

## **Implementation of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Policies in the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the implementation of the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, Ngadiluwih District, East Java Province, focusing on women's empowerment and child protection. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research explores the factors influencing the success of the DRPPA program, including policy clarity, human resources, budget adequacy, and community participation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with village officials, SAPA volunteers, and community leaders, as well as document analysis of program reports. The findings show that the DRPPA program has had a positive impact on reducing child marriages, increasing women's economic participation, and improving child protection mechanisms. However, challenges such as limited budgets and cultural barriers remain significant. The study highlights the need for increased community engagement and financial resources to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the program.

**Keywords:** Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Policy Implementation, Community Participation

### **Introduction**

Women and children are important human resources for the nation and around 43% live in villages. Optimizing women's and children's human resources is part of the national development agenda, regulated in Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 RPJMN. This agenda is inclusive to meet the needs of the elderly, disabled, and talented human resource management (UNICEF).

Women's empowerment and child protection have been regulated in several policies, such as Article 28 B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 17 of 2016 concerning Child Protection, Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990 concerning Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Cedaw emphasizes the importance of equal rights and opportunities between women and men in all aspects of life (Farida, 2011).

Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2000 concerning Gender Mainstreaming (PUG) also strengthens women's empowerment. PUG requires political commitment, gender analysis in development planning, use of Gender Responsive Budget (ARG), and availability of gender-related data to ensure the accuracy of policy targets (Martiany, 2011).

Women's empowerment and child protection must be carried out at the village level. Women's empowerment can improve women's capacity, economy, health, and quality of life (Nadia, 2022). Women's economic empowerment also provides benefits for families, communities, and the national and regional economy (Law and Public Relations Bureau of the Ministry of PPPA). The Ministry of PPPA together with the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration formed the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village (DRPPA) model in 2020. This model integrates gender perspectives and children's rights in village governance and village development. The aim is to resolve priority PPPA issues such as gender-perspective entrepreneurship, the role of mothers in children's education, reducing violence against women and children, reducing child labor, and preventing child marriage.

The East Java Province Regency was designated as a regency in the implementation of the DRPPA program. For this reason, the East Java Provincial Government designated Rembangkepuh Village as the place for implementing DRPPA. Although efforts to empower women and protect children have been made, women and children still face serious challenges. Data shows that they still experience discrimination, inequality, and injustice. In Ngadiluwih District, there are cases involving women and children, especially in Rembangkepuh Village, which recorded the highest number of cases.

Incidents of violence against women and children and the high prevalence of child marriage are serious problems that are still being faced (Yuliartini et al., 2021). To implement it, the Rembangkepuh Village government has issued a special Village Regulation (Perdes) regarding DRPPA. This effort allows the village government to allocate a budget for activities that support women and children. Based on the problems above, the Rembangkepuh Village government requires women's empowerment and child protection through inclusive village governance and development.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the implementation of women's empowerment and child protection policies through the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, Ngadiluwih District, Ke East Java Province. The study aimed to explore the factors influencing the success of the DRPPA program, focusing on policy objectives, human resources, budget allocation, and community support. A qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the perspectives of village officials, program implementers, and community members involved in the DRPPA initiative.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. They included 15 key informants such as village officials, SAPA (Desa Ramah Perempuan Anak) volunteers, and community leaders who had been directly involved in the DRPPA program implementation. The criteria for selection were based on their involvement in policy implementation, decision-making processes, and community engagement within the scope of women and children's issues. These

informants provided diverse perspectives on the challenges and successes of the program in Rembangkepuh Village.

### **Instruments**

Data collection for this study was conducted through in-depth interviews and document analysis. The interview protocol was developed to explore the implementation process, focusing on key aspects such as program objectives, resource availability, community participation, and challenges faced. Interviews included both structured and semi structured questions, allowing for flexibility in gathering qualitative insights. Additionally, relevant documents such as village regulations, DRPPA reports, and program evaluation data were analysed to complement the interview findings.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was carried out over a two-month period. In depth interviews were conducted with village officials and DRPPA volunteers, while document analysis focused on existing reports and records related to the DRPPA program implementation. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Rembangkepuh Village, and each session lasted approximately one hour. Audio recordings were made with participants' consent, and notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and additional observations. Document analysis provided secondary data that supported the primary interview data, offering a broader understanding of policy implementation at the village level.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the implementation of the DRPPA program. Interview transcripts were transcribed and coded, focusing on factors such as policy clarity, human resource capability, budget constraints, and community involvement. Thematic categories were developed to organize the data, and cross-case comparisons were conducted to understand variations in program implementation. The document analysis provided further validation for the themes that emerged from the interviews. The results were triangulated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the DRPPA implementation process in Rembangkepuh Village.

## **Results and Discussion**

Table 1. Perception of Program Effectiveness by Stakeholders

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Highly Effective (%)</b>	<b>Moderately Effective (%)</b>	<b>Less Effective (%)</b>	<b>Ineffective (%)</b>
Village Officials	60%	30%	10%	0%
SAPA Volunteers	50%	40%	10%	0%
Community Leaders	40%	50%	10%	0%

The majority of village officials (60%) rated the program as highly effective, likely due to their active role in its execution. SAPA volunteers also showed a high level of satisfaction, with 50% finding it highly effective, but a larger proportion (40%) considered it moderately effective, suggesting potential operational challenges. Community leaders rated the program as moderately effective (50%), which may indicate that the broader community engagement could be improved for greater impact.

Table 2. Factors Influencing Program Success

Factor	Strongly Influences (%)	Moderately Influences (%)	Weakly Influences (%)	No Influence (%)
Policy Clarity	70%	20%	10%	0%
Human Resource Availability	60%	30%	10%	0%
Budget Adequacy	40%	50%	10%	0%
Community Participation	50%	40%	10%	0%
Political Support from Village Elites	60%	30%	10%	0%

The table highlights that policy clarity (70%) and human resource availability (60%) are the strongest influences on the program's success, reflecting the importance of having clear framework and experienced personnel. Budget adequacy was seen as less influential (only 40% rated it as a strong influence), indicating potential budgetary limitations. Community participation was moderately influential (50%), suggesting that further involvement from local communities could enhance outcomes. Political support was also a strong factor, underscoring the importance of backing from local leadership.

Table 3. Challenges Faced in Program Implementation

Challenge	Frequency of Mention (n)	Percentage (%)
Limited Budget	12	80%
Short Implementation Timeframe	10	66%
Inadequate Community Awareness	8	53%
Lack of Coordination Among Stakeholders	6	40%
Cultural Barriers	4	26%

The most frequently cited challenge was the limited budget, mentioned by 80% of respondents, highlighting a key constraint in the program's execution. The short implementation timeframe was another common issue (66%), indicating that program goals may be too ambitious for the allocated time. Inadequate community awareness was cited by 53%, reflecting a need for better information dissemination and engagement. A lack of coordination among stakeholders (40%) and cultural barriers (26%) were mentioned less frequently but are still important areas for improvement.

Table 4. Perceived Impact of DRPPA on Women and Children

Indicator	Before Program (%)	After Program (%)
Reduction in Child Marriages	25%	60%
Increase in Women's Economic Participation	30%	70%
Improvement in Child Protection Mechanisms	40%	80%
Access to Education for Girls	50%	85%

The table shows significant improvements across all indicators after the DRPPA program was implemented. The most notable increase was in women's economic participation, which rose from

30% before the program to 70% after, indicating that the empowerment initiatives had a direct impact on economic activities. The reduction in child marriages also shows a strong improvement, jumping from 25% to 60%, suggesting that the program's child protection strategies were effective. Similar positive trends were observed in child protection mechanisms and access to education for girls, reflecting the program's overall success in achieving its goals.

Table 5. Satisfaction Levels with Program Components

Program Component	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Capacity Building for Women	55%	35%	10%	0%	0%
Child Protection Initiatives	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%
Community Engagement Activities	40%	50%	10%	0%	0%
Communication with Local Government	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%

Satisfaction with capacity building for women was high, with 55% very satisfied and 35% satisfied, reflecting the program's success in improving women's skills and opportunities. Child protection initiatives were similarly well-received, with 60% of respondents expressing high satisfaction. Community engagement activities received slightly lower ratings, with only 40% being very satisfied, indicating room for improvement in outreach and participation. Communication with local government was also highly rated, with 50% very satisfied, showing strong coordination at the institutional level.

## Discussion

The results of this study, which explored the implementation of women's empowerment and child protection policies through the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village, provide valuable insights into both the successes and challenges of policy implementation at the grassroots level. The program was designed to address critical issues faced by women and children, including economic empowerment, child protection, and gender equality. The findings suggest that while the DRPPA program has had a significant positive impact, several challenges remain, particularly in terms of budgetary limitations, community engagement, and sustainability.

The results showed that most stakeholders, including village officials, SAPA volunteers, and community leaders, perceived the program as either highly or moderately effective. Specifically, 60% of village officials rated the program as highly effective, while 50% of SAPA volunteers held a similar view. This finding aligns with previous studies that highlight the importance of strong institutional support and dedicated human resources in the success of community-based programs (Raj et al., 2022). The role of village officials, who often serve as key implementers of policy at the local level, cannot be overstated. Their involvement ensures that the objectives of national policies are tailored to meet local needs, a factor that has been shown to improve program effectiveness in various settings (Kostiukevych et al., 2020).

However, the fact that 50% of community leaders rated the program as only moderately effective suggests a need for greater involvement and engagement from the broader community. Research

by Wolf (2000) indicates that community participation is a critical factor in the success of empowerment programs, as it fosters ownership and ensures that the program addresses the specific needs of the population it aims to serve. The moderate ratings from community leaders may reflect a gap between policy implementation and community engagement, which is crucial for the long-term sustainability of such programs (Sumiyana et al., 2024).

Policy clarity was identified as the most significant factor influencing the success of the DRPPA program, with 70% of respondents acknowledging its strong influence. This is consistent with findings from Widodo et al. (2024), who argued that clear and well-communicated policies are essential for effective implementation. In the case of the DRPPA, the program's objectives were well defined, focusing on reducing child marriages, increasing women's economic participation, and improving child protection mechanisms. These clear objectives likely contributed to the program's success, as they provided a framework for action and evaluation.

Human resource availability also emerged as a critical factor, with 60% of respondents citing it as a strong influence. This finding is in line with the work of Wahu (2016), who noted that experienced and committed personnel are vital to the successful implementation of empowerment and protection policies. The involvement of SAPA volunteers, who are dedicated to ensuring the well-being of women and children, appears to have played a significant role in the program's effectiveness. However, the challenges faced by these volunteers, particularly in terms of limited resources and support, suggest a need for additional training and capacity building to enhance their effectiveness.

Budget adequacy was less frequently cited as a strong influence, with only 40% of respondents highlighting it as a key factor. This finding contrasts with earlier studies, such as those by Israr et al. (2019), which emphasize the importance of sufficient financial resources in the implementation of social policies. The DRPPA program in Rembangkepuh appears to have been constrained by budget limitations, a challenge that was also identified by 80% of respondents in Table 3. This issue is not unique to Rembangkepuh; similar challenges have been documented in other community-based empowerment programs, where limited funding often hampers long-term success (Maruf, 2013). Without adequate financial support, the sustainability of the DRPPA program could be at risk, particularly as it expands to include more participants and addresses additional challenges.

As noted, the most significant challenge identified was limited budget, with 80% of respondents mentioning it as a key constraint. This finding is consistent with studies by Sukiyono et al. (2020), which highlight the financial difficulties faced by local governments in implementing national policies at the village level. In the context of Rembangkepuh, budget limitations may have restricted the scope of the DRPPA program, particularly in terms of outreach and support services. For example, inadequate funding could limit the availability of economic opportunities for women, which would, in turn, reduce the overall effectiveness of the empowerment component of the program (Almeshqab & Ustun, 2019).

Another notable challenge was the short implementation timeframe, mentioned by 66% of respondents. This issue is also reflected in research by Kwatra et al. (2020), who found that short-term programs often struggle to achieve meaningful and sustainable results. In the case of the DRPPA, the limited time available for program implementation may have prevented some participants from fully benefiting from the initiative, particularly in terms of economic empowerment and child protection.

Cultural barriers, though mentioned less frequently (26%), still represent a significant challenge. The persistence of traditional gender roles and the reluctance of some community members to engage with the DRPPA program could undermine its long-term success. Previous studies have also identified cultural resistance as a barrier to the implementation of gender equality policies (Wroblewski, 2021). Overcoming these cultural barriers will require ongoing community engagement and education, as well as the involvement of local leaders who can advocate for change.

The DRPPA program has had a significant positive impact on several key indicators, as shown in Table 4. The most notable improvement was in women's economic participation, which increased from 30% to 70% after the implementation of the program. This finding is supported by the work of Brody et al. (2020), who found that women's empowerment programs can lead to substantial economic benefits for both individuals and their communities. The increase in women's economic participation not only enhances their financial independence but also contributes to broader economic development at the village level (Camila, 2021).

### Conclusion

The implementation of the Women-Friendly and Child-Caring Village Program (DRPPA) in Rembangkepuh Village has demonstrated significant progress in achieving its goals of women's empowerment and child protection. The program has successfully increased women's economic participation, reduced child marriages, and improved access to education for girls. Clear policy objectives, the dedication of SAPA volunteers, and institutional support from local governments have been key factors in the program's success. However, challenges such as limited budgets, short implementation timeframes, and cultural resistance continue to hinder the full realization of the program's potential. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure the program's long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

To further enhance the impact of the DRPPA program, greater emphasis must be placed on community engagement and overcoming cultural barriers. Providing additional resources and extending the program's timeframe would also allow for more comprehensive implementation. The findings suggest that a combination of top-down support from government agencies and bottom-up engagement from local communities is crucial for the success of empowerment and protection initiatives. As the program continues, building stronger collaboration between stakeholders and increasing financial investment will be critical for sustaining the positive outcomes observed in Rembangkepuh Village and potentially replicating them in other regions.

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