

Collaboration between Social Services and Non-Governmental Organizations in Improving Social Services in Local Government

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of collaboration between local government social services and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in improving the delivery of social services to vulnerable communities. The study focuses on identifying key partnership mechanisms that contribute to improving the distribution of assistance, psychosocial support, and economic empowerment programs. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing document analysis, interviews, and field observations to evaluate how collaborative efforts influence service effectiveness, transparency, and community participation. The findings reveal that structured collaboration between social services and NGOs significantly improves the accessibility and responsiveness of social programs. Through formal agreements such as Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), clear role sharing, active participation in needs assessments, and capacity development initiatives, targeted and sustainable impacts can be achieved. Additionally, joint monitoring and performance evaluation strengthen transparency, enabling continuous program improvements to meet the evolving needs of the community. Key factors influencing the success of this collaboration include commitment, synergy among stakeholders, adequate human resources, organizational capacity, funding, infrastructure, and trust. This study has significant implications for policy development, suggesting that integrated partnerships can enhance the efficiency and inclusiveness of social service programs. However, challenges such as bureaucratic barriers, resource constraints, and differing priorities between government agencies and NGOs highlight the need for adaptive strategies. Future studies should explore innovative approaches, including digital tools for monitoring and evaluation, to optimize collaboration and ensure sustainable social development outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of social development, collaboration between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is becoming increasingly important (Lawelai & Nurmandi, 2024; Mishra & Lahiff, 2018; Voreviciene & Butkeviciene, 2017; Zajda, 2017), especially in the provision of effective and sustainable social services. In Ambon City, the role of the Social Services Agency as the government agency responsible for social welfare is crucial in planning and implementing social programs (Almahdali & Sakir, 2024). On the other hand, NGOs also contribute significantly to supporting the

government in providing social assistance to those in need. Cooperation between the Social Services Agency and NGOs in Ambon City is key to improving the effectiveness and reach of social services, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the poor (Mayasari, 2023; Siahaya & Joris, 2021). With the enactment of Law No. 11/2009 on Social Welfare and Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 12 of 2020, a clear legal framework has been established to support the implementation of community-based social services.

Although collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs in Ambon City shows great potential for improving social services, there are a number of challenges that must be addressed (Arifin et al., 2024; Lasaiba, 2024). Some of the issues that have emerged include limited resources, suboptimal coordination, uneven service coverage, and a lack of evaluation and monitoring (Wildan, 2022). In addition, community participation in social programs is still low, resulting in the effectiveness of the services provided not being maximized (Sahetapy & Bahasoan, 2023). These problems indicate that despite the efforts made, there are still gaps that need to be addressed to achieve better social services.

In the existing literature, although many studies have been conducted on collaboration between the government and NGOs in the context of social services, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding of the dynamics of this collaboration in Ambon City. Most studies focus more on theoretical aspects and lack in-depth empirical analysis of the challenges and successes of such collaboration (Bernot et al., 2024; Van Ewijk et al., 2015). Furthermore, existing research often does not consider the specific local context, so the results may not be entirely relevant to the situation in Ambon City. Therefore, it is important to conduct more focused and contextual research to better understand how this collaboration can be improved.

As a solution to overcome the problems faced, this study will explore various strategies that can be implemented to improve collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs. The proposed approach includes increasing organizational capacity, strengthening communication and coordination between parties, and increasing community participation in program planning and implementation. By identifying and implementing these strategies, it is hoped that collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs can become more effective and sustainable, so that social services can reach more people in need.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand and address the challenges faced in collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs in Ambon City. With the increasing complexity of social problems faced by the community, this study is expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academics in formulating better strategies to improve social services. Additionally, this study will contribute to the development of theory and practice of collaboration in the context of social services in Indonesia, particularly in areas facing similar challenges (Ishaka et al., 2023).

The objectives of this study are to analyze the dynamics of collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs in the provision of social services in Ambon City, as well as to identify existing challenges and opportunities. This study also aims to provide strategic recommendations that can be applied to improve the effectiveness of this collaboration. Thus, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for the development of better social service policies and practices in the future.

The novelty of this research lies in the contextual approach used to analyze the collaboration between the Social Services Agency and NGOs in Ambon City. This study will not only examine theoretical aspects but will also involve in-depth empirical analysis through interviews and surveys with stakeholders. As a result, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and successes of collaboration in the local context, as well as relevant and applicable recommendations to improve social services in Ambon City.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design located at the Benteng Village Office, Nusaniwe District, Ambon City. The focus of the study is the authority of the population administration services in Benteng Village in their efforts to achieve quality public services as measured by five indicators, namely Tangible, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using triangulation techniques to ensure the validity of data in this qualitative study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Triangulation techniques include three methods, namely interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including village office employees and recipients of administrative services, to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and views regarding service quality. Observations were conducted directly at the Benteng Village Office to monitor the service process and interactions between employees and the community, including physical conditions and the work environment that could affect service quality. In addition, documentation in the form of service reports, policies, and procedures at the village office were reviewed as additional relevant data sources to strengthen the research findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed the concept of (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of four main stages, namely data collection, data presentation, data condensation, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the initial stage, data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation are collected and organized systematically. Next, the data are presented in a structured form such as tables, graphs, or narratives to facilitate the analysis process. The data condensation stage involves filtering and selecting relevant information and identifying the main themes and patterns

from the collected data. Finally, the researcher draws conclusions based on the analysis results and conducts verification to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research findings. With the application of these data collection and analysis techniques, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the authority of the population administration services and the quality of public services in Benteng Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vision and Mission of the Social Affairs Agency

The vision of the Social Affairs Agency of Ambon City explicitly directs the organization towards the creation of social welfare that is humanistic, adaptive, dedicated, responsive, and inclusive. This vision underscores the agency's commitment to serving all segments of society, particularly the vulnerable, through an approach that not only focuses on meeting basic needs but also on respecting human rights and empowering individuals. The clarity of this vision serves as a strategic foundation guiding all activities and programs (Kaehne, 2020), ensuring that all efforts to deliver social services are carried out in a structured and integrated manner.

The mission encompasses a series of operational actions, including social protection for vulnerable groups, improving community access to social services, community empowerment, and strengthening strategic partnerships with various parties. This approach reflects a comprehensive social service paradigm that not only provides temporary assistance but also builds community capacity and independence. With this focus, the organization seeks to create sustainable social dynamics, where communities can actively participate in the social development process according to their capacities and needs (Christens & Lin, 2014; Nuttavuthisit et al., 2015).

The clear strategic direction in the vision and mission reflects the organization's maturity in responding to complex social challenges (Gurley et al., 2015; Vidgen et al., 2017). The setting of clear objectives enables the optimization of resources and more effective and efficient program management. This also demonstrates a level of managerial maturity that is able to integrate the values of inclusiveness and responsiveness into policies and service practices, which in turn increases the legitimacy and trust of the community towards the institution.

Conceptually, the vision and mission serve as internal control instruments in maintaining the consistency of the organization's direction and evaluating the achievement of social programs (Adebanke Olusola et al., 2022; Sanderson, 2016). A strong vision serves as an ideal image that motivates performance, while the mission provides a concrete and measurable roadmap for implementation. The success of social programs and the level of public satisfaction demonstrate that the vision and mission of the Ambon City Social Service Agency are not merely administrative documents but have become a framework that strengthens institutional functions in achieving sustainable social welfare goals.

Organizational Structure, Functions, and Duties of the Social Services Agency

The duties of the Ambon City Social Services Agency, which include the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of social policies, demonstrate a systematic and structured work process that serves as the main framework for achieving social service objectives. This study found that the implementation of these tasks is supported by a clear and organized organizational structure, which enables the appropriate distribution of responsibilities among work units. This well-defined organizational structure facilitates coordination between departments (Trigueiro-Fernande et al., 2022; Winasti et al., 2023), allowing decision-making and program implementation to run more smoothly and in a targeted manner.

Furthermore, the study's findings reveal that a solid organizational structure is a key factor in improving service accountability. With specific division of functions, each unit can focus on its roles and responsibilities without overlap, thereby minimizing the potential for internal conflict and increasing work transparency (Barabba, 2022; Fahn & Zanarone, 2022; Král & Schnackenberg, 2024). This reflects the managerial maturity of the Social Services Agency in managing human resources and administration, which has a direct impact on the quality and consistency of the social programs implemented.

Additionally, the effectiveness of social program implementation also heavily depends on the firmness of organizational functions that can accommodate the dynamic needs of the community while responding to various emerging challenges (Manit et al., 2019). This study found that with a flexible yet clear structure, the Social Services Department can optimize resource utilization and accelerate the resolution of social issues. This highlights the crucial role of organizational structure in fostering synergy and harmony among work units to achieve optimal service outcomes.

The research findings emphasize that clarity in organizational structure and proper division of functions are not merely administrative aspects but strategic foundations that determine the success of social policy implementation at the Ambon City Social Affairs Office. An organization that can effectively coordinate internal functions will be better prepared to address the increasing complexity of social tasks while ensuring that service programs align with standards and community needs. Therefore, strengthening organizational structure is a priority in efforts to enhance the quality of social services sustainably.

Collaboration between Social Services and NGOs in Improving Social Services

Collaboration between Social Services and NGOs in improving social services in Ambon has shown a significant positive impact on the distribution of aid to vulnerable communities. Through a formal agreement, both parties can ensure transparency and optimal coordination in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Partnerships between the government and NGOs can increase the effectiveness of social services by strengthening synergies in program planning and implementation (Bano, 2019; Gupta & Koontz, 2019). In this context, collaboration not only improves the accuracy of social

assistance distribution but also ensures that resources are used efficiently to achieve welfare objectives.

Furthermore, the success of this collaboration can be attributed to the existence of good communication mechanisms and effective monitoring systems (Nwauche, 2022; Shamsuzzoha et al., 2017; Sorce, 2021). By sharing accurate data and information, the Social Services Agency and NGOs are able to identify community needs more precisely, making interventions more responsive and appropriate to conditions on the ground. This is in line with research showing that cross-sector partnerships can overcome government resource constraints and create a more holistic approach to addressing social issues (Andrews & Entwistle, 2010; Bode et al., 2019). Thus, this cooperation model can serve as a reference for other regions facing similar challenges in improving social service distribution.

Although this collaboration has shown positive results, there are several challenges that need to be addressed, such as differences in priorities between the Social Services Agency and NGOs, as well as bureaucratic obstacles that can hinder the implementation process. Therefore, efforts are needed to strengthen coordination through flexible and innovative approaches, such as the use of technology in program monitoring and evaluation. This will ensure the sustainability of this collaboration and continue to enhance its impact on community welfare. As social needs evolve, stronger synergy between the government and NGOs is expected to emerge in creating effective and sustainable solutions.

The Role of NGOs in Community Empowerment

NGOs play a crucial role in community empowerment by providing direct assistance, conducting needs assessments, and offering psychosocial services to vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. Through independence-oriented programs, NGOs not only provide material support but also build individual capacity to adapt to social challenges. In line with the research by (Fisher et al., 2023; Mutiarin et al., 2024; van Wijk et al., 2020) structured interventions carried out by NGOs can be an effective solution in overcoming various social problems by ensuring that the assistance provided has a long-term impact. This approach allows communities to develop independently, without complete dependence on external assistance.

Furthermore, the empowerment carried out by NGOs contributes to creating a more inclusive environment by raising public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities (Jayakumar, 2005; Meyers, 2014). Social campaigns, skills training, and policy advocacy conducted by NGOs can change community mindsets, making them more open to diversity and equality. In this context, the involvement of NGOs is not only reactive in providing assistance but also proactive in shaping a more supportive social system. Thus, the existence of NGOs becomes a catalyst for change that strengthens the collective capacity of communities to adapt to various challenges.

However, in practice, NGOs face a number of challenges in implementing empowerment programs, such as limited resources, cultural resistance, and

unsupportive policies (Marzuki et al., 2022; Tierney & Boodoosingh, 2020). To overcome these obstacles, NGOs need to build collaboration with various parties, including the government and the private sector, to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs they implement. With an adaptive and innovative approach, NGOs can continue to contribute to strengthening community capacity and creating sustainable social change. Therefore, their role in community empowerment needs to be continuously appreciated and supported so that its impact can be more widespread and profound.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the success of social strategies in improving community welfare, particularly through clear vision and mission statements, effective organizational structures, and close collaboration between the government and NGOs. Key findings indicate that a systematic and structured approach to social policy can improve transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of services to the community. In addition, NGO involvement in community empowerment has proven to strengthen social capacity through an independence-based approach, which not only provides direct assistance but also builds a foundation for social sustainability. Overall, these results emphasize the importance of cross-sectoral coordination in addressing social challenges in a more holistic and adaptive manner.

The implications of this study provide insights for the development of more inclusive and community empowerment-oriented policies. However, there are several limitations that need to be considered, such as bureaucratic challenges, resource constraints, and differences in priorities among parties involved in social programs. Therefore, further research is needed to explore strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of social policy implementation, including the use of technology in program monitoring and evaluation. With a more flexible and innovative approach, the effectiveness of collaboration in improving social services can be further strengthened and expanded.

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