partisipatif; Pengembangan Komunitas.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Young people are the driving force behind social, cultural, and economic changes in their local areas (UNDP, 2014). As the age group most capable of innovation and change, they influence the paths that communities take in ways that go beyond just being involved in the moment. They represent the future leaders who will decide whether social systems, cultural traditions, and economic growth can continue. The active involvement of youth is both an investment in human potential and a spark for creating societies that are more resilient and inclusive. Studies have shown a consistent link between youth participation in community activities and the promotion of innovation, resilience, and social unity (Camino, 2005). When given real chances to take part, young people build stronger connections to civic life, improve their ability to solve problems, and get ready to tackle new social issues. Youth organizations are important tools for turning this energy, creativity, and hope into positive actions (Krauss *et al.*, 2014). These groups offer organized spaces for developing leadership skills and working together with young people and adults to create solutions for community problems. International studies have shown that strong youth organizations not only improve personal growth but also promote democratic practices, conversations between generations, and community strength. In developing areas especially, these groups fill the gaps between formal government systems and local participation making youth voices louder in local development.

The success of youth organizations as tools for empowerment is influenced by contextual factors such as organizational legitimacy, leadership regeneration, and access to resources or public spaces (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Larson, 2000; Hart, 1997). Without legal recognition or legitimacy, youth groups often lack credibility and fail to integrate into broader development agendas. Weak leadership regeneration results in stagnation and discontinuity while inadequate infrastructure limits sustainability. In Indonesia including Papua these constraints have contributed to weak institutionalization of youth organizations. The absence of formal recognition and leadership training has led to fragile structures with low participation rates and minimal development contributions (Pratono 2016). Based on the report from the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2024 rural youth participation in formal organizations is still below 25% with Papua having an even lower rate at 15% according to BPS data from 2025. This indicates that there is an urgent need for interventions aimed at improving institutional legitimacy increasing leadership capacities as well as providing access toward sustainable facilities.

Regulatory frameworks such as Permensos No. 25/2019 require every village (kelurahan) to establish and empower Karang Taruna as a partner in local social development, thus positioning it not simply as a voluntary group but rather an institutional mechanism for the implementation of social welfare and innovation programs. Implementation is still patchy—especially in rural areas and the east where administrative resources are thin on the ground and leadership turnover is frequent. In Anjereuw Village, institutionalization has never happened so that youth are unrepresented in local decision-making and planning/budgeting processes take place without their participation. Preliminary mapping late in 2024 indicated weak organizational participation of Anjereuw youth: out of about 42 individuals aged 15–30, only 5 (≈12%) had ever regularly attended village meetings, 3 (≈7%) had ever sat on any community committee, and none were involved with any registered youth economic initiatives. Informal interviews suggest most were economically inactive and also not aware of Karang Taruna's legal framework. This finding corresponds with studies conducted in Papua and Eastern Indonesia which described similar patterns of organizational fragility and dependency on external facilitation (Halawa, 2024).

There is a gap between national decrees (Permensos No. 25/2019) and their actual realization at the village level, particularly in remote areas like Biak. We address that gap through the application of a three-phase participatory model—(1) organizational initiation; (2) cadre development; and (3) formal legalization by Village Head Decree issued by the Head of Anjereuw Village with witnessing from District Head—to bring policy into operation while building measurable leadership capacity as well as sustainable economic opportunities. Unlike previous initiatives which emphasized temporary mobilization, our model ties institutional legalization with leadership regeneration and creative-economic engagement within an integrative sequential structure—an innovation barely achieved within rural Papua. A baseline assessment done early in 2025 confirmed institutional weaknesses: out of 35 eligible youths, only 7 (20%) had ever attended village meetings, 4 (10%) had ever assumed any leadership role, and none were participating in youth-led economic initiatives (0%). Awareness regarding the function of Karang Taruna was also very low—less than one-fifth could state its legal role—and this finding highlights integrated interventions that combine leadership development with organizational strengthening plus institutional support towards building sustainable youth participation for community resilience (Midun & Indrawadi, 2022).

Community engagement programs have empirically proven that youth empowerment through managerial training and mentoring, as well as entrepreneurship initiatives, increases the capacity of individuals and the performance of organizations collectively (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). When such initiatives are combined with legal recognition and creative-economic activation, they not only foster entrepreneurship but also increase

participation and resilience (UNDP, 2016). In Anjereuw where youth are trapped in institutional fragility with limited opportunity, we are applying an integrated model to find a sustainable base for participatory youth development. The project was about establishing and empowering Karang Taruna in Anjereuw Village through participatory collaboration among the youth, local leaders, and village authorities. More than just capacity-building activities, we also supported the creation of local creative hubs where young people can hold cultural events as well as entrepreneurial ventures (Rosyadi *et al.*, 2021). This proves how participatory engagement can be combined with institutional capacity-building and economic activation to strengthen youth organizations in marginalized areas. Theoretically speaking, we place Karang Taruna in a larger frame that is about participatory community development and grassroots institutionalization; this speaks to the discourse on youth agency in local governance (Camino, 2005). By bringing together ideas about participation and legitimacy with those about engaging in the creative economy, this study takes current models of community empowerment further. It does so by situating itself where participatory action research meets institutional capacity building to create a new model for understanding how youth empowerment works within rural governance contexts and what practical steps can be taken by practitioners interested in community development.

2 | BACKGROUND THEORY

This community service project has a theoretical framework built on four interrelated concepts: participatory development, asset-based community development (ABCD), youth empowerment and regeneration of leadership, and institution building at the grassroots level along with economic empowerment. These concepts together form an integrated framework for understanding the problems that youth in Anjereuw Village are facing and how to reinforce Karang Taruna as a sustained instrument of empowerment.

2.1 Participatory Development

Participatory development is about inclusion, shared decision-making, and redistributing power to the community members (Lechner *et al.*, 2022; Midun & Indrawadi, 2022). It views citizens not just as beneficiaries but also as co-creators in the process of development by emphasizing the role that local knowledge, discussion, and collective ownership play in sustaining community-based initiatives. Lechner *et al.* (2022) show that practices of participatory learning and co-design allow communities to enhance their resilience and revive indigenous values through collaborative decision-making and mutual learning. Other studies confirm that participation is more than mere attendance or consultation; it is about building local capacity and sharing responsibility for action (Taurista & Choiriyah, 2024; Widyastuti *et al.*, 2021). Meaningful participation happens when community members gain control over agenda setting, resource allocation, and evaluation of outcomes—thereby transforming development from a top-down intervention into a dialogical empowering process between facilitators and local actors. In terms of youth engagement, participatory development opens up pathways for young people to express their aspirations negotiate power relations among themselves and develop leadership capacity through real decision-making experiences. In this study, all stages of youth engagement were guided by principles of participation—from identifying needs to shaping organizational structure as well as creative-economic initiatives. The process ensured that decisions were made collectively with transparency regarding information sharing while embedding reflection cycles within activities throughout the program. Thus participation was both a means—to design interventions collaboratively—and an end—to strengthen local autonomy and organizational legitimacy.

2.2 Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

The ABCD framework emphasizes community strengths rather than external deficits. It does not start with problems but what the community already has—skills, social ties, cultural practices, and physical areas—as a base for sustainable and locally owned growth. This view moves focus from dependence on outside help to self-reliance and building collective capacity. By mapping and using these assets, communities can change social ties into productive networks that build trust and participation. Globally, this model has been used to shift community planning from needs-based analysis to capacity-oriented collaboration, encouraging local innovation and pride of ownership. In rural contexts such as Papua, this orientation is especially relevant because it values indigenous knowledge mutual cooperation cultural assets as catalysts for resilience. Within this project ABCD principles guided the mapping of youth skills local craftsmanship communal spaces which later informed co-design of facilities such as public stage creative space. These tangible outcomes exemplify how asset mapping can evolve into concrete community initiatives demonstrating that sustainable youth development begins with recognizing amplifying resources already present within the community.

2.3 Youth Empowerment and Leadership Regeneration

Theories about empowering youth see them as agents who can meaningfully contribute to social, cultural, and economic development. A crucial dimension is leadership regeneration which ensures organizational sustainability by

cultivating new cadres to replace outgoing leaders. There is agreement that empowerment needs both opportunities (access to participation) and capacities (skills and training). However, debates continue about how best to balance youth autonomy with adult guidance since too much adult control can reproduce hierarchical power structures Empirical studies have revealed stagnation in youth organizations without structured cadre regeneration. Therefore this project embedded leadership training within organizational initiation process to ensure continuity aligning practical strategies with empowerment theory as an integrated approach not only addressing the challenge of leadership transition but also reinforcing sustainability as a core outcome of empowerment in rural youth organizations.

2.4 Grassroots Institutionalization and Economic Empowerment

Theories of grassroots institutionalization emphasize the critical role of legitimacy in determining the sustainability of community organizations (Mansuri & Rao, 2012). Legal recognition through government decrees allows organizations to access resources, develop trust, and interact with formal governance structures (Suharko, 2015). Without legitimacy, even the most active organizations are likely to be marginalized or excluded from decision-making processes. Economic empowerment complements institutionalization to ensure that organizations are not only socially active but also financially resilient. Studies have found that integrating organizational development and small-scale youth enterprises can improve sustainability and attract wider youth participation (Lediana, Perdana, Deliana & Sendjaja, 2023). However, limitations usually arise in resource-constrained areas. Arifin *et al*. (2020) reported that rural organizations have market access problems; Rifah, Utami, and Utami (2023) described village-owned enterprises as often unviable without continuous mentorship and strategic capacity building—effective guidance and institutional support are critical to long-term community entrepreneurship and sustainable development. The Anjereuw initiative responded to these problems by combining legal recognition with economic initiatives in a District Head decree that gave formal legitimacy to Karang Taruna and the public stage plus youth-run beverage stall as both a cultural space and source of revenue. This dual strategy bridged the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how institutional and economic dimensions must work together for organizational sustainability.

These four frameworks will not be implemented in isolation but instead reinforce each other. Participatory development assures inclusive decision-making, ABCD mobilizes local assets, empowerment together with leadership regeneration sustains human capital while grassroots institutionalization provides legitimacy as well as economic grounding. Together they form a cyclical mutually reinforcing model that runs through all phases of the program. Similar participatory models were used in rural youth organizations in Vietnam (Pham, 2023) and the Philippines (Lopez, 2024), where community-based legalization improved sustainability. These comparative examples also indicate how institutional recognition can strengthen participation which ensures long-term engagement in community-driven programs. Figure 1 below illustrates a conceptual framework on how four complementary theories support three phases of the Karang Taruna Anjereuw empowerment initiative program. Each theoretical pillar brings into play principles that are distinct but interrelated to give guidance on participatory design, implementation sustainability of the program.
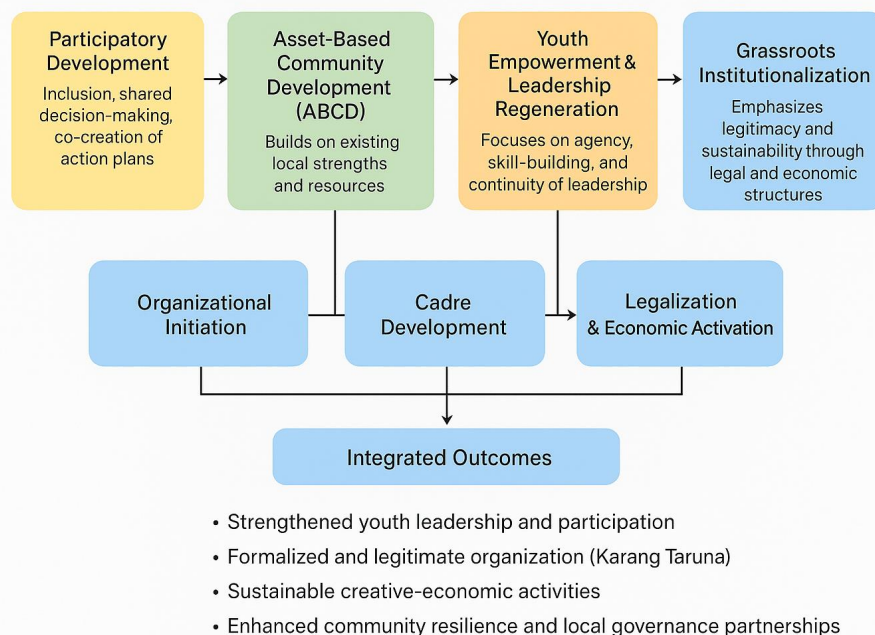

Figure 1: Conceptual framework linking participatory ABCD empowerment theories and institutionalization theory.

3 | METHOD

3.1 Community Engagement Design

This community service project adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, emphasizing collaboration between academics, youth participants, community leaders, and local government. PAR was chosen because it facilitates the co-creation of knowledge and ensures that interventions remain relevant to the lived realities of the community (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Bergold & Thomas, 2012). The approach aligns with the objective of strengthening youth organizational capacity and creative-economic participation, positioning them as active decision-makers rather than passive recipients of aid. The PAR cycle comprised three iterative loops of action–reflection: (1) diagnosis through FGDs, (2) co-design of organizational structure, and (3) reflection during evaluation meetings. Across these stages, the program achieved approximately 70% active engagement from participants. The 70% engagement rate was determined using attendance logs, participation in discussions, and self-reported reflection journals, which together provided a balanced measure of both quantitative and qualitative participation levels. Although the overall duration was condensed to one and a half months, each PAR cycle integrated shorter reflection sessions to maintain iterative feedback and participant-led decision-making. Despite the brief timeframe, each loop of action and reflection was carefully structured with defined objectives, feedback discussions, and adaptive planning to preserve the rigor and credibility of the PAR process.

3.2 Target Community and Selection Procedure

The target beneficiaries were youth in Anjereuw Village, Biak Numfor District, Papua, aged 15–30, with no formal organizational body recognized by the local government. Initial community assessments were conducted through informal interviews with village officials, focus group discussions (FGDs) with youth representatives, and participant observation of existing community dynamics. Inclusion criteria required participants to be village residents, committed to attending at least two-thirds of the activities, and willing to contribute to organizational development. A total of 35 youth (approximately 80% of the eligible youth population) were selected through purposive and volunteer-based sampling, in open consultation with community leaders. The participants represented active youth from four neighborhood units (RT 01–04), ensuring inclusiveness and proportional representation across the sub-village clusters.

3.3 Instruments and Data Collection

A qualitative, multi-method approach was applied:
1) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the program to capture evolving perspectives of youth and community leaders. Three FGDs were held (90–120 minutes each) with youth, village officials, and community leaders. The first FGD explored youth roles, barriers to participation, and expectations toward organizational formation. The second FGD focused on co-designing the structure, leadership roles, and work programs of Karang Taruna. The final FGD evaluated program outcomes, identified lessons learned, and discussed strategies for sustaining the organization. Key discussion indicators included deliberative participation, leadership initiative, and collaborative problem-solving, which were used to assess the depth of engagement and group dynamics across phases.
2) Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with youth participants, village officials, and community elders to gather diverse viewpoints on participation, leadership, organizational legitimacy, and creative-economic practices.
3) Reflective Journals: Youth participants documented their experiences, challenges, and learning throughout the program, providing insight into behavioral change and self-reflection.
4) Participant Observation: Researchers directly observed meetings, workshops, and community activities, noting interaction patterns, participation levels, and collaborative behaviors in detailed field notes.

3.4 Procedures and Timeline

The program was implemented over 1 month and 2 weeks (mid-July to end of August 2025) in three condensed phases:

Table 1. Program Phases, Timeline, and Deliverables

Phase	Period	Main Activities and Focus	Key Deliverables	Main Actors Involved
Organizational Initiation	Mid–July 2025	Introductory meetings with youth and community leaders; establishment of Karang Taruna vision, mission, and structure through participatory discussion.	Draft of Karang Taruna organizational statute and temporary management structure.	Youth representatives, community leaders, academic facilitators.
Cadre	Late	Leadership and organizational	Leadership and program design	Youth

Development	July – Early August 2025	management training; mentoring sessions on program design, teamwork, and mobilization; creative-economy workshops (handicrafts, digital promotion, event organizing).	module; record of training and mentoring sessions.	participants, local trainers, academic mentors.
Institutional Legalization	Mid–Late August 2025	Submission of organizational documents to the district government; formal legalization through a Village Head Decree issued by the Head of Anjereuw Village (No. 240/001/SK.KEL.ANJW/IX/2025), witnessed by the District Head; inauguration of Karang Taruna and opening of public stage and youth space.	Official Village Head Decree (No. 240/001/SK.KEL.ANJW/IX/2025) issued by the Head of Anjereuw Village, witnessed by the District Head, legitimizing Karang Taruna; inauguration of youth facilities (public stage and creative space).	Youth committee, village officials, district government, academic team.

Each phase involved specific actor roles and deliverables to ensure effective collaboration and measurable outcomes. Youth participants led the planning and implementation activities, taking primary responsibility for meetings, training sessions, and the creation of youth spaces. Village officials facilitated coordination, provided administrative approval, and ensured alignment with local governance procedures. The academic team offered technical guidance, documentation, and continuous monitoring to maintain methodological rigor and ensure sustainability. Deliverables for each phase included: (1) an organizational statute and management draft during the initiation phase, (2) a leadership and program design module during the cadre development phase, and (3) a legalized decree and youth facility inauguration during the institutional legalization phase. These collaborative arrangements not only distributed responsibilities equitably but also strengthened local ownership and institutional trust throughout the process. All activities took place in the village hall and designated youth space, ensuring accessibility for participants. The condensed timeline required overlapping some activities and intensifying engagement sessions to achieve objectives within the limited period.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. All interviews and field notes were transcribed verbatim and coded manually. Initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas and participant expressions related to empowerment, participation, and local innovation. These codes were then clustered into broader themes that captured the collective learning and social transformation processes emerging from the project. To enhance credibility, triangulation was applied by comparing data from three sources—youth interviews, community leader focus groups, and observation notes—to identify consistent patterns across perspectives. Member checking was conducted through feedback discussions with youth participants to validate emerging themes, while an audit trail of coding decisions and meeting notes ensured transparency and reliability of the analysis. The final themes were refined collaboratively within the research team to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' lived experiences and aligned with the participatory principles of the study.

3.6 Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. The relatively short project duration (one and a half months) limited the opportunity for longitudinal observation of behavioral and organizational changes among youth participants. Additionally, the scale of participation was confined to a specific community cluster, which may constrain the generalizability of findings to broader contexts. Given the researchers' active facilitation role, potential bias in interpretation was mitigated through reflexive journaling and triangulation across data sources. Despite these constraints, the participatory nature of the project and the iterative cycles of reflection provided rich insights into youth engagement and community-driven capacity building that remain valuable for similar initiatives in comparable settings.

4 | RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

The implementation of the three-phase participatory model in Anjereuw Village produced tangible results across three outcome dimensions: social participation, institutional strengthening, and creative-economic activation. Each dimension reflects the program's capacity to transform youth engagement from informal involvement into structured, sustainable participation.

4.1.1 Social Participation and Leadership Engagement

At the beginning of the project, youth participation in community forums was limited — only 5 out of 42 youth (12%) had previously taken part in village meetings or collective decision-making. By the end of the program, active participation increased to 28 out of 35 participants (80%), based on attendance logs and reflection journals. This substantial rise indicates not only numerical growth but also a qualitative shift in how youth perceived their role within village governance. This change was driven by participatory learning methods, open consultation forums, and role delegation during training sessions, which encouraged youth to speak, plan, and take initiative.

> *"Before, I just watched village activities without joining. Now I can lead discussions and coordinate events with other youth."* — *(Male participant, RT 03, reflective journal, August 2025)*
>
> *"We used to wait for instructions from elders. Now, we can design our own plans and share ideas directly."* — *(Female participant, RT 01, FGD 3).*

These reflections illustrate a transformation from passive observation to active deliberation — a key marker of empowerment and leadership development. Participants began to take collective ownership of meetings, forming small task groups responsible for planning, documentation, and follow-up activities. Female youth also showed increased confidence in voicing opinions, indicating a gradual shift toward more inclusive participation.

Overall, these findings suggest that participation evolved beyond attendance to become a platform for shared leadership and decision-making, reflecting the project's success in operationalizing empowerment principles through structured, participatory practice.

Figure 2. Documentation of Interview Session with
Youth Representatives During the Participatory Action Phase.

4.1.2 Institutional Strengthening and Legal Recognition

The institutional dimension was achieved through the establishment and formal legalization of Karang Taruna Anjereuw via a Village Head Decree issued by the Head of Anjereuw Village (No. 240/001/SK.KEL.ANJW/IX/2025), witnessed by the District Head. This decree granted the organization formal status as a youth partner of local government. Organizational legitimacy led to stronger collaboration between youth and local authorities, particularly in the planning of social events and facility maintenance.

> *"Since the decree was issued, village officials have begun inviting youth to planning meetings. It feels like our organization is officially trusted."* — (Youth leader, RT 02, interview, August 2025).

Baseline data showed the absence of any youth organizational structure prior to July 2025. By the end of the project, the group had completed an organizational statute, management structure, and annual work plan draft. This indicates a transition from informal youth activity to institutionalized representation, aligning with the objectives of *Permensos No. 25/2019* on Karang Taruna facilitation.

Figure 4. Official Handover of the Legality Document of The
Karang Taruna Organization in Anjereuw Village, 2025.

4.1.3 Creative-Economic Activation

The third outcome dimension relates to the activation of creative-economic spaces as sustainable youth initiatives. Through the project, youth collaboratively designed and constructed two multifunctional facilities: (1) a public stage for cultural and social events, and (2) a youth creative space serving as a micro-center for community gatherings and small business activities. Initial operations generated modest economic outputs: beverage and snack sales during community events produced an average income of IDR 150,000–300,000 per week during August 2025. Youth members also began renting the stage for local performances and meetings, providing a structured source of collective income.

> *"We learned how to manage small events and budget our income. Even though it's small, it feels like a real start."* — (Female participant, RT 04, interview, August 2025).
> *"The stage is not only for events — it's now our shared symbol that youth can build something permanent."* — (Village official, interview, August 2025).

These developments demonstrate that economic activation complemented organizational strengthening, ensuring that the youth group not only exists administratively but also sustains itself through small-scale enterprise.

Figure 3. Youth Selling Activities During the Community Bazaar

4.1.4 Challenges and Reflections

Despite the overall success of the initiative, several challenges emerged during the implementation phase. Time constraints proved to be one of the most significant limitations. The 1.5-month duration restricted the depth of mentoring, follow-up evaluation, and long-term impact assessment. As a result, while short-term objectives were achieved, opportunities for more intensive skill reinforcement and reflection were limited. Another issue was participants' initial dependence on facilitators. During the early stages, several youth participants relied heavily on the academic team for direction, which indicated a need for greater confidence-building and self-initiative. Over time, however, this dependency gradually decreased as participants gained experience and took ownership of the project. A further challenge involved gender participation gaps. Male youth tended to dominate the construction and physical development activities, while female participants were less visible in these stages. Nevertheless, participation among young women increased notably during training sessions and management discussions, where they contributed actively to decision-making and

organizational planning. This shift demonstrated growing inclusivity and awareness of gender balance, suggesting that future programs could strengthen gender-sensitive approaches by providing equal opportunities for leadership and capacity-building across all stages of community engagement. Nevertheless, structured reflection sessions helped mitigate these issues by promoting shared accountability and adaptive learning among youth.

"At first, I waited for instructions, but later I learned to take responsibility. Now I feel confident to continue without the facilitators." — (Male participant, RT 02, reflective journal).

4.1.5 Summary of Baseline vs Endline Indicators

To assess program effectiveness, a simple baseline–endline comparison was conducted using attendance logs, observation notes, and participant reflections. Table 2 summarizes changes across four key indicators: participation, leadership initiative, youth-led activities, and creative-economic engagement.

Table 2. Summary of Baseline and Endline Indicators of Youth Participation and Capacity

Indicator	Baseline (Pre-Program)	Endline (Post-Program)	% Change	Data Source
Youth participation in community meetings	5 of 42 youth (12%)	28 of 35 youth (80%)	+68%	Attendance lists, FGDs
Leadership initiative (self-reported readiness to lead)	2 of 35 (6%)	24 of 35 (69%)	+63%	Reflection journals
Youth-led activities per month	0	3 (average)	—	Observation, reports
Engagement in creative-economic activities	None recorded	5 micro-initiatives (event organizing, drinks sales, music performances, handicrafts, digital promotion)	—	Interview, observation

The results indicate substantial improvement across all indicators, particularly in active participation and leadership initiative, reflecting both institutional and behavioral change achieved through the three-phase participatory model

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating organizational legalization, leadership regeneration, and creative-economic activation within a single participatory model can produce measurable institutional and behavioral changes among rural youth. The increase in participation rates, establishment of formal youth organization, and creation of income-generating activities collectively signify progress toward more sustainable community engagement. As one participant reflected during the final FGD, *"We never had a place to gather before; now we can plan and perform activities together."* This statement illustrates the transformation from fragmented youth involvement to a more cohesive and institutionalized form of participation, aligning with the principles of participatory development (Cornwall, 2008) and the ABCD framework (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Compared to previous studies that emphasized short-term training or motivational workshops, the present intervention differs by combining three interdependent processes—legal recognition, leadership training, and creative-economic activation. Similar participatory legalization models have been reported in rural youth programs in Vietnam (Pham, 2023) and the Philippines (Lopez, 2024), where community-based decrees and local partnerships improved organizational continuity and financial self-reliance. In the context of Papua, this integrated model provides empirical evidence that legal legitimacy, when supported by participatory leadership development, enhances both the credibility and operational sustainability of youth organizations. The establishment of a formally recognized *Karang Taruna* in Anjereuw thus represents not only administrative success but also the institutionalization of youth agency within local governance structures. Despite these achievements, several practical tensions emerged. The program's condensed timeline—approximately six weeks—limited the depth of reflection cycles typical of a full PAR process. Some participants expressed dependency on external facilitators for decision-making, and female members faced time constraints due to domestic responsibilities, leading to uneven participation. These challenges echo concerns raised in participatory research literature regarding the balance between rapid implementation and genuine empowerment (Chambers, 2012). Nonetheless, the project's deliberate transfer of responsibilities to youth leaders in later stages helped mitigate overreliance on external actors and fostered a sense of ownership among participants.

Sustainability was addressed through both institutional and economic mechanisms. The issuance of a District Head Decree ensured formal recognition in accordance with Permensos No. 25/2019, which mandates the institutionalization of *Karang Taruna* as village partners in social development. Concurrently, the creative-economic facilities—such as the public stage and multifunctional youth space—served as tangible assets for continued engagement and revenue generation. The establishment of a maintenance fund managed by the youth committee, supported by small event

revenues and community contributions, represents an initial step toward financial self-sufficiency. These arrangements resonate with studies on community asset governance (Sari, 2023; Kuncoro, 2024), highlighting how social infrastructure can underpin long-term organizational viability. The findings also carry broader policy implications. Strengthening *Karang Taruna* through formal legalization and creative-economic integration can contribute to national youth development goals, particularly in rural and eastern Indonesian contexts where institutional fragility remains common. Local governments should consider adopting participatory legalization models that link training, recognition, and entrepreneurship to ensure that youth organizations become enduring components of community governance. For policymakers, this case demonstrates how structured facilitation combined with regulatory support can accelerate youth leadership transitions and expand inclusive development practices. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to participatory development scholarship by linking institutional legitimacy with creative-economic sustainability—an intersection rarely explored in Indonesian community service research. It reinforces the argument that participatory engagement must move beyond dialogic participation toward institutional anchoring and economic viability to achieve long-term community resilience. Future studies could further examine comparative applications of this model across different regions of Eastern Indonesia to test its adaptability and impact under diverse socio-political setting.

5 | CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This community-based initiative successfully strengthened youth organizational capacity in Anjereuw Village through a structured three-phase participatory model consisting of organizational initiation, leadership cadre development, and institutional legalization. The program produced tangible outcomes: the formal establishment of Karang Taruna Anjereuw through a District Head Decree, the creation of functional community facilities, and a marked increase in youth participation and leadership readiness. These results confirm that combining participatory engagement with legal recognition and creative-economic activation can generate measurable institutional and behavioral transformation within a relatively short timeframe. To sustain these outcomes, a follow-up mentoring phase of at least six months is recommended, focusing on advanced leadership management, financial literacy, and partnership-building with district-level agencies. Operationally, Karang Taruna should set clear first-year performance indicators—such as organizing at least six community events, maintaining 30 active members, and generating monthly income from creative-economic activities—to ensure continued relevance and accountability. Strengthening linkages with the local government and private partners will also be essential to diversify funding sources and expand impact. At a policy level, this study highlights the importance of integrating participatory legalization mechanisms within the national Karang Taruna framework, as mandated by Permensos No. 25/2019, to enhance institutional sustainability and youth inclusion in local governance. For the province of Papua and other regions in Eastern Indonesia, replicating this model can contribute to reducing the structural marginalization of rural youth by providing them with legitimate, economically viable platforms for civic engagement.

Future studies should conduct longitudinal evaluations to assess long-term organizational stability, gender inclusiveness, and the financial viability of youth-managed facilities. Comparative research across diverse rural settings would also help refine the model's adaptability and identify contextual factors that influence its success. By combining participatory governance with institutional anchoring and economic empowerment, youth organizations can continue to serve as vital engines for inclusive and sustainable community development.

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