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Beyond the Developing Village Index: Exploring the Gap Between Village Development Status and Lived Experiences of Poverty in Central Sumba, Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: Indonesia has relied on composite village development indices to classify rural progress and guide policy intervention, yet administrative status may not fully capture how poverty is experienced within households and communities.
Objective: This study examines the gap between official village development status and lived poverty in Central Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, through a comparative qualitative multiple-case design covering Anakalang (advanced), Wairasa (developing), and Umbu Pabal Selatan (disadvantaged).
Methods: The evidence integrates a 2022-2025 poverty verification/evaluation dataset, official IDM and food-security records, policy documents, and 2026 qualitative field-summary evidence for the district and all three villages. The administrative comparison is non-monotonic: recorded poor persons declined by 15.9% in Anakalang, 17.3% in Wairasa, and 23.2% in Umbu Pabal Selatan despite sharply different IDM statuses. Qualitative evidence identifies three distinct conversion pathways.
Results: Anakalang demonstrates cumulative governance conversion through transparent budgeting and participatory social institutions, while Wairasa highlights accessibility-enabled selective conversion where economic opportunities expand through strategic trade and infrastructure, yet poverty and educational constraints persist. Meanwhile, Umbu Pabal Selatan showcases productive conversion under severe structural limits, where dryland farming and seasonal water dependence coexist with food estate initiatives, irrigation development, and integrated livelihood support.
Conclusion: The findings refine the measurement-experience gap as the distance between administratively recorded progress and household capabilities, access, security, voice, and resilience, while showing that similar policy instruments are converted differently across local governance and territorial contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is increasingly understood as a multidimensional condition rather than a shortfall of income alone. Contemporary poverty scholarship recognizes that deprivation may simultaneously involve weak access to health care and education, insecure livelihoods, poor housing, social exclusion, limited mobility, weak political voice, and exposure to shocks. The Alkire–Foster tradition has been particularly influential in translating this multidimensional understanding into measurable indicators, while more recent reviews show that the field

continues to debate the choice of dimensions, weights, thresholds, and the treatment of intangible forms of deprivation (Alkire & Foster, 2011; D'Attoma & Matteucci, 2024). These debates matter for public policy because what governments measure shapes what they can see, compare, target, and fund. At the same time, composite indicators inevitably compress heterogeneous realities into standardized categories; consequently, a place can improve its score even when important groups continue to experience deprivation that is weakly represented, unequally distributed, or difficult to quantify (Bernards, 2023).

This measurement problem is highly relevant to Indonesia's village development agenda. Since the enactment of the Village Law, village governments have received substantial fiscal transfers and broader authority to plan development, provide services, strengthen community institutions, and support local economic activities. A growing literature has examined whether Village Funds improve rural development and reduce poverty, but the empirical picture is mixed. Village development expenditure has been associated with reductions in the number of low-income rural families, yet other categories of spending show weaker or context-dependent relationships (Agusta & Khoirunurrofik, 2024). National panel evidence also suggests that Village Funds can improve rural development while their poverty-reduction effects vary across periods and external shocks (Paska et al., 2025). Qualitative and mixed-method studies further show that institutional capacity, coordination, participation, accountability, and the quality of local implementation influence whether fiscal resources are converted into sustainable welfare gains (Permatasari et al., 2021; Waworundeng et al., 2025).

For nearly a decade, the Developing Village Index (Indeks Desa Membangun, IDM) provided an important administrative representation of village progress. The IDM classified villages using social, economic, and ecological resilience and assigned statuses ranging from very disadvantaged to independent. Previous research has treated the IDM as an outcome to be explained by Village Funds, population, human development, infrastructure, or other local characteristics (Kurniawan & Rauf, 2021; Prasetyo & Sonny, 2020; Wedi & Fathurrahman, 2025). Other studies have used it alongside poverty indicators to assess rural development outcomes (Anam et al., 2023; Saragi et al., 2021). However, the institutional landscape has changed. Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration No. 9 of 2024 replaced the IDM framework with a new Village Index (Indeks Desa) comprising six dimensions: basic services, social conditions, economy, environment, accessibility, and village governance. The regulation simultaneously revoked the 2016 regulation governing the IDM. This transition creates a timely opportunity to ask not only whether an index is statistically associated with development, but whether its categories correspond to how residents experience welfare and deprivation in daily life.

Central Sumba offers a critical setting for such an inquiry. Official statistics recorded 24.24 thousand poor residents in 2023, equivalent to 31.78% of the population and a poverty line of Rp362,089 per capita per month. The poverty rate subsequently declined to 30.84% in 2024 and 29.23% in 2025, yet the latter remained the highest recorded rate among regencies and municipalities in East Nusa Tenggara in the national statistical table (Barat & Tengah, 2025; Statistik, 2025). Poverty is therefore not only persistent but embedded in a local governance environment with limited fiscal room. A 2026 field interview summary characterized the regency's fiscal independence at only about 4.5-5%, a perception consistent with BPK evidence that places Central Sumba's fiscal-independence index at roughly 0.05 and classifies it as not yet fiscally independent (Timur, 2023). In such a setting, an improvement in a village's administrative development status cannot automatically be interpreted as an equivalent improvement in household capabilities: the conversion of transfers, programs, infrastructure, and local institutions into effective welfare becomes the central empirical question.

Existing Indonesian studies leave three important gaps. First, much of the evidence examines the causal or statistical association between Village Funds, village indices, and poverty rather than the correspondence between an official village status and lived poverty. Second, qualitative evaluations of village development indices have largely focused on implementation, policy compliance, or government interpretation, while the perspective of poor households is less systematically placed at the center of the analysis (Basyar et al., 2022). Third, recent work increasingly emphasizes that similar formal governance arrangements can produce different

village outcomes because local social capital, institutional capability, geography, and actor configurations shape the conversion of resources into development (Haryanto & Nurlinah, 2025; Waworundeng et al., 2025). What remains insufficiently explained is how these conversion conditions generate a gap (or, in some cases, a close fit) between administrative classifications and lived experiences of deprivation.

This article addresses that gap by integrating two complementary theoretical perspectives. The capability approach treats poverty as deprivation in substantive freedoms: what people are effectively able to be and do, rather than only the resources or services nominally available to them (Byskov, 2026; Sen, 1999). The concept of administrative legibility, associated with Scott (1998) and Turner (2025), highlights how states simplify complex social realities into standardized categories that can be recorded and governed. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that an index can be administratively useful without being socially exhaustive. The crucial analytical question is therefore not whether the IDM or the new Indeks Desa is 'correct' or 'incorrect,' but which dimensions of local life it makes legible, which conversion processes it assumes, and which experiences remain partly invisible.

The study develops the concept of a measurement–experience gap, defined as the distance between administratively recorded village progress and residents' actual capabilities, access, security, voice, resilience, and perceived pathways out of poverty. It asks three research questions: (RQ1) How do residents and local stakeholders in villages with different development statuses define and experience poverty, welfare, and development? (RQ2) In what ways do these lived experiences converge with or diverge from the dimensions and classifications represented by official village development indices? (RQ3) What governance, territorial, institutional, and socio-cultural mechanisms explain the observed convergence or divergence? By answering these questions, the study contributes to rural governance scholarship by shifting attention from index determinants to index validity in lived terms, contributes to poverty scholarship by connecting multidimensional measurement with everyday capability conversion, and offers policy lessons for the design and use of the new *Indeks Desa* in high-poverty rural regions.

METHOD

The study adopted a comparative qualitative multiple-case design. A case-study strategy was appropriate because the research examined how and why administrative development status corresponded—or failed to correspond—to lived poverty within real governance and territorial contexts (Almli & Næs, 2026; Yin, 2018). The village served as the primary case, while households and stakeholder groups constituted embedded units of analysis. Comparisons across villages were essential because the theoretical contribution depended on explaining variation: similar index categories could conceal different lived experiences, while different index categories could encompass overlapping forms of deprivation or resilience.

The design was interpretive but analytically structured. The official IDM/*Indeks Desa* dimensions served as one source of administrative representation rather than as a coding template that predetermined residents' accounts. The interview approach began with open-ended questions about local understandings of a 'good life,' poverty, and village progress before exploring services, livelihoods, participation, infrastructure, security, and governance. This sequencing was intended to reduce the risk of forcing residents' experiences into government categories and to allow unanticipated dimensions to emerge.

Central Sumba Regency comprised 65 villages across six districts, providing opportunities for comparison within a common district-level policy environment. The study employed purposive maximum-variation case selection and focused on three villages representing the principal contrasts needed to examine the measurement-experience gap: Anakalang in Katikutana District (advanced; IDM 2024 = 0.7979), Wairasa in Umbu Ratu Nggay Barat District (developing; IDM 2024 = 0.6875), and Umbu Pabal Selatan in Umbu Ratu Nggay Barat District (disadvantaged; IDM 2024 = 0.5175). Selection was therefore theory-driven rather than statistically representative. The three cases established a status gradient while also allowing comparisons with the 2022–2025 poverty verification and evaluation data and the 2024 FSVA profile. Their partially shared exposure to Sumba Tengah's agricultural development and food-estate policy environment further strengthened the design, as differences in observed trajectories could be

investigated through local conversion conditions rather than attributed solely to differences in district-level policy contexts.

Case selection followed a most-different-status, within-regency logic. Anakalang provided a relatively high-status benchmark for examining whether administrative progress translated into broad household capabilities. Wairasa represented an intermediate case in which relatively strong social and economic IDM components coexisted with weaker ecological resilience and a water-related FSVA signal. Umbu Pabal Selatan was selected as a deviant case because its disadvantaged IDM status and low economic-resilience score coexisted with the strongest FSVA composite priority and the largest proportional decline in recorded poor persons among the three cases. This combination made it particularly useful for investigating possible status lag, sector-specific development gains, or local resilience that a composite development classification might capture only partially.

Table 1
Purposive case selection for the three-village comparative design

Case	Administrative status / score	Contextual evidence used for selection	Analytical purpose
Anakalang	Advanced; IDM 2024 = 0.7979	Recorded poor persons 88 -> 74 (2022-2025); FSVA 2024 priority 5; very high IKE (0.9500).	High-status benchmark: test whether administrative progress is broadly converted into lived capabilities and identify residual deprivation.
Wairasa	Developing; IDM 2024 = 0.6875	Recorded poor persons 301 -> 249; FSVA priority 5; high IKS (0.8457) and IKE (0.7500), but low IKL (0.4667); strategic Waingapu-Waibakul road-corridor location; agriculture, services/trade, food-estate and Kaliwu/agroforestry activities.	Accessibility-enabled selective-conversion case: examine how territorial advantage and diversified livelihoods coexist with continued food assistance, financial-access constraints, educational barriers, and ecological vulnerability.
Umbu Pabal Selatan	Disadvantaged; IDM 2024 = 0.5175	Recorded poor persons 198 -> 152 (largest proportional decline); FSVA priority 6; IKE 0.2667; dryland farming and traditional livestock; Embung Lokojangi; Food Estate Zone 2; PK-POM; integrated housing and productive assistance.	Productive-conversion-under-constraint case: examine whether irrigation, household production, social protection, and productive assistance improve lived welfare before broader development-status change, and whether complementary-resource requirements exclude the poorest.

The study adopted purposive stakeholder sampling to capture both official and citizen perspectives. The 2026 field-summary corpus included district- and village-level information generated through interactions with local government and community stakeholders. However, the synthesized documents available for this manuscript did not preserve a participant-by-participant roster or the total number of interviews conducted. Accordingly, the analytical design retained the following participant groups for transcript-level completion and auditability: village heads or secretaries, planning and finance officials, BPD members, village facilitators, *BUMDes* or livelihood actors where relevant, frontline education, health, and social-protection providers, community or customary leaders, women and other locally relevant groups, and households experiencing poverty or socioeconomic vulnerability. At the district level, relevant stakeholders included the village empowerment office, development planning agency, social affairs office, and

other agencies directly involved in poverty reduction and village development.

For a journal-submission-quality transcript corpus, the intended comparative design targeted approximately 35–53 interviews across the three villages and district-level institutions. Final recruitment was to be guided by information power, cross-case coverage, and thematic sufficiency rather than a mechanically fixed sample size. Within each village, priority was to be given to poor and vulnerable households, village government and BPD members, service providers, facilitators or *BUMDes* actors where relevant, and community or women's leaders. Particular attention was required for residents in peripheral hamlets and groups whose effective access might differ from that of residents in village centers. Household participants were not to be identified solely through an official 'poor' label; recruitment was instead designed to combine administrative eligibility information with local knowledge of livelihood insecurity and deprivation to capture both officially recognized and potentially under-recognized poverty.

Table 2
Participant groups and evidence expected

Participant group	Indicative target	Primary evidence
Poor/vulnerable households	12-18	Everyday deprivation, service access, livelihood security, shocks, perceived development change
Village government and BPD	9-12	Planning, budgeting, indicator reporting, targeting, implementation and accountability
Village facilitators/*BUMDes*/service providers	6-9	Implementation processes, access barriers, local economy and service quality
Community/customary/women's leaders	3-6	Distribution, participation, informal institutions, exclusion and local resilience
District-level officials	5-8	Index use, policy targeting, cross-village comparison and institutional coordination

Data collection combined semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary analysis. Interviews with residents explored definitions of poverty and welfare, perceived changes in village life, access to health and education, water and sanitation, mobility, livelihoods, food security, social protection, participation, exposure to shocks, and perceived benefits from Village Fund-financed activities. Interviews with officials examined how index data were produced and used, how development priorities were selected, how poor households were identified, how Village Funds were allocated, and how progress was evaluated. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian or an appropriate local language, with translation support where necessary. They were audio-recorded with consent where available and prepared for thematic analysis.

Observation documented road conditions, distance and travel constraints, service facilities, water access, markets, economic facilities, settlement patterns, and the use of selected Village Fund projects. Documentary evidence included village development plans (*RPJMDes*), annual work plans (*RKPDes*), village budgets and accountability reports (*APBDes* and realization reports), IDM/*Indeks Desa* records, relevant village regulations, program beneficiary records where ethically and legally accessible, district poverty-reduction plans, and official statistical publications. Triangulation was used to compare recorded information, officials' accounts, residents' experiences, and observable conditions in the local environment.

The qualitative material available for this manuscript consisted of 2026 research-team field summaries covering district-level conditions and all three village cases. These summaries were compiled between January and March 2026 by two trained field researchers who conducted semi-structured interviews with village heads, sub-district officials, agricultural extension workers, and selected household heads, supplemented by direct observation and documentary

review. Each summary was cross-checked by a second researcher for factual accuracy. The summaries were derived from interview notes and observation records rather than verbatim transcripts, constituting a methodological limitation that affected auditability. The authors acknowledged that the absence of a complete transcript corpus constrained the depth of participant-level interpretation. Accordingly, claims in the Results section were framed as patterns identified in the field evidence rather than as direct participant accounts. A follow-up transcript-based data collection phase was planned to strengthen the evidentiary basis before journal resubmission.

Analysis proceeded in two linked stages. First, within-case analysis employed reflexive thematic analysis to identify how poverty, welfare, development, and access were experienced and understood by different stakeholder groups (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kushnir, 2025). Coding began with open labelling of field-summary segments and progressed to pattern codes aligned with, but not confined to, capability-oriented sensitizing concepts.

Second, cross-case analysis employed matrices and pattern matching to compare villages in terms of administrative status, territorial conditions, and lived capability outcomes (Etesse iD, 2025; Miles et al., 2020). This stage systematically examined whether and how villages with different IDM classifications differed in residents' lived access to education, health services, economic opportunities, food security, and social protection.

Table 3
Initial coding framework

Code family	Illustrative codes	Interpretive question
Meanings of poverty/welfare	enough food; debt; livestock/assets; schooling; health; dignity; future security	What do residents themselves treat as deprivation and progress?
Administrative visibility	index score; village status; target; reporting; indicator compliance	What becomes visible to government through the index?
Capability conversion	distance; cost; information; time; gender; disability; transport; social position	Why does nominal availability translate—or fail to translate—into actual use?
Governance conversion	participation; *Musrenbangdes*; transparency; targeting; discretion; coordination	How do institutions distribute development benefits?
Territorial conversion	remote hamlet; road quality; rainy season; water scarcity; market distance	How does space alter the value of public investment?
Distribution and exclusion	elite capture; unequal beneficiaries; women; landless; remote households	Who benefits, who does not, and why?
Resilience and shocks	drought; crop failure; illness; price shock; coping; social networks	Does development status reflect capacity to withstand recurring shocks?

Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents; comparisons between government and citizen accounts; purposeful inclusion of contradictory cases; and participant clarification of key factual interpretations where appropriate. Dependability was supported by an audit trail documenting case selection, interview decisions, coding revisions, and cross-case comparisons. Reflexive memos recorded how the researchers' institutional positions and prior expectations might have influenced interpretation. Thick description was used to support transferability to other high-poverty rural settings without claiming statistical generalizability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Central Sumba as a High-Poverty and Fiscally Constrained Rural Governance Context

Central Sumba combines persistently high poverty with limited local fiscal capacity. In 2023, official statistics recorded 24.24 thousand poor persons (individuals below the national poverty line, as measured by BPS consumption-expenditure methodology), equivalent to 31.78% of the population (poverty headcount ratio) and a poverty rate over three times the national average of approximately 9.36% (Nasional, 2025). These figures refer to individual-level poverty counts and population-based rates from the National Socioeconomic Survey (*Susenas*); they differ from the household-level poverty-verification data (*Data Terpadu Kesejahteraan Sosial*, DTKS) used in later sections, which reports poor households across deciles 1–4. Readers should note that the two data sources use different units of analysis and measurement criteria.

The district-level interview material also frames poverty as a basic-service and housing problem. The summary reported that 19.7% of residents lacked access to clean drinking water, 13.09% did not use electricity for household lighting, less than 78% had adequate sanitation, and less than 60% lived in houses with permanent walls. Because these percentages are reported in the field summary rather than reproduced from a statistical table in the current corpus, they are treated as locally reported administrative evidence and not as substitutes for BPS series. Their analytical value lies in showing why a monetary poverty trend can coexist with capability deprivation in water, energy, sanitation, and housing—the exact domains in which an administrative village status may converge only partially with everyday welfare.

Poverty-reduction policy in the district has consequently combined indicator-oriented social assistance with attempts to strengthen productive capacity. The 2026 field summary reported that the village fiscal allocation contracted by approximately 70%—a figure reported as an informant estimate, not derived directly from Presidential Instruction No. 1/2025. The authors were unable to verify this figure against official budget documents at the time of writing; it should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the perceived magnitude of fiscal tightening rather than a precisely calculated percentage. If available, official village-level budget allocation data from the Ministry of Finance should be used to corroborate or correct this estimate.

Administrative Status and the Uneven Trajectory of Recorded Poverty

The three cases form a deliberately contrasting administrative hierarchy. In the 2024 Village Development Index (IDM), Anakalang was classified as an advanced village with an IDM score of 0.7979 (IKS=0.7771; IKE=0.9500; IKL=0.6667), Wairasa as a developing village with a score of 0.6875 (IKS=0.8457; IKE=0.7500; IKL=0.4667), and Umbu Pabal Selatan as a disadvantaged village with a score of 0.5175 (IKS=0.6857; IKE=0.2667; IKL=0.6000) (Ministry of Villages (Ministry of Villages, 2024), Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration, 2024a). The poverty verification/evaluation dataset, however, does not reproduce this hierarchy in a simple monotonic form. Between 2022 and 2025, the number of persons recorded in the poverty dataset declined from 88 to 74 in Anakalang (-15.9%), from 301 to 249 in Wairasa (-17.3%), and from 198 to 152 in Umbu Pabal Selatan (-23.2%). The decline in recorded poor households was 20.0%, 16.0%, and 20.6%, respectively. For comparison, the district-wide dataset declined by about 7.5% in recorded persons over the same period. Thus, the disadvantaged case shows the largest proportional decline in the administrative poverty count, while the advanced case still contained 74 recorded poor persons in 2025. This does not invalidate IDM; rather, it indicates that development status and the trajectory of administratively recorded poverty are related but non-equivalent constructs.

Anakalang: Cumulative Governance Conversion from Disadvantaged to Advanced Status

Anakalang provides the clearest primary evidence in the current corpus of how administrative status can be produced through cumulative governance and capability conversion. The 2026 field summary traces the village's trajectory from disadvantaged status in 2015 to developing status in 2017 and advanced status since 2019. Local accounts did not attribute this transition to a single infrastructure project. Instead, they emphasized orderly data management, transparent and non-monopolistic budget governance, mutual trust, and direct supervision by the

village head and secretary over programs and expenditures. This pattern is analytically significant because it links upward status mobility to local administrative capability and accountability—conversion conditions that composite development scores may capture only indirectly.

The Anakalang material also demonstrates why poverty classifications should not be collapsed into one administrative measure. The field summary reported 581 households across deciles 1-5 in 2019 and, for 2025, 60 households in decile 1, 172 in decile 2, and 248 in decile 3. These decile counts are not directly comparable with the study's poverty verification dataset, which recorded 12 poor households and 74 poor persons in Anakalang in 2025, because the two systems use different thresholds, populations, and administrative purposes. Rather than treating this discrepancy as an error to be reconciled mechanically, the study interprets it as evidence of administrative measurement pluralism: different state datasets can make different segments of vulnerability legible. Transcript-level household evidence and documentary triangulation are therefore needed to establish whether apparent movement across registries corresponds to sustained improvements in income, food security, housing, service access, and resilience.

The field evidence nevertheless identifies plausible mechanisms behind Anakalang's stronger administrative position. The summary attributes relatively rapid poverty improvement to the convergence of district and central-government programs, including social assistance, small and large livestock, agricultural machinery for approximately 300 hectares of cultivated land, and subsidized fertilizer that supported rice production. The food-estate intervention was also described as a catalyst for institution building. In 2022 the village established a cooperative linked to its agricultural potential, with 25 farmer-group members, five dasa wisma groups, and a 300-hectare polygon-mapped production area; the cooperative provides basic goods, agricultural inputs, and savings-and-loan services. Social institutional development extended beyond production through a child-protection forum and a village reading facility. Taken together, these elements suggest a cumulative conversion pathway in which transparent governance, productive assets, local economic organization, and social participation reinforce one another. This interpretation is consistent with wider Indonesian evidence showing that the poverty effects of village finance depend on local institutional capacity and the composition of development spending (Agusta & Khoirunurrofik, 2024; Anam et al., 2023).

Wairasa: Accessibility-Enabled Diversification with Persistent Poverty Constraints

Wairasa presents an intermediate pathway in which territorial accessibility appears to broaden economic opportunity without fully resolving poverty. The 2026 field summary describes the village as more dynamic and strategically located than more interior settlements because it lies on the main Waingapu-Waibakul corridor and close to the regency capital. This location supports a mixed local economy combining increasingly modern agriculture with services, roadside kiosks, small-scale trade, and food businesses serving passing traffic. In capability terms, Wairasa therefore benefits from a territorial conversion advantage: physical connectivity can reduce the cost of reaching markets, information, services, and non-farm income opportunities. Yet its developing IDM status and the persistence of recorded poverty indicate that accessibility is an enabling condition rather than a sufficient outcome.

Agricultural modernization is a second part of the Wairasa pathway. The field evidence identifies Wairasa as one of the Sumba Tengah food-estate locations, where agricultural machinery and more participatory production management were introduced to raise rice and maize output. At the same time, local economic initiatives include customary sustainable plantations and Kaliwu agroforestry practices promoted by customary youth groups, creating a hybrid development pattern in which external modernization coexists with locally rooted land-use knowledge. This combination is analytically important because it suggests that rural development is not simply a transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' production; capability expansion may depend on how formal programs are adapted to indigenous institutions, ecological conditions, and household strategies.

The same field summary, however, describes continuing reliance on food assistance and close monitoring of aid distribution through the village office, particularly during the dry season. It also identifies weak ownership of formal savings accounts and low educational attainment as continuing barriers to escaping poverty. These observations refine Wairasa's earlier classification

as a selective-conversion case. Its relatively high social and economic IDM dimensions, strategic location, diversified economic activity, and declining poverty-verification count coexist with vulnerabilities in ecological resilience, financial inclusion, human capital, and seasonal food security. The central question is therefore not whether Wairasa has development opportunities, but which households can convert those opportunities into stable and autonomous livelihoods and which remain dependent on recurrent public support.

Umbu Pabal Selatan: Productive Conversion under Structural and Seasonal Constraints

Umbu Pabal Selatan provides the strongest deviant case in the study because its disadvantaged IDM status coexists with the largest proportional decline in recorded poor persons among the three villages. The 2026 field summary situates the village within the Umbu Pabal customary territory, including the Liangu Marapu customary forest, and describes an economy strongly dependent on dryland agriculture and traditional livestock. Historically, farmers have faced limited access to information, modern technology, and capital, while production remains highly seasonal. Water infrastructure is therefore a critical conversion factor: the availability of Embung Lokojangi is described as central to irrigation and to the capacity of households to move from rain-dependent subsistence toward more reliable agricultural production.

The village's development pathway is characterized by layered productive interventions rather than a single poverty-alleviation instrument. The field summary reports training in bokashi organic fertilizer production using buffalo manure and straw, intended to reduce input costs and increase farm autonomy. It also identifies the PK-POM (*Pekarangan Pro Oli-Mila*) program, which uses the yards of poor households for horticulture and small livestock as sources of nutrition and supplementary income, alongside Food Estate Zone 2 and agricultural-mechanization support. These interventions represent a household-scale capability strategy: instead of treating food security, income, and agricultural productivity as separate problems, they attempt to expand households' own production possibilities and reduce vulnerability to market and seasonal shocks.

Social protection remains equally important. The field record notes the operation of PKH, BPNT, government rice reserves, and Village Fund cash assistance for extreme-poverty households, older people living alone, and residents not covered by central programs. District policy further integrates housing improvement with productive support: the summary reports approximately ten '*rumah mandiri*' beneficiaries per year in Umbu Pabal Selatan, with assistance of about Rp20 million per house, electricity connection, and complementary packages of poultry, goats, fish seed, and vegetable seed. This design is significant because housing, nutrition, productive assets, and income generation are treated as connected dimensions of deprivation. At the same time, the requirement that beneficiaries be able to finance unfinished construction introduces a potential inclusion problem: the poorest households may be least able to supply complementary resources and therefore may have weaker capability to convert a nominal entitlement into a completed housing improvement.

The field summary also reports that more than half of the village's productive-age population has completed undergraduate education. This figure originates from a single informant's account in the field summary and has not been independently verified against village-level education statistics (e.g., BPS village potential data or school enrolment records). Given that Central Sumba's average education attainment is considerably lower than the national average, this claim warrants documentary corroboration before being treated as established. Until verified, it is presented as a reported informant perception rather than a confirmed statistic.

Cross-Index Evidence: Development Status, Food Security, and Residual Deprivation

The contrast becomes sharper when IDM is read alongside the 2024 Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas (FSVA) produced for Sumba Tengah. Anakalang was assigned FSVA composite priority 5 (composite score 65.62), Wairasa priority 5 (67.59), and Umbu Pabal Selatan priority 6 (74.62) (Tengah, 2024). The local FSVA is a village-level administrative compilation, while the national FSVA framework conceptualizes food security through availability, access/affordability, and utilization and groups areas into six priority categories (Nasional, 2025). Importantly, the component profiles remain uneven. Anakalang combines a very high IDM economic-resilience score (0.9500) with a weak FSVA health-worker component (priority code 1). Wairasa combines

high social (0.8457) and economic (0.7500) IDM scores with low ecological resilience (0.4667), while its FSVA water-access component is also coded at priority 1. Umbu Pabal Selatan, despite the lowest IDM economic score (0.2667), has the strongest overall FSVA classification among the three cases. These cross-index inconsistencies support the paper's central proposition: aggregate administrative classifications can identify important structural conditions but may conceal domain-specific strengths and deprivations that matter for everyday welfare.

Shared Rural-Development Interventions, Different Conversion Pathways

The three villages are especially useful for comparison because they operate within a partially shared policy environment but convert that environment differently. Ministry of Agriculture reporting places Anakalang, Wairasa, and Umbu Pabal Selatan within the Sumba Tengah food-estate landscape, while the 2026 field summaries add village-specific institutional and livelihood mechanisms. In Anakalang, agricultural support is embedded in cooperative development, farmer groups, and transparent local governance. In Wairasa, food-estate modernization interacts with strategic road access, services, trade, and customary agroforestry. In Umbu Pabal Selatan, the same broad agricultural agenda is mediated by dryland constraints, irrigation dependence, household-yard production, organic-input innovation, and integrated social protection. The analytical implication is that exposure to the same program does not constitute the same treatment in substantive terms: local conversion factors shape who can use assets, sustain production, reach markets, and translate program outputs into household security.

What Administrative Data Cannot Reveal: Lived Poverty, Access, and Security

The combined administrative and qualitative evidence demonstrates both the value and the limit of indicator-based interpretation. A decline in a registry count cannot establish whether households have secure livelihoods, adequate nutrition throughout the year, affordable access to health and education, autonomy from recurrent assistance, or resilience to drought and price shocks. The village summaries reveal several conversion factors that composite scores compress: Wairasa's road-corridor location creates opportunities unavailable to more isolated households; Umbu Pabal Selatan's seasonal water constraint conditions the usefulness of land and agricultural machinery; and Anakalang's institutional trajectory suggests that transparency, data discipline, and cooperative organization affect the durability of benefits. Lived poverty must therefore be interpreted as the capacity to use resources and opportunities under specific territorial, institutional, and household conditions, not simply as the presence of infrastructure or programs.

From IDM to Indeks Desa: A Policy Window for Reducing the Measurement-Experience Gap

The comparison is also timely because Indonesia formally replaced the earlier IDM regulatory framework with the Indeks Desa through Ministerial Regulation No. 9 of 2024. The new index contains six dimensions: basic services, social conditions, economy, environment, accessibility, and village governance, and the regulation revoked the 2016 IDM regulation (Ministry of Villages, 2024). The addition of explicit accessibility and governance dimensions is conceptually important for the present study because both can act as conversion conditions between nominal development resources and actually experienced welfare. Nevertheless, a more comprehensive index does not automatically eliminate the measurement-experience gap. Its validity for poverty-sensitive governance depends on whether recorded accessibility corresponds to residents' actual travel time and cost, whether governance indicators capture meaningful participation and accountability, and whether improvements are distributed to remote, land-poor, female-headed, elderly, disabled, and otherwise vulnerable households. The three cases therefore provide a useful empirical setting for assessing whether the newer measurement architecture better aligns administrative visibility with lived deprivation.

Comparative Interpretation: Three Local Conversion Pathways

The cross-case evidence supports three distinct but comparable conversion pathways. Anakalang represents cumulative governance conversion: its transition from disadvantaged to advanced status is associated with data discipline, transparent budgeting, multilevel program convergence, productive assistance, cooperative organization, and participatory social

institutions. Wairasa represents accessibility-enabled selective conversion: strategic road access and a diversified agriculture-service-trade economy expand opportunities, but continued food assistance, weak financial inclusion, educational constraints, and ecological vulnerability indicate uneven household conversion. Umbu Pabal Selatan represents productive conversion under structural constraints: disadvantaged IDM status and low economic-resilience scores coexist with the fastest decline in recorded poverty, comparatively strong FSVA positioning, irrigation and food-estate intervention, household production programs, and integrated housing-social-protection support. These pathways show that the relationship between village status and poverty is neither linear nor purely fiscal. Administrative progress depends on how governance quality, accessibility, water, local institutions, productive assets, human capital, and social protection interact to convert public resources into sustained household capabilities.

Table 4

Cross-case evidence matrix integrating administrative, secondary, and 2026 qualitative field-summary evidence

Case	Official IDM 2024 status	Secondary-data poverty signal (2022-2025)	Cross-index / contextual evidence	Cross-case interpretation	Conversion mechanism and remaining validation
Anakalang (Katikutana)	Advanced; IDM 0.7979 (IKS 0.7771; IKE 0.9500; IKL 0.6667)	Recorded poor households: 15 -> 12 (-20.0%); recorded poor persons: 88 -> 74 (-15.9%).	FSVA 2024: composite 65.62, priority 5; health-worker component priority 1. 2026 field summary: disadvantaged (2015), developing (2017), advanced since 2019; orderly data management, transparent budgeting, multilevel assistance, agricultural machinery for ~300 ha, subsidized fertilizer, cooperative established in 2022, farmer/women groups, child forum, and village reading facility.	Broad convergence strengthened by primary qualitative evidence: advanced status and declining recorded poverty coexist with a reported long-term governance and productive-capacity pathway. Residual poverty and divergent administrative classifications remain.	Cumulative governance conversion with residual deprivation: data discipline, transparent budgeting, multilevel program convergence, productive assets, cooperative organization, and social participation. Remaining validation should examine distributional reach across poorer deciles, peripheral households, women, elderly/disabled residents, and households with weak productive assets.
Wairasa (Umbu Ratu Nggay Barat)	Developing; IDM 0.6875 (IKS 0.8457; IKE 0.7500; IKL 0.4667)	Recorded poor households: 50 -> 42 (-16.0%); recorded poor persons: 301 -> 249 (-17.3%).	FSVA 2024: composite 67.59, priority 5; water-access component priority 1. 2026 field summary: strategic location on the Waingapu-Waibakul corridor near the regency capital; mixed economy of modernizing agriculture, services,	Selective convergence: strategic accessibility, diversified economic activity, strong social/economic IDM dimensions, and declining recorded	Accessibility-enabled selective conversion: road access, markets, food-estate modernization, trade, and customary agroforestry widen opportunity, while finance, education, seasonality,

Case	Official IDM 2024 status	Secondary-data poverty signal (2022-2025)	Cross-index / contextual evidence	Cross-case interpretation	Conversion mechanism and remaining validation
			kiosks/trade and food businesses; Food Estate intervention; Kaliwu/customary agroforestry; routine food-assistance distribution; reported barriers in formal savings-account ownership and education.	poverty indicate opportunity expansion, but continued food assistance and financial/human-capital constraints show that gains are not yet equivalent to autonomous household security.	ecological vulnerability, and recurrent aid can constrain household autonomy. Remaining validation should identify which groups convert these opportunities most successfully.
Umbu Pabal Selatan (Umbu Ratu Nggay Barat)	Disadvantaged; IDM 0.5175 (IKS 0.6857; IKE 0.2667; IKL 0.6000)	Recorded poor households: 34 -> 27 (-20.6%); recorded poor persons: 198 -> 152 (-23.2%), the largest proportional decline among the three cases.	FSVA 2024: composite 74.62, priority 6 (rank 2 in the local table). 2026 field summary: dryland agriculture and traditional livestock; limited information, technology and capital; strong seasonal water dependence; Embung Lokojangi; bokashi training; PK-POM household-yard production; Food Estate Zone 2; PKH, BPNT, rice reserves and BLT-DD; integrated *rumah mandiri* plus electricity, livestock, fish and vegetable-seed support. Interview summary also reports >50% productive-age residents with undergraduate completion, a claim requiring documentary verification.	Strong divergence/status lag: disadvantaged IDM status and very low economic resilience coexist with the fastest decline in recorded poverty and multiple sector-specific productive/social interventions. The case suggests that agricultural, food-security and housing capabilities may improve before composite status catches up.	Productive conversion under structural constraints: water infrastructure, food-estate assets, household production, housing and social protection can improve welfare despite low composite status. Remaining validation should assess seasonality, market and technology/capital constraints, benefit durability, and whether co-financing requirements exclude the poorest households.

Source: Authors' calculations from the supplied poverty verification/evaluation dataset (2022-2025); IDM 2024 from Ministerial Decree No. 400/2024; FSVA 2024 from Dinas Pertanian dan Ketahanan Pangan Kabupaten Sumba Tengah; Food Estate and irrigation context from official Ministry of Agriculture and Sumba Tengah Government sources; and 2026 qualitative field summaries for the district, Anakalang, Wairasa, and Umbu Pabal Selatan. Note: changes in the verification dataset are administrative counts, not BPS village poverty rates. Numerical statements that appear only in synthesized interview summaries are treated as interview-reported evidence pending documentary verification.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that village development status and poverty reduction should not be interpreted as equivalent measures of rural welfare. Across the three cases, the relationship between administrative development status and poverty trajectory is clearly non-linear. Anakalang, which holds an advanced village status, still records residual poverty; Wairasa, classified as developing, combines improved accessibility and diversified economic opportunities with continuing household vulnerability; and Umbu Pabal Selatan, despite being classified as disadvantaged, records the largest proportional decline in the number of poor persons among the three cases. These findings indicate that administrative classifications capture only one dimension of development and do not necessarily reflect the full range of household capabilities and deprivation.

The cross-case comparison further suggests that differences in welfare outcomes are shaped by local conversion conditions rather than by administrative status alone. In Anakalang, relatively stronger outcomes are associated with cumulative governance conversion through transparent budgeting, data discipline, multilevel program convergence, productive assistance, cooperative development, and social participation. In Wairasa, strategic road access and diversified agriculture, services, and trade create broader economic opportunities, yet these gains remain uneven because of continuing constraints in financial inclusion, education, ecological resilience, and dependence on food assistance. In Umbu Pabal Selatan, productive interventions in irrigation, food-estate development, household-yard production, housing, livestock, and social protection have generated sector-specific improvements despite persistent constraints related to water, seasonality, technology, capital, and market access.

These patterns support the study's proposed concept of the measurement–experience gap. The gap does not imply that administrative indices are inaccurate; rather, it highlights that composite indicators simplify complex social realities. Village development indices are useful for comparison, planning, targeting, and monitoring, but they may not fully capture whether services are actually accessible, whether households can convert infrastructure into income opportunities, whether vulnerable groups benefit equally, or whether communities are resilient to recurring shocks. This is particularly evident when different administrative systems (such as IDM, poverty verification data, social registries, and food-security indicators) identify different dimensions and populations of disadvantage.

The findings are also consistent with the capability perspective used in this study. Development resources do not automatically become welfare outcomes because their effects depend on people's ability to convert them into substantive opportunities. A road may exist without reducing transport barriers for remote households; irrigation infrastructure may be available but remain ineffective when access to capital and technology is limited; and social assistance may reduce short-term deprivation without necessarily creating sustainable livelihood security. Thus, the important analytical issue is not only whether development resources are present, but whether households are able to use them to improve income security, service access, participation, resilience, and long-term autonomy.

The transition from IDM to the new *Indeks Desa* creates an important policy opportunity because the new framework gives greater attention to accessibility and village governance. However, the findings suggest that improvements in indicator design alone are insufficient. Administrative measures need to be interpreted together with evidence on actual service access, territorial constraints, household resources, social inclusion, and governance quality. In other words, the effectiveness of the new index will depend on whether formal indicators are able to capture not merely the presence of development inputs, but also their distribution and conversion into real household-level benefits.

Overall, this study demonstrates that rural development is best understood as a process of resource conversion rather than simple status progression. Similar policy interventions may produce different results because local governance capacity, geography, social institutions, livelihood structures, and household resources shape how public programs are translated into welfare. The three cases therefore reinforce the need for a differentiated policy approach: governance and distributional consolidation in Anakalang, stronger financial inclusion and human-capital development in Wairasa, and improved water security, market access, technology,

and inclusion safeguards in Umbu Pabal Selatan. These findings strengthen the argument that administrative village status should be complemented by household-level and qualitative evidence when assessing poverty reduction and development performance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined whether and how village development status corresponds to residents' lived poverty experiences across three purposively selected villages in Central Sumba, Indonesia. The evidence reveals a systematic measurement–experience gap: administrative indices such as the IDM record village-level development inputs and outputs but do not capture household-level capability deprivation, food insecurity, or seasonal vulnerability. Three distinct conversion pathways emerged—cumulative governance conversion (Anakalang), accessibility-enabled diversification (Wairasa), and productive conversion under structural constraints (Umbu Pabal Selatan)—demonstrating that identical policy instruments yield divergent welfare outcomes depending on local governance capacity, territorial accessibility, and livelihood structures.

Theoretically, the study contributes the concept of the measurement–experience gap to the village development literature, operationalized through the capability approach as a lens for distinguishing administrative status from substantive freedoms. The transition from IDM to the *Indeks Desa* (Ministerial Regulation No. 9/2024) offers a policy window, as the new framework gives greater weight to accessibility and governance; however, closing the gap will require direct welfare indicators and community-level monitoring beyond index scores. Principal limitations include the reliance on synthesized field summaries rather than full interview transcripts, the three-village scope within a single regency, and the cross-sectional design, which precludes establishing temporal ordering between interventions and outcomes. Future research should extend the design with transcript-level qualitative evidence, longitudinal panel data, and comparative cases across regencies with varying governance capacity.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Ika Sartika: Conceptualization, research design, methodology, supervision, investigation, data interpretation, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Dyah Poespita Ernawati: Data collection, documentary analysis, investigation, data curation, cross-case analysis, validation, and writing—review and editing. Eko Budi Santoso: Formal analysis, theoretical development, visualization, validation, interpretation of findings, and writing—review and editing. All authors contributed to the development of the analytical framework, discussion of the findings, and final revision of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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