

*Research Article***Vernacularization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Diffusing Global Values in Indonesia's Village Government**H.S., Tisnanta^{1*}, Ria Wierma Putri², Yuga Narazua Khanza³, Lenilde Pereira⁴, FX Joko Priyono⁵^{1,2}Faculty of Law, Universitas Lampung, Indonesia³Master of Law, Universitas Pelita Harapan, Indonesia⁴Representative of the Sixth United Nations General Assembly Committee, Timor Leste⁵Faculty of Law, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how Indonesia's village governments interpret and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the process of vernacularization. Given Indonesia's more than 81,000 villages, each with unique socio-cultural characteristics, localizing global norms is both a legal and practical challenge. The urgency lies in aligning global development frameworks with traditional village governance while maintaining local identities. This study aims to assess the implementation of Village SDGs and to evaluate vernacularization as a mechanism for translating global norms into culturally resonant practices at the grassroots level. Using a normative juridical method, this research analyzes legal documents, policy frameworks, and academic literature to identify patterns in SDG localization. Qualitative doctrinal analysis and thematic content review are applied to trace how global values are reinterpreted through local institutions and practices. Findings indicate that the 17 SDGs, along with Indonesia's additional Goal 18 on adaptive village culture, align with existing local norms but require contextual adaptation. This is achieved through a three step vernacularization model involving translation, the role of vernacularizers, and framing, all grounded in a human rights based approach. The study concludes that vernacularization is essential to ensuring inclusive, culturally grounded, and sustainable implementation of the SDGs, reinforcing both universal values and local autonomy.

Keywords: International Agenda; SDGs; Village Government; Vernacularization.

A. INTRODUCTION

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS), Indonesia has 81,616 villages, each with unique characteristics guaranteed by the Constitution through the principle of recognition, namely the original rights (*hak asal usul*) of village governance. This principle is reaffirmed in Law Number 3 of 2024 concerning Villages, as harmonized with Law Number 6 of 2023 on the Enactment of Government Regulation in Lieu of

Law Number 2 of 2022 on Job Creation into Law.

This legal framework strengthens village autonomy in managing internal affairs and outlines three key elements of governance transformation: (1) increased financial allocations to support local development, (2) clearer delineation of village authority in planning and policymaking, and (3) reinforcement of participatory mechanisms to ensure community involvement in decision-making (Kushandajani & Alfirdaus, 2019).

Constitutionally, village governance is recognized under Article 18B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which affirms the customary rights (*hak asal usul*) of traditional villages, including their authority to establish local regulations. Furthermore, Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, as amended by Law Number 3 of 2024, defines a village as a legal community unit with territorial boundaries vested with the authority to manage and regulate governmental affairs and community interests. Such authority is exercised based on community initiative, original rights, and/or traditional rights, all of which are acknowledged within the framework of the national governance system (Meilian, Diamantina, & Saraswati, 2022).

The village thus emerges not only as a cultural entity but also as a strategic platform for national development and security (Nagara & Maulana, 2025). In this context, aligning national development agendas particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with local realities becomes imperative. Since the global adoption of the SDGs in 2015, village development in Indonesia has been reoriented to reflect this framework (Andari, 2021). Nonetheless, challenges arise when universal development objectives risk displacing local identities. The introduction of the Village SDGs, especially the addition of Goal 18 on Adaptive Culture, underscores the tension between global values and local traditions.

The diversity of Indonesian villages reflects distinctive forms of local wisdom and cultural uniqueness. Accordingly, village governments are expected to pursue development agendas while simultaneously safeguarding local traditions. This approach does not merely function as a means of cultural preservation but also constitutes a strategic dimension of national development. From the perspective of national security, accelerating village development and improving rural welfare are essential to advancing human security and serve as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving national resilience (Nagara & Maulana, 2025).

A well-known Javanese maxim, *deso mowo coro, negoro mowo toto* meaning that the village has its own customs while the state is governed by laws illustrates the harmonious relationship between local governance and national policy (Arroisi, 2015). This principle may serve as a normative reference for village governments in formulating policies related to local development. It provides the legal and philosophical foundation for villages to establish policies tailored to their specific conditions while preserving their original values. At the same time, this principle justifies the delegation of authority by the central government, which manifests in the recognition of village autonomy (*otonomi desa*) as part of Indonesia's broader decentralization framework (Pamungkas, 2019).

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the

Indonesian government has aligned village development agendas with this global framework. As the smallest unit within Indonesia's social structure, the village has been significantly influenced by the integration of the SDGs (Budoyo & Hardiyanti, 2021). The village embodies cultural diversity and traditional values, forming the foundation of what is often referred to as a "social capital-based" community. This concept promotes collective advancement through enhanced interactions among individuals working together to address development needs in accordance with social norms, mutual trust, respect, and solidarity. Village governance also possesses independent mechanisms that prioritize community participation in decision-making (Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017). While the SDGs can elevate the scope of village development, their implementation must be carefully contextualized to avoid undermining or eroding village identity. Accordingly, efforts are required to adapt the SDG framework to local contexts (Rozikin, 2019).

In response, the government introduced the Village SDGs as a localized implementation of Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017. This framework incorporates an additional goal, Goal 18, concerning Dynamic Village Institutions and Adaptive Culture. While this goal seeks to strengthen the role of local institutions, it simultaneously raises concerns regarding the marginalization of indigenous values and the homogenization of local cultures (Andari, 2021).

The emphasis on "adaptive culture" may encourage village communities to align themselves with externally constructed global norms, often rooted in Western modernity. As Andari (2021) observes, such alignment risks diluting local cultural identities and highlights the homogenizing tendencies of global development frameworks.

Existing studies on the Village SDGs have primarily focused on the governance dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the enhancement of village government capacity and the integration of SDG implementation with local development potential. Social mapping demonstrates that villages possess significant potential to contribute to SDG achievement; however, institutional limitations often hinder this realization (Yulianto et al., 2023). A case study by Ahmad Zuber on Plumbon Village illustrates notable progress across several SDG indicators but underscores the necessity of sustained strategic interventions, policy consistency, and collaborative engagement to ensure long-term outcomes (Zuber et al., 2024). Despite these advancements, the literature remains limited in its examination of the process of localizing the SDGs, particularly within villages as the smallest yet often most culturally distinct units of governance (Immler & Sackers, 2022).

Efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must account for how abstract global principles can be meaningfully translated into local practices, thereby enabling both village governments and their communities

to internalize their normative significance (Tisnanta et al., 2024). Through such translation, the SDGs acquire not only institutional legitimacy but also moral grounding by fostering an appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between global objectives and local realities. Prior studies emphasize the necessity of framing SDG implementation through situational analysis, policy development, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure alignment with the specific needs and socio-cultural contexts of local communities (Budiman & Jaelani, 2023). This process is further complicated by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which stipulates under Articles 371 and 372 that village affairs fall under village law, with financing responsibilities shared among central, provincial, and regency-level governments. However, the articulation of the 17 SDG goals through regulatory instruments has yet to be meaningfully embedded within the institutional imagination of village governance (Diamantina, 2017). For instance, the Ministry of Villages' regulation on the allocation of village funds for SDG implementation is often perceived as technocratic and remains difficult for local actors to operationalize effectively (Tisnanta et al., 2024).

This condition reflects a clear disjuncture between *das sollen* what is prescribed in legal and policy frameworks and *das sein* the lived realities and capacities of village governments. Although the SDGs have been formally adopted, their implementation at the village level frequently

remains fragmented, insufficiently contextualized, and detached from local cultural systems. The absence of locally resonant translation mechanisms contributes to a weak sense of ownership among both communities and village authorities.

To address this gap, this study adopts the concept of vernacularization as a theoretical and analytical lens. Vernacularization refers to the process by which universal norms are translated into culturally meaningful terms, thereby enabling global principles to resonate with local realities (Merry, 2006). Originally developed within human rights discourse and anthropology, the concept explains how global frameworks are domesticated through local languages, traditions, and institutions (Destrooper & Merry, 2018). This approach enhances the accessibility of international agendas and fosters stronger community engagement and legitimacy by aligning development interventions with local values and epistemologies (Seekings, 2021). Vernacularization thus provides an important corrective to the top-down implementation of the SDGs. It emphasizes meaning-making, participation, and cultural translation as critical dimensions in ensuring that global goals are not only formally adopted but also morally grounded and socially embedded at the village level. In this way, vernacularization strengthens both universal values and local identities. By embedding development norms within local languages, rituals, and practices, communities are

empowered to shape development agendas according to their lived experiences. Consequently, the SDGs become less abstract and more actionable, as communities define their own priorities and co-create solutions that reflect both global aspirations and indigenous worldviews (Fineman, 2011; Seekings, 2021).

Several recent studies have contributed to the discourse on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Indonesia. Yulianto et al. (2023) underscore the potential of villages in advancing the SDGs, while also acknowledging persistent limitations in institutional capacity. Zuber et al. (2024), through a case study in Plumbon Village, demonstrate measurable progress across several dimensions of the SDGs but emphasize the necessity of sustained strategic engagement. Immler and Sakkers (2022) examine the rural localization of the SDGs, yet their analysis does not sufficiently address the cultural translation of global norms. Budiman and Jaelani (2023) argue for context-sensitive policy frameworks, whereas Tisnanta et al. (2024) observe that regulatory directives are frequently misaligned with local understandings. Biermann, Kanie, and Kim (2017) highlight the importance of institutional fit in the successful implementation of the SDGs, and Seekings (2021) illustrates how culturally embedded adaptation strengthens local ownership. Despite these contributions, the existing literature has not yet sufficiently explored vernacularization as a comprehensive approach to harmonizing SDG

implementation with culturally grounded village governance.

Vernacularization also carries strategic significance in Indonesia's broader governmental agenda, particularly in relation to postcolonial state-building. It complements national efforts to reclaim foundational principles by re-centering development on traditional knowledge systems and indigenous governance structures. As Wilson (2022) notes, vernacularization entails extracting concepts and practices from the universal discourse of international institutions and translating them into ideas that resonate with local cultural logics and lived realities. In doing so, it transcends formal legal boundaries by recognizing the authority of norms and values embedded in local communities. Although originally associated with human rights discourse, vernacularization has also emerged as a conceptual and anthropological framework for transforming the SDGs into locally legitimate and sustainable practices (Wilson, 2022).

Given Indonesia's vast and culturally diverse village system, the challenge of localizing global norms is both legal and practical. This study therefore seeks to examine vernacularization as a meaningful approach to implementing the SDGs within village governance. Specifically, it addresses two central research questions: (a) how the Village SDGs are being implemented, and (b) how vernacularization is understood in the diffusion of global values within the framework of village governance.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative juridical approach to examine the legal frameworks and doctrinal principles relevant to the vernacularization and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of Indonesian village governance. The normative juridical method is particularly appropriate for analyzing the structure, substance, and application of legal norms, especially in relation to sustainable development policies and human rights-based approaches.

The research relies on secondary data obtained through a systematic review of academic literature, government policy documents, ministerial regulations, and international development reports. These sources were selected on the basis of their relevance to the legal foundations and practical implementation of the Village SDGs and vernacularization frameworks. A qualitative doctrinal analysis was conducted to identify recurring legal patterns, value integration, and institutional challenges in the localization process. In addition, thematic content analysis was applied to trace conceptual linkages between universal SDG indicators and local governance arrangements, with particular emphasis on the role of human rights (Mujib & Muchlas, 2023), local knowledge systems, and community participation.

This methodological framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how global norms are translated into village-level practices. It

also facilitates the identification of best practices and potential legal reforms necessary to strengthen the localization of the SDGs within Indonesia's village governance system.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of vernacularization arises within norm diffusion theory, particularly in the fields of international relations and transnational legal studies, as a central mechanism through which global norms are internalized within domestic and local contexts. Sally Engle Merry, one of the leading scholars in this area, defines vernacularization as the process of translating universal norms especially human rights into ideas and practices that resonate with local values and ways of life (Levitt & Merry, 2009). Merry identifies three principal stages in this process: first, adapting symbols, stories, or language to fit local narratives; second, involving local actors or "vernacularizers" who facilitate the adaptation of programs into new cultural settings; and third, framing the adapted norms to suit target audiences (Levitt & Merry, 2009). This multi-layered process is shaped by power relations, institutional contexts, modes of communication, and the nature of the values being localized. Although originally applied extensively in human rights research, vernacularization is also relevant to broader global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where local adaptation is essential for meaningful implementation (Seekings, 2021). The SDGs

themselves are closely intertwined with human rights; approximately 92% of the 169 SDG targets are directly linked to human rights principles, underscoring the importance of a contextualized, human rights–based approach in their localization (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022; The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2020).

The SDGs, established in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, provide a universal policy framework to promote economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Rahman & Yasin, 2022). Comprising 17 goals and 169 sub-targets, they emphasize global solidarity and shared responsibility across all states, regardless of income status, under the central commitment of “leaving no one behind” (Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017). Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were often criticized for their top-down design, the SDGs adopt a more inclusive and transformative governance framework based on target-setting rather than prescriptive rules (Qisa’i, 2020). Nevertheless, the realization of the SDGs has been uneven, with implementation heavily dependent on national and subnational capacities. In Indonesia, the SDGs have been integrated into policy and legal instruments such as the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). Yet, significant challenges persist, particularly in rural and remote areas (Iskandar, 2020). Moreover, global awareness and local engagement with the SDGs remain limited, reinforcing the relevance of vernacularization as a

strategy to contextualize SDG discourse and enhance public understanding (OECD, 2017).

In response, the Government of Indonesia introduced the Village SDGs as a localized adaptation of the global framework, formalized through Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 and grounded in the legal foundation of Village Law No. 3 of 2024. This initiative reflects the government’s recognition of the central role of villages in national development, given that approximately 91% of Indonesia’s territory consists of villages. The Village SDGs comprise 18 goals, including an additional objective not present in the global framework: Goal 18 on Dynamic Village Institutions and Adaptive Village Culture, which underscores the importance of local wisdom and cultural resilience (Aspan et al., 2023). As Napitupulu, Pasaribu, and Rajagukguk (2022) observe, this localized model promotes context-specific development by addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, gender, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability at the village level (Iskandar, 2020). To ensure transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, the implementation of the Village SDGs requires reliable village-level data and robust community participation (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022). Nevertheless, scholars caution that universal indicators may not fully capture the diversity of village life, thereby making vernacularization essential to ensure that the SDGs are not only formally adopted but also embedded meaningfully

within village governance systems (Rozikin, 2019).

1) Assessing the Implementation of the Village SDGs

The village, although constituting the smallest territorial unit in Indonesia, encompasses a complex set of socio-economic challenges. With more than 90% of Indonesia's territory classified as rural areas, village development is essential for the overall progress of the nation (Iskandar, 2020). Addressing socio-economic issues at the village level would significantly contribute to resolving broader national development problems. Villages remain the primary locus of poverty, characterized by high poverty rates and low levels of education and health among their populations. In addition, sharp disparities persist between rural and urban areas in terms of purchasing power and economic opportunities.

In order to accelerate rural development, the government has introduced the Village SDGs program. While the SDGs are designed to reduce development gaps and ensure that no one is left behind, the unique characteristics of villages present distinct challenges to their implementation (Yulianto et al., 2023). Nevertheless, through this universal framework, the government seeks to strengthen village development and, in turn, address Indonesia's broader socio-economic issues. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Village SDGs, this study examines two core aspects: first, how village governments have responded to the program;

and second, the challenges they encounter in its implementation.

a) Village Response and Supporting Capacities.

The response of village governments (Pemerintah Desa or Pemdes) to the Village SDGs agenda can be observed through four main efforts: legislative responses and the allocation of village funds, institutional collaboration, community participation, and monitoring mechanisms. From a legislative perspective, the central government enacted the National Strategy for Accelerating the Development of Disadvantaged Regions 2020–2024, which integrates the Village SDGs program and emphasizes poverty reduction as a national priority (Syahrudin et al., 2023). The strategy seeks to improve the quality of life and well-being of communities in disadvantaged regions, particularly in rural areas. In alignment with this policy, since 2020 Pemdes has allocated village funds for the implementation of SDGs through the Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Permendesa PDTT) No. 11 of 2019 concerning the Priority of Village Fund Utilization in 2020. This regulation has subsequently been renewed annually with the same objectives (Andari & Fitria, 2023).

Further reinforcement was provided through the Regulation of the Minister of Finance No. 201/PMK.07/2022 on the Management of Village Funds, which stipulates that up to 75% of

the village fund ceiling may be allocated for non-cash assistance, distributed in two phases for self-reliant villages and three phases for very underdeveloped, underdeveloped, developing, and advanced villages. This allocation prioritizes village development under four key pillars identified in village priority programs. Moreover, Article 5 paragraph (2) of Permendesa PD TT No. 7 of 2021 concerning the Priority of Village Fund Utilization for 2022 outlines three specific priorities to accelerate the Village SDGs: (1) national economic recovery in accordance with village authority; (2) implementation of national priority programs under village authority; and (3) mitigation and management of natural and non-natural disasters under village authority (Syahrudin et al., 2023).

To accelerate SDGs achievements in rural areas, the allocation of village funds in 2022 was directed towards three key areas: poverty alleviation to achieve poverty-free villages; the establishment, development, and strengthening of village-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Desa or BUMDes) and inter-village enterprises to promote equitable economic growth; and the promotion of productive economic ventures managed by BUMDes or joint BUMDes to encourage sustainable consumption and production. This policy was reaffirmed in 2023 through Permendesa PD TT No. 8 of 2022 on the Priority of Village Fund Utilization in 2023 (Khaerunnisa, 2019).

In addition to legislative initiatives, institutional collaboration has also been emphasized. Capacity-building programs for village leaders have been implemented to cultivate sustainable development perspectives, while the Ministry of Villages established the Team for the Acceleration of Village SDGs in 2019. Community participation has likewise been strengthened through programs such as Desa Siaga (Village Preparedness), which encourages community involvement in disaster risk identification and mitigation; Posyandu (Integrated Health Posts), which focus on maternal and child health, nutrition, and family planning; Desa Iklim (Climate Village), which promotes climate resilience and reduces greenhouse gas emissions; and the Golden Village Movement, which emphasizes community empowerment and sustainable development.

Finally, monitoring mechanisms have been established through the Indeks Desa Membangun (IDM) monitoring and evaluation system, implemented under Permendesa PD TT No. 21 of 2020, as well as the Village Data and Information Center, which provides data access, facilitates analysis, and generates reports to inform policymaking (Damayanti, 2021).

Overall, these initiatives reflect the Indonesian government's significant commitment to implementing the SDGs at the village level. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of implementation varies across regions. While some village governments have demonstrated strong

commitment and achieved notable progress, others continue to face structural and administrative challenges that hinder the full realization of Village SDGs (Prasetyo, Putrini, & Hartanto, 2021).

b) Challenges in Implementing Village SDGs

Although the Indonesian government has undertaken significant efforts to implement the Village SDGs program, several gaps remain that hinder its overall effectiveness. To provide a clearer understanding of these challenges, they can be categorized into two analytical types: technical gaps and substantial gaps. This interpretive framework, while not explicitly stated in the original sources, is derived from the systemic shortcomings identified by Maulana and Hidayatno (2023) through the application of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). In their comparative analysis of model gaps, they highlight inconsistencies in planning and operations, political interference, weak monitoring mechanisms, and inadequate resources as central obstacles to sustainable village-level development. Within this categorization, technical gaps refer to procedural and operational shortcomings, such as the use of inaccurate or outdated data, inequitable funding allocation, insufficient infrastructure, limited human resources, and weak intergovernmental coordination. These problems mirror broader challenges of localization identified in global studies (Messias, Vollmer, & Sindico, 2018).

A key contributor to these technical shortcomings is the persistent dependency of most village governments on central government funding. Prasetyo, Putrini, and Hartanto (2021) emphasize that addressing this issue requires both central and local governments to design more efficient and autonomous funding mechanisms to strengthen the financial capacity of villages. Once this fiscal foundation is reinforced, other technical barriers including limited collaboration, inadequate institutional capacity, and infrastructural deficits can be addressed more effectively.

In contrast, substantial gaps concern deeper structural misalignments and value-based constraints that impede the achievement of sustainable development objectives. These include the dominance of short-term, politically driven planning, the absence of consistent long-term frameworks, and the lack of robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Such issues obstruct the realization of SDG targets at the village level (Maulana & Hidayatno, 2023). Substantial challenges also manifest in the form of insufficient community participation, low levels of social awareness, and misalignment between development goals and community values. Within this context, the village is often understood as a form of social capital, characterized by networks of trust, reciprocity, shared norms, and collective action (gotong royong) that can be mobilized to enhance local development and improve community welfare.

(Maulana & Hidayatno, 2023). Active community participation thus becomes an essential prerequisite for the success of the Village SDGs.

However, the diffusion of SDGs as a set of universal values raises concerns about the potential erosion of cultural identity within local communities, including villages in Indonesia. While the SDGs promote inclusivity and universal progress, they are often operationalized through standardized targets and indicators that may conflict with local wisdom and indigenous traditions. This tension is reflected in Indonesia's formulation of the 18th Village SDG, Dynamic Institutions and Adaptive Village Culture, which implicitly acknowledges the pressure on villages to align with global development frameworks. Zheng et al. (2021) observe that cultural values influence all 17 SDGs and 79 percent of their targets, yet culture remains undervalued in both policy and academic discourse. Rather than merely adapting to global norms, cultural identity should be preserved and integrated into development strategies. Without deliberate vernacularization, SDG implementation risks homogenizing diverse communities and marginalizing local knowledge systems. This tendency toward cultural homogenization is often equated with Westernization or Americanization, as global frameworks like the SDGs frequently embody liberal values that do not always resonate with local traditions (Azzahra & Aushafina, 2018). The need for vernacularization echoes the long-standing human rights debate between

universalism and cultural relativism. As articulated in the Bangkok Declaration, human rights are universal, but their application must take into account "national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds." A similar interpretive approach is necessary for SDG implementation, especially in culturally diverse contexts such as Indonesian villages (Indrayanti & Saraswati, 2019).

Furthermore, Putra et al. (2024) note that the integration of SDGs into Indonesia's regional development planning often neglects cultural dimensions, prioritizing economic and governance aspects instead. This disconnect underscores the broader difficulty of reconciling Indonesia's decolonization agenda aimed at reinforcing local autonomy and values with the globalized framework of sustainable development. In this regard, the principle of leaving no one behind, though normatively compelling, may be perceived as a top-down imposition that overlooks local socio-cultural specificities (Putri & Ehsonov, 2024). If applied without sensitivity to local contexts, the universalization of SDGs risks eroding community values and diminishing traditional practices.

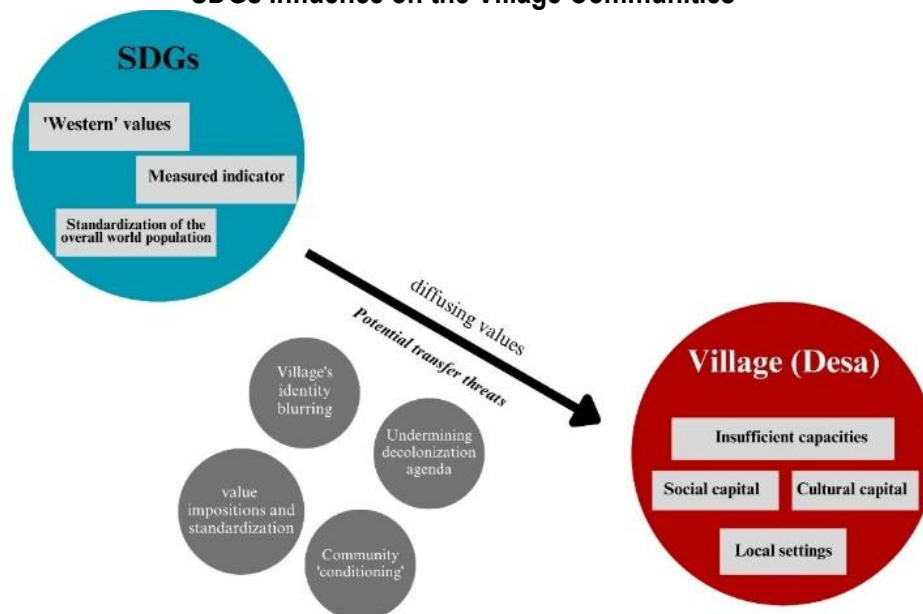
These top-down tendencies are also visible in the governance of village institutions. The diffusion of SDG values to local communities is closely tied to the institutional constraints inherent in village administration. Similarly, village governments' dependency on higher levels of government raises concerns about autonomy and

self-governance. Although village head elections are intended to empower local communities, the structural influence of local governments often undermines the independence of village leaders. As noted by Diamantina and Setiawan (2003), this form of control may limit villagers' freedom of

choice and constrain their ability to elect leaders who truly represent their interests.

The diffusion of SDG values into village communities, and the challenges it entails, can be further illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 1.
SDGs Influence on the Village Communities



Sources: Formulated by the authors from various sources

The illustration underscores the importance of ensuring that the implementation of the SDGs in village communities is sensitive to local values and contexts. Balancing the pursuit of global equity with the preservation of local identity requires governments to reconcile universal values with indigenous cultural frameworks. In this regard, the global agenda must be aligned with local settings, which encompass the distinct characteristics that differentiate one village from another, including culture, geography, and resources (Susetyo, 2019). Because each village faces unique needs and challenges, development policies must be tailored accordingly. For

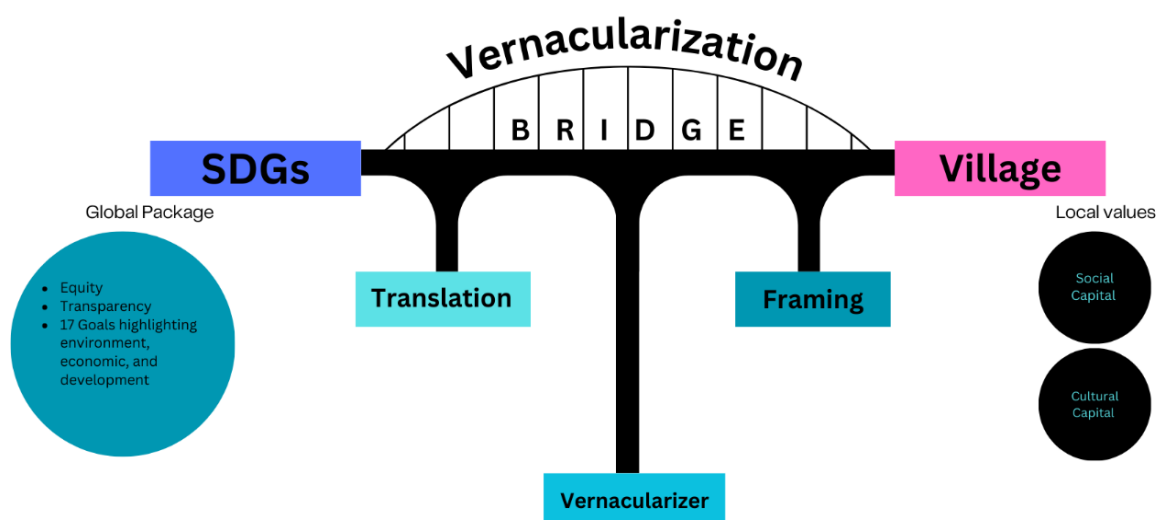
instance, as demonstrated in the case study of Pohjejer Village (Priambodo, Ilman, & Pertiwi, 2024), despite the nationwide implementation of SDG initiatives, local communities have not always experienced tangible benefits, highlighting the necessity of community-led adaptation of global frameworks. By incorporating local contexts, development efforts can strengthen community participation, preserve cultural values, and optimize local resources, thereby fostering ownership, adaptability, and inclusiveness in sustainable development. Indonesia, therefore, would benefit from adopting a framework that prioritizes SDG localization, integrating both

technical policy requirements (Putra et al., 2024) and community capacities and values. Such an approach prevents the erosion of cultural identity while ensuring that sustainable development initiatives remain responsive to local aspirations. In addressing both technical and substantial gaps, the implementation of Village SDGs can achieve deeper community engagement while preserving cultural integrity.

Villages endowed with strong social and cultural capital remain vulnerable to the homogenizing effects of global consensus. To mitigate this risk, the Indonesian government must adopt mechanisms that safeguard cultural heritage from erosion. One such approach is vernacularization, a process through which global norms are translated, adapted, and embedded within local cultural frameworks. The successful realization of the SDGs ultimately depends on their effective execution at the grassroots level,

with local governments operating as the lowest tier of public administration playing a decisive role. However, local contexts and environments vary considerably (Tisnanta et al., 2019). Accordingly, universal concepts and objectives must be carefully tailored to the unique needs of each community to ensure both effectiveness and sustainability. This section introduces the vernacularization mechanism through three interrelated steps: translation, the involvement of vernacularizers, and framing. These steps are derived from integrated scholarly research and adapted from the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), providing a framework for reinterpreting SDGs within village governance. The author further illustrates how vernacularization can operationalize the localization of SDGs in the context of Indonesian villages.

Figure 2.
Vernacularizing the global discourse of SDGs to local context of Village.



Sources: Formulated by the authors based on various sources

Based on the foregoing illustration, the author seeks to formulate a strategic framework for localizing the SDGs within village governance. To realize the global commitment of leaving no one behind, the SDGs must be effectively internalized at the community level. The SDGs, with their universal framework emphasizing equity, measurable indicators, and transparency while addressing social injustices in a comprehensive manner, embody global values that may at times challenge or even disrupt the social and cultural capital of villages. In this context, vernacularization serves as a bridging mechanism to align the global objectives of the SDGs with local realities through structured and contextualized steps.

Furthermore, the implementation of the SDGs requires monitoring through a bottom-up approach, namely a method of development that originates at the grassroots level and progresses toward broader systems and institutions. This approach situates decision-making, problem-solving, and developmental initiatives in the direct participation of individuals and communities most affected by the issues. In the process of localizing the SDGs, village governments are thus positioned as key actors in driving the enforcement of goals and targets. By prioritizing local knowledge, fostering community participation, and strengthening a sense of ownership, this approach ensures sustainability and enhances the legitimacy of implementation.

The following section further examines these steps in detail.

a) Translating

Translating constitutes a process of presenting foreign ideas in a manner that resonates with local contexts and stimulates community interest, ultimately leading to the identification of strategic actions. In essence, translation functions as a medium of social change that facilitates the establishment of resonance between global norms and local values. Through this process, universal norms are given a local façade, thereby enhancing their relevance and legitimacy within the community. Translation serves several important functions in strengthening the understanding of the SDG framework (Kachika, 2020):

- i) It influences how village communities comprehend each goal.
- ii) It shapes how communities conceptualize their social problems and potential solutions, thereby determining which perspectives are accepted or rejected.
- iii) It mitigates the perception of the SDGs as foreign or alienating, as the reinterpretation of global norms in locally translated terms connects the abstract framework with grounded community realities.

When adapting the SDG concepts to local contexts, the incorporation of traditional terminology is essential to facilitate community understanding. Rural communities, in fact, have instinctively aligned with the pursuit of SDG

targets through their pre-existing social capital. Villages possess local wisdom (kearifan lokal), understood as a set of ways of life, knowledge systems, and strategies employed by communities to meet their needs (Aspan et al., 2023). The strength of local wisdom in community development lies in its communicative dimension, often articulated through symbolic language that proves highly effective in conveying values (Hangabei et al., 2021). Local wisdom thus represents a defining characteristic of a region that must be preserved to safeguard its authenticity. Its transmission across generations ensures cultural continuity and sustainability, typically expressed through longstanding customs and collective practices (Alawiyah & Setiawan, 2021).

As Atmodjo (1986) emphasizes, local wisdom reflects the community's ability to selectively absorb foreign cultures by adapting them to local atmospheres and conditions. This selective process is particularly relevant as it enables communities to filter external influences in line with their own cultural identity. Such adaptation requires the lived experiences of the community to function effectively (Qodariyah & Armiyati, 2015). Hence, local wisdom, which varies across regions, must be preserved as it embodies values of togetherness and collective wisdom. In practice, community empowerment initiatives are most effective when they take into account local wisdom as a guiding principle (Suswanto, Handoko, & Sabiq, 2013). Within this

framework, local wisdom serves as a primary instrument for translation. Rural communities, even unconsciously, have long engaged in practices consistent with the SDG targets through their embedded social capital. Illustrations of local wisdom aligning with developmental agendas are presented in the following table.

Table 1.
Terms of Local Wisdom which Aligns with the SDGs

| No | Terms and Practices of Local Wisdom (Origin) | Meaning | Connection to SDGs Goal |
|----|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Gotong royong (Java) | Gotong royong, derived from the words "gotong" meaning to carry or lift, and "royong" meaning together, literally translates to carrying or doing something together. This concept is closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it embodies values and | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 13, 16, and 17 |

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| | | <p>principles that support sustainable development. It fosters collaboration and collective action, contributing to poverty reduction, food security, health, education, access to clean water, sustainable cities, climate action, social harmony, and partnerships for achieving the SDGs. Embracing gotong royong empowers local communities, promotes inclusivity, and strengthens joint efforts towards holistic and sustainable development</p> | | | <p>(Riana, 2022). In Lampung province, gotong royong known as Sakai Sambayan with the same meaning. The concept of sakai sambaian is typically guided by the village head, who holds influence and can distribute the responsibility to various parties in the village to help the targeted individual. This deliberate concept serves to promote equity among communities, thereby reflecting the overarching goal of SDGs (Rostiyanti, 2012).</p> | |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|--|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|---------------------|---|------------|---|----------------|
| 2 | Sasi (Maluku) | Sasi is a traditional practice in Maluku society aimed at preserving natural resources. During sasi, the community is prohibited from exploiting resources, both from land and sea, for a specific period determined by the village government. Implementing sasi eliminates the potential for overexploitation of resources by allowing nature to regenerate and flourish. Through the practice of sasi, the traditional communities in Maluku actively contribute to the | 12, 13, 14, and 15. | | | realization of sustainable villages (Judge & Nurizka, 2008). | |
| | | | | 3 | Merti Desa | Merti Desa is a traditional activity carried out by the Javanese community as an expression of gratitude and preservation of ancestral traditions (Muhajir et al., 2022). In relation to the SDGs, Merti Desa strengthens community ties and fosters a sense of belonging, contributing to the development of sustainable and resilient communities, which aligns with Goal 11. | 11, 13, and 16 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--|----------------------|--|--|--|
| | | <p>Additionally, Merti Desa is in line with Goal 13 as it promotes the appreciation of nature and agricultural produce, raising awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>Lastly, Merti Desa reflects Goal 16 by promoting social cohesion and upholding traditional values, thus contributing to the creation of peaceful and inclusive societies.</p> | | | <p>safeguarding staple food reserves in their local area. The lumbung desa collects a portion of the harvest from local farmers and stores it in the rice barn (Harjito, Wibowo, & Suhardjanto, 2016). The concept of lumbung desa is highly relevant to the SDGs as it addresses food security, sustainable agriculture, and community resilience, contributing to the overarching goals of poverty eradication, hunger alleviation, and environmental conservation. By</p> | |
| 4 | Lumbung Desa | Lumbung desa is a rural community social institution aimed at | 1, 2, 12, 13, 15, 17 | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|-----------|---|--------------------|--|----------|
| | | empowering local communities to take charge of their food resources and fostering cooperation, lumbung desa embodies the spirit of sustainable development and collective action in achieving a more equitable and resilient future. | | | | institution, aligning with the achievement of Village SDGs Goals 16 and 18, which prioritize promoting peace, justice, and inclusive governance within the community. This collective approach to decision, making reflects the commitment to uphold the principles of sustainable and inclusive development for the betterment of the village and its people (Pamungkas, 2019). | |
| 5 | Rembug Desa | “Rembug desa” or “mufakat desa,” also known as village consensus, is a longstanding traditional value in the decision, making process at the village level. It aims to foster a dynamic and equitable village | 16 and 18 | | | | |
| | | | | 6 | Ekonomi Kerakyatan | “Ekonomi kerakyatan” translates to “people's economy”, | 8 and 17 |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | | represents an economic approach that focuses on empowering communities through active participation in economic activities such as cooperatives, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and the informal sector (Hidayah, 2022). | |
|--|--|---|--|

Sources: Formulated by the authors based on various sources

By integrating traditional terminology into the framework of achieving the SDGs at the village level, communities are better able to relate to the concepts being promoted. This enhances their sense of ownership, thereby fostering a more harmonized and effective implementation of the SDGs. In this context, translation does not merely involve incorporating traditional terms into the design of the SDG implementation framework, but also functions as an evaluative mechanism to assess the extent of SDG fulfillment within villages. Consequently, the indicators for measuring SDG achievements should allow for

flexibility rather than rigidity. The practices already embedded in traditional communities must be acknowledged and recognized as their distinct modes of engaging with the global development agenda.

b) Vernacularizers

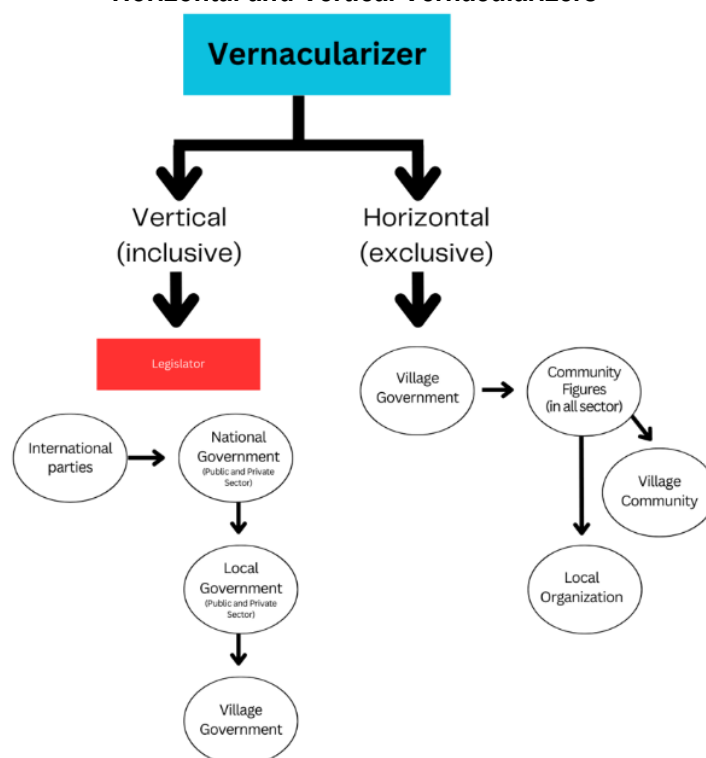
Levitt and Merry define vernacularizers as “people in between,” referring to individuals who occupy intermediary positions bridging the global and local levels. These vernacularizers often include transnational activists, national elites, and educated leaders situated within the middle tier of governance (Levitt & Merry, 2009). In addition, scholarship has identified a second category of vernacularizers, referred to as “locals,” who are relatively less exposed to international contexts and operate primarily within village or community settings (Kachika, 2020).

In the context of transferring SDG ideas from the global to the local sphere, vernacularizers may be categorized into two types: horizontal and vertical (see Figure 3). Horizontally, vernacularizers address local injustices through culturally resonant communication within the village sphere. Here, the village government functions as a vernacularizer to local leaders or influential community figures, who in turn act as “secondary translators” responsible for disseminating ideas throughout the village community and its organizations. Vertically, vernacularizers reframe issues of social disparity and injustice to align them with national or international agendas. This

category encompasses legislators and elites who operate across the global, national, and local levels, thereby ensuring inclusive processes of knowledge and norm transfer (Kachika, 2020). Importantly, legislators do not merely serve as translators transmitting ideas downward to village

governments, but also bear responsibility for communicating insights and concerns from the local level back to global platforms, thereby ensuring reciprocal engagement with international agendas.

Figure 3.
Horizontal and Vertical Vernacularizers



Sources: Formulated by the authors based on various sources

In terms of their roles, vernacularizers appropriate and adapt programs by framing them in ways that align with local culture. They occupy an intermediary position between “translation” and “framing,” utilizing their capacity to amend policies, influence society, and integrate local wisdom in the performance of their functions. The concept of “double consciousness” has been employed to describe how vernacularizers simultaneously maintain a transnational

understanding and a local perspective (Kachika, 2020). In relation to the distribution of ideas under the SDG agenda, a range of stakeholder groups may be engaged. These include organizations and individuals with the capacity to influence both the government (duty bearers) and village communities (rights holders). Such stakeholders possess mandates and functions that shape policies, norms, behaviors, and agendas. They may comprise religious leaders (tokoh agama),

business actors, local organizations, and relevant NGOs. While vertical vernacularizers (the elites) hold substantial responsibilities, horizontal vernacularizers (the locals) perform a vital function in policy development and implementation, particularly because they directly engage with vulnerable groups and affected communities (Abrianto, Ibrahim, & Nugraha, 2020). For this reason, it is essential for local governments to identify the most relevant civil society actors in order to strengthen community understanding and foster meaningful participation.

c) Framing

While Merry conceptualizes vernacularization as a process, the present author contends that it is better understood as a concord rather than a linear progression. Vernacularization should be seen as an interrelated set of practices in which translation and framing occur simultaneously. In this sense, vernacularizers engage in both functions concurrently. The notion of “framing” originates from Goffman’s concept of a “frame” as a schema of interpretation, while Ferree defines a frame as an interpretive package that structures and contextualizes a core idea (Wilson, 2022). Frames therefore function to present external ideas in ways that resonate within the local context, attract community interest, and guide the identification of strategic actions. In essence, frames act as vehicles of social change, fostering resonance between global and local norms. Framing is thus indispensable to translation and

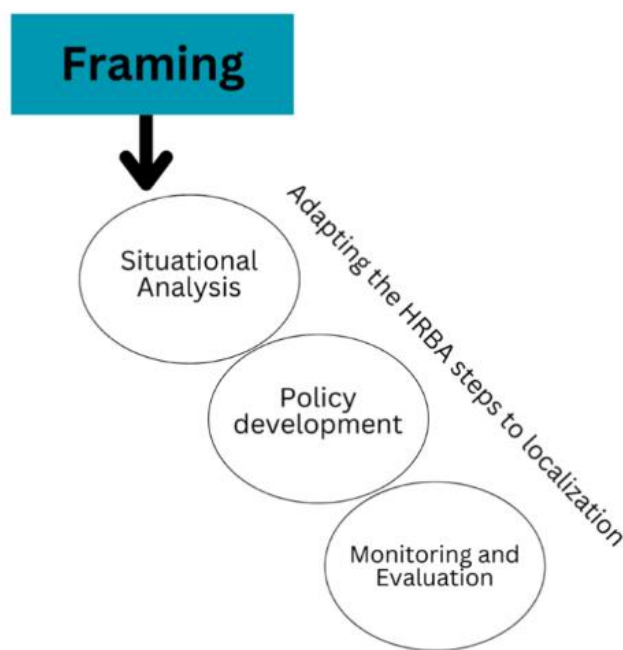
constitutes a decisive factor in the success or failure of vernacularization.

Framing entails bridging the gap between ideal programs and their intended beneficiaries by constructing narratives that render external concepts relevant within the local context. It requires sensitivity to local needs, aspirations, and values in order to mobilize support and participation from local actors. Through effective framing, vernacularizers can ensure that global norms are not merely adopted, but are adapted to local realities in a manner that facilitates sustainable engagement (Kachika, 2020).

In this regard, the author’s recent publication, *Localizing Human Rights in the Context of SDGs*, introduces a three-step mechanism for adapting universal human rights principles to local communities (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022). By integrating human rights with the SDG framework, the book advocates for a human rights-based approach (HRBA) as a means of supporting local governments in achieving their development targets. This approach emphasizes critical issues such as health, gender equality, and social inclusion, underscoring the inherent alignment between Agenda 2030 and established human rights law. The adoption of an HRBA has been widely recognized as essential to the comprehensive realization of the SDGs, given the mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and sustainable development. The book further elaborates the operationalization of this approach

through three essential steps: situational analysis, policy development, and monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
Three Essential Steps in Implementing a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)



Source: Raoul Wallenberg Institute (2022)

i. Situational analysis

Situational analysis is conducted to construct a framework that aligns with local values by addressing the specific context, characteristics, and challenges of the community, and by examining how these factors relate to the promotion and protection of rights. This stage is carried out through vertical vernacularization by the local government as a means to identify programs that may address existing gaps, and to determine which goals or targets should be prioritized in the subsequent stage of policy development. In horizontal vernacularization, this stage of framing is undertaken by community

members for their own community, focusing on the identification of internal challenges and thereby reinforcing ownership over local problems and their solutions (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022).

To conduct such an analysis, local governments must possess a comprehensive understanding of the local economic, social, cultural, and political context, as well as the capacity and potential of vernacularizers (local residents). According to the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (2022), the following steps may be undertaken: (1) causality analysis, which examines cause-and-effect relationships to

identify problems, challenges, and opportunities, ensuring inclusivity by addressing both immediate and underlying causes of development gaps; (2) role pattern analysis, which identifies effective channels of communication and collaboration between the community and vernacularizers; and (3) capacity gap analysis, which highlights areas where vernacularizers may require additional support in their function as transmitters of ideas. Undertaking these analyses provides the local government with a solid foundation for prioritizing targets and issues appropriately.

The initial task of the local government is to familiarize itself with the legal and policy frameworks that contextualize SDG localization in practice. Subsequently, the government may engage vernacularizers, village leaders (*kepala desa*), religious leaders (*tokoh agama*), and vulnerable groups as valuable sources of information to map the problems and issues present within the village. Once the mapping process is complete, the government can identify both the concerns of the community and the duty bearers responsible for implementing the SDGs. Duty bearers include legislators, relevant industries, socio-economic institutions, and resource providers, while rights holders consist of individuals in villages who continue to face social injustices and are entitled to equitable treatment and support. Establishing a list of priorities from the identified issues particularly those affecting vulnerable groups before moving into policy development is highly advisable. Furthermore, it

is essential to disseminate the findings of the situational analysis to rights holders and civil society through public consultations, media outlets, websites, and digital platforms. Such dissemination fosters transparency, allows for feedback, and strengthens the legitimacy of subsequent policy measures.

ii. Policy development

Upon the completion of situational analysis, the local government advances to the next stage of vernacularization: policy development. At this stage, policymakers comprising local authorities, elite vernacularizers, and community representatives collaborate to draft laws and regulations that reflect the findings of the situational analysis. The overarching objective is to establish an institutional framework that ensures local accountability for achieving the SDGs. According to the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (2022), several key elements must be emphasized:

- (a) Transparency and accountability, including the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to ensure proper budget utilization and the provision of remedies where necessary;
- (b) Inclusive policymaking, achieved through consultation and participation of all community members without discrimination, ensuring equitable access to decision-making processes. Collaboration between local elites and vernacularizers is crucial for ensuring meaningful public involvement;

(c) Explicit integration of SDGs, requiring that laws, policies, and practices at all levels directly reference and support the implementation of the SDGs.

Once these initial elements are established, the local government proceeds to strategic policy design. Effective policy design should satisfy at least the following criteria (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022):

- (a) Scope definition, ensuring the policy addresses and removes barriers to implementation;
- (b) Priority focus, directing attention toward vulnerable groups or SDG goals identified as urgent priorities;
- (c) Fulfillment of targets and reduction of inequalities, ensuring the policy not only achieves prioritized SDG indicators but also addresses systemic disparities;
- (d) Institutional structure, requiring a robust framework for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, along with adaptive mechanisms for revision where necessary;
- (e) Duty identification, clearly defining the responsibilities of vernacularizers both horizontally and vertically including the institutions tasked with policy implementation.

To operationalize these measures, it is recommended that local governments develop a Village Action Plan (Rencana Aksi Desa/RADes) in collaboration with the community. This plan should be tailored to local capacities and predetermined priorities to ensure a targeted

approach. Implementation must emphasize technical precision and involve all relevant stakeholders. Given that financial resources are often limited, it is strategic to focus available funding on priority SDG targets within each village. While this approach may not address all SDGs comprehensively, it ensures that resources generate maximum impact on the most pressing issues faced by village communities.

iii. Monitoring and evaluation

Although monitoring and evaluation (M&E) may not appear directly linked to vernacularization, they are indispensable for assessing the effectiveness of the programs and policies developed. As framing constitutes a critical determinant of the success or failure of vernacularization, M&E must be incorporated to evaluate outcomes systematically. Once the strengths, challenges, and gaps have been identified during situational analysis, and subsequently addressed through policy development, the process must be followed by robust M&E mechanisms.

Indonesia currently employs monitoring mechanisms through the use of SDGs Scorecards (KPS Scorecards), completed by local actors as quantitative assessments. In addition, the government utilizes the Responsive, Transformative, and Inclusive Score Analysis (Analisis Skor Responsif, Transformatif, dan Inklusif/ARTI) (INFID, 2019). The ARTI method collects qualitative data through interviews, which are then translated into numerical scores ranging

from 1 to 4. The assessment covers four key dimensions of SDG implementation: (a) policies, (b) institutional structures, (c) planning and budgeting, and (d) program implementation. The data used in this process generally derives from government performance reports, including the latest agency performance reports (Laporan Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah/LKIP), Village SDGs Action Plans (RADes), Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMD), and Annual Work Plans/Budgets (RKP/RKA) (INFID, 2021).

To enhance inclusivity and public participation in M&E, the adoption of IT-based tools is recommended. Such tools improve accessibility and foster meaningful exchanges among local stakeholders. Within this context, the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) recommends the use of SMART indicators: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2022). Tailoring indicators to the local context further enhances their relevance and applicability. Where government data is lacking, supplementary data can be collected from local organizations and community members themselves. Transparency in data dissemination is equally crucial, as it enables feedback from the community, thereby enhancing accountability and ensuring that policies remain responsive to local needs.

By employing the three primary tools of vernacularization translation, vernacularizers, and framing the SDGs can be effectively integrated into local contexts. This approach fosters local

ownership, ensures inclusivity, and encourages broad public participation. Ultimately, the vernacularization of the SDGs extends beyond reconciling global and local values. It empowers village communities, leverages their social and cultural capital, and facilitates their engagement with higher-level actors through a bottom-up approach. This study thus underscores the importance of a carefully constructed framework that both respects and utilizes local assets to optimize SDG achievement while preserving community values.

D. CONCLUSION

Indonesia's commitment to global equity is reflected in the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national legal and policy framework. Through the adoption of various regulatory instruments, policies, and action plans, Indonesia has demonstrated its determination to ensure the effective implementation of the SDGs. The establishment of the Village SDGs illustrates Indonesia's recognition of the urgency of addressing structural injustices in rural areas, which comprise approximately 91 percent of the country's territory. By integrating the SDGs at the village level, Indonesia can substantially accelerate national progress toward achieving the broader SDG agenda. Nevertheless, the implementation of Village SDGs encounters two principal obstacles: technical and substantive. Technical challenges primarily arise from limitations in

institutional and administrative capacity, whereas the substantive challenge lies in the insufficient sense of ownership among local communities, which constitutes a significant impediment to effective implementation.

To respond to these challenges, a vernacularization mechanism is employed, consisting of three interrelated components: translation, vernacularizers, and framing. Translation highlights the importance of strengthening local ownership by employing terminology and narratives that resonate with community values, thereby fostering comprehension and encouraging participation. Vernacularizers both vertical elites and horizontal community actors serve a critical role in transmitting global discourses and reconciling them with local perspectives. The final component, framing, determines the extent to which vernacularization succeeds or fails. This process entails three stages: situational analysis to assess village capacities and challenges; policy development to design context-specific regulations and prioritize key targets; and the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability and measure outcomes. Through vernacularization, the implementation of the SDGs is redirected toward a locally grounded approach. Such an approach ensures that the SDGs are adapted to the specific needs and socio-cultural contexts of rural communities, thereby enhancing

participation, strengthening legitimacy, and increasing the likelihood of successful realization.

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