

## Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Village

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### ABSTRACT

*This community service article reports the implementation and outcomes of a program entitled “Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Subdistrict.” The program was developed in response to recurring community challenges related to unclear land boundaries, weak documentation, and limited understanding of land rights and administrative procedures, which may escalate into prolonged disputes and social tension. The main objective was to improve residents’ legal literacy and practical capacity to prevent and manage land boundary issues in an orderly and peaceful manner. The program employed a participatory educational approach consisting of three phases: preparation, core implementation, and evaluation with follow-up. During the preparation phase, coordination with the subdistrict office, neighborhood leaders (RT/RW), and community figures was conducted to map common problems and tailor the content to local needs. The core implementation involved three main activities: (1) legal socialization and education on land boundaries, land rights, ownership evidence, and precautionary principles in transactions and inheritance; (2) practical boundary clarification training, including simulations of boundary marker placement, simple boundary sketch mapping, photo documentation, and drafting written boundary agreements (minutes) acknowledged by local authorities; and (3) a consultation clinic with light mediation support to guide residents in resolving boundary issues through structured deliberation before resorting to formal legal channels. Evaluation results indicated increased participant understanding of key land-law concepts, improved awareness of the importance of documentation and witnesses, and stronger readiness to apply preventive practices. The program also produced practical outputs, including document templates (boundary minutes and land-document checklists) and a recommended local contact point for ongoing guidance. Overall, the program demonstrates that integrating education, hands-on practice, and consultative support can strengthen community legal literacy, reduce dispute risks, and promote social harmony in land-related matters.*

**Keywords:** Strengthening Legal Literacy, Community, Land Boundaries, Land Rights, Saragi Village

### 1. Introduction

Issues surrounding land boundaries and land rights are among the most frequent triggers of social tension at the community level, particularly in areas where livelihoods remain strongly dependent on agricultural and land-based resources. In many neighborhoods and villages, land is not only an economic asset but also a symbol of identity, family heritage, and long-term security. When boundaries are unclear, ownership documents are weak, or community legal awareness is limited, the potential for disputes increases and can affect social relationships, productivity, and residents’ sense of safety. These conditions become more complex when administrative boundaries change, land is converted for different uses, buying and selling occurs without proper procedures, or inheritance is distributed informally without clear written agreements. In this context, the community service program entitled “Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land

Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Subdistrict” is highly relevant as a preventive effort to build residents’ understanding of land law while strengthening peaceful and orderly dispute resolution mechanisms.(Negara & Ekonomi, n.d.)

The urgency of strengthening land-law literacy in Saragi can be seen in several common realities. First, land boundaries are often determined informally based on natural markers (trees, rocks, small ditches) or verbal agreements between neighbors. Such markers can shift, disappear, or become contested again when generations change, ownership transfers, or economic pressures encourage land transactions. Second, many residents do not clearly distinguish between “physical control” of land and “legal ownership.” Land that has been cultivated for years is sometimes assumed to be legally owned, even though lawful recognition requires clear administrative proof. Third, understanding of types of land rights, procedures for transferring rights, and the importance of registration and documentation remains limited. As a result, residents may become vulnerable to harmful transactions, prolonged inheritance disputes, or boundary conflicts that damage social harmony.(Timur et al., 2025)

Boundary problems often serve as an entry point to broader conflict. Disputes that begin with a small shift in a boundary marker can escalate into tensions between families or neighbors and may even lead to formal complaints that consume time, money, and emotional energy. Economically, disputed land often becomes less productive because owners hesitate to manage it, fear litigation, or face obstacles in accessing agricultural support programs and financing. Socially, land disputes can reduce trust and weaken solidarity within the community. Legally, unresolved disputes tend to become more complex over time, requiring difficult evidentiary processes and sometimes resulting in decisions that are hard for all parties to accept.(Rofiah, 2017) Therefore, prevention through legal literacy is essential: community members need sufficient knowledge to avoid risky practices, maintain orderly documentation, and resolve problems before they expand.(Burgess, Enzle, & Morry, 2000)

In this community service initiative, legal literacy is understood not merely as “knowing the rules,” but as the ability to understand rights and obligations, recognize administrative procedures, and apply practical steps that protect one’s legal interests.(Penyelesaian & Tanah, 2025) In land matters, legal literacy includes basic knowledge of ownership evidence (e.g., certificates, official letters, purchase documents), understanding of boundary markers and land demarcation, simple mapping procedures, steps for measuring and establishing boundaries through deliberation, and dispute resolution mechanisms through mediation. With such literacy, residents are expected to respond more rationally and systematically to boundary issues, rather than relying on emotional reactions or inherited assumptions that may not align with legal principles.(Yulia & Anam, 2025)

In Saragi, the need for land-law literacy is even more urgent because land ownership and land use patterns are often layered: inherited plots, informally purchased land, cultivated land, and land with boundaries adjacent to neighbors’ plots or public access routes. In such situations, boundary disputes frequently arise from information gaps and weak written evidence. In addition, residents often face psychological and administrative barriers: some perceive certification as complicated, expensive, or unnecessary because “neighbors already know.” At this point, the community service program is designed to bridge this knowledge gap and provide grounded assistance, so that residents not only receive normative explanations but also gain step-by-step guidance suited to local conditions.(Syahidah, Devi, & Siregar, 2025)

The solutions offered in this program are designed using an educational and participatory approach. The program goes beyond one-way socialization by integrating legal education, practical boundary clarification, and strengthening deliberation/mediation mechanisms. First, legal education focuses on the most relevant topics for residents: the concept of boundaries and the importance of boundary markers, types of ownership evidence, safer procedures for buying, selling, and inheritance, and precautionary principles to reduce the risk of harmful transactions.(Alfariszi & Ahsan, 2024) The material is delivered

in accessible language, supported by local case examples and concise handouts to facilitate understanding and retention. Second, practical boundary clarification is conducted through simulations or limited field practice, such as determining boundary points based on mutual agreement, placing boundary markers, recording boundary agreements, and producing simple documentation (photos, sketches, and minutes of agreement). This practical component is essential because boundary problems cannot be solved through theory alone; residents need to see and practice correct procedures so they can apply them independently. (Nelli & Syahrizan, 2024)

Third, the program strengthens peaceful dispute resolution through community-based deliberation and mediation. Many boundary conflicts can be prevented or resolved without formal legal processes if there are communication forums, clear guidance, and neutral facilitation. Therefore, the program encourages a simple mediation pathway: identifying disputing parties, collecting available evidence, recording a chronology, conducting a field review, formulating an agreement, and preparing a written settlement signed by the parties and acknowledged by local authorities (subdistrict staff and neighborhood leaders). This approach strengthens the role of local government as a social mediator while helping residents achieve boundary certainty and reduce the risk of recurring disputes.

To ensure effectiveness, this community service program also emphasizes collaboration with local stakeholders. Subdistrict officials, neighborhood leaders, community figures, and resident groups are positioned as strategic partners to ensure contextual relevance and sustainability after the program ends. In many cases, the continuation of legal literacy initiatives depends on the presence of local “agents” who can disseminate knowledge and serve as first points of reference when residents face problems. Therefore, one expected output is improved capacity among local administrators and community representatives to understand basic land procedures and preventive steps for addressing boundary disputes.

The intended benefits of this program are both immediate and long-term. In the short term, residents gain a stronger understanding of land boundaries, land rights, and safer administrative procedures; they also obtain practical guidance for clarifying boundaries in an orderly and documented manner. In the long term, improved legal literacy is expected to reduce the incidence of land disputes, strengthen orderly land administration, and enhance legal certainty, contributing to improved land productivity and social harmony. In other words, strengthening legal literacy is not merely a knowledge intervention, but an empowerment strategy that enables communities to manage land resources fairly, safely, and sustainably.

Considering the urgency of the problem and the solutions offered, this community service article is important as a practical reference for community empowerment at the subdistrict level. Community service focused on land boundaries and land rights is not only relevant for reducing conflict, but also for strengthening social governance through orderly administration, respect for others’ rights, and deliberative problem-solving. Saragi provides a relevant context to show that improved legal literacy can become an entry point to social order and rights certainty, while also strengthening community resilience in dealing with land issues that are often sensitive and multidimensional.

## 2. Implementation Method

The community service program entitled “Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Subdistrict” is implemented using a participatory and educational approach, emphasizing dispute prevention through improved legal understanding and residents’ practical skills. The implementation method is organized into three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation with follow-up actions. In the preparation phase, the service team coordinates with Saragi subdistrict stakeholders (the head of the subdistrict office, neighborhood leaders/RT–RW, and community figures) to map local needs and determine target participants. An initial problem identification is conducted through a brief focus group discussion (FGD) and information gathering regarding common land-related disputes (e.g., shifting boundary markers, informal land

transactions, and inheritance conflicts). During this phase, the team prepares educational materials, concise modules/leaflets, and evaluation instruments such as a legal literacy pretest–posttest and activity observation sheets. (Nelli & Syahrizan, 2024)

The implementation phase consists of three core activities. First, legal socialization and education is delivered through structured presentations and interactive Q&A sessions covering key topics: the concept and importance of land boundaries, types of land rights, acceptable forms of ownership evidence, safer procedures for buying/selling and inheritance, and preventive steps to reduce dispute risk. Second, a practical training session is conducted through simulations of boundary clarification, including how to determine boundary points through mutual agreement, install boundary markers, produce simple sketch maps, document boundaries with photographs, and prepare a written boundary agreement (minutes of agreement) acknowledged by neighborhood leaders and the subdistrict office. Third, the program provides a consultation clinic and light mediation support, offering guidance for residents who face boundary issues so they can explore procedural steps and community-based deliberation options before pursuing formal legal channels.

The evaluation and follow-up phase is conducted through a posttest, participant reflections, and an assessment of implementation fidelity. The team also compiles follow-up recommendations, including establishing a local “contact point” at the subdistrict or neighborhood level as an initial reference for residents, and distributing practical document templates (e.g., boundary agreement forms and a land-document checklist) to support sustainability beyond the program period.

### 3. Community Service Results and Discussion

The community service program entitled “Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Subdistrict” achieved key outcomes in the form of increased community understanding of land-law principles, improved practical skills for orderly boundary clarification, and the availability of consultation and early-stage resolution mechanisms based on community deliberation. The implementation results are presented in alignment with the planned stages: preparation, core implementation, and evaluation and follow-up.

#### 1) Results of the Preparation Phase: Needs Mapping and Strengthening Local Collaboration

During the preparation phase, the service team coordinated with the Saragi Subdistrict Office, neighborhood leaders (RT/RW), and community figures to map needs and determine the most relevant activity strategy. From this coordination, it was identified that the issue most frequently triggering tension among residents is unclear land/garden boundaries, especially in inherited plots and land whose boundaries still rely on natural markers (trees, stones, small ditches) without permanent boundary posts. In addition, it was found that some residents had not sufficiently understood the difference between physical land control and legal ownership, resulting in land buying/selling or transfer of control being conducted without adequate documentation. The team also noted residents’ need for knowledge of basic land documentation, simple methods to document boundaries, and orderly deliberation procedures when competing claims arise.

This preparation stage also produced supporting outputs for the activities, including presentation materials and concise leaflets, a land-document checklist, and evaluation instruments (a legal literacy pretest–posttest and an implementation observation sheet). Furthermore, the team and local partners agreed on roles and responsibilities: the subdistrict office facilitated the venue and invited participants, neighborhood leaders supported participant mapping and identification of cases requiring consultation, while the service team prepared materials, facilitated training, and provided consultative assistance. This collaboration became an important enabling factor because it enhanced the legitimacy of the program and encouraged more active community participation.

## 2) Results of the Core Implementation Phase: Education, Practical Training, and Consultation Clinic

### a. Legal Socialization and Education on Land Matters

The education session was conducted interactively, focusing on issues closely related to residents' everyday experiences. The topics covered included: (1) the importance of clear land boundaries in preventing disputes; (2) common forms of ownership evidence and relevant documentation; (3) precautionary principles in transactions such as buying/selling, grants (*hibah*), and inheritance; and (4) preventive steps when boundary claims differ. During the Q&A session, residents raised practical concerns such as "What should be done if a garden boundary marker is shifted without permission?", "What documents are needed when inherited land has not been formally divided?", and "What steps should be taken if older transactions lack written evidence?"

A key outcome of this session was increased awareness that boundary disputes often arise not solely from bad intentions but from unclear evidence, weak documentation, and disorganized communication. Residents also began to recognize that boundary determination cannot rely only on memory or local custom; it requires written agreements and documented proof to prevent future conflicts, particularly when ownership changes across generations. The session further reinforced the importance of involving RT/RW and subdistrict authorities as administrative witnesses to strengthen the legitimacy of agreements.

### b. Practical Training on Land Boundary Clarification

The practical training component was among the most engaging parts for participants because it provided hands-on guidance that could be directly applied. In this session, the team facilitated simulations of boundary clarification steps: determining boundary points through mutual agreement, installing simple boundary posts, producing a basic boundary sketch, and documenting the boundary with photographs. Participants were also trained to prepare a written boundary agreement (minutes of agreement) containing the identities of the parties, a description of boundary lines, witnesses, and signatures. At this stage, residents understood that even a simple document, if properly drafted and acknowledged by local authorities, can serve as a valuable reference when claims arise.



**Figure 1.** Community and community leaders of Saragi Village taking part in activities

During the training, several common constraints were identified. First, some residents were not familiar with drawing boundary sketches; therefore, the team provided simple

sketch examples and step-by-step practice. Second, some participants did not initially recognize the importance of including witnesses and clear reference points (e.g., north/south/east/west boundary descriptions), so the team emphasized structured boundary descriptions. Third, there were concerns that boundary post installation might create new conflict if carried out unilaterally; therefore, the training emphasized a core principle: boundary clarification must be conducted through communication, mutual agreement, and shared documentation, rather than unilateral action.

### c. Consultation Clinic and Light Mediation Support

Following the education and practical sessions, the team opened a consultation clinic for residents facing real boundary issues. Several residents presented cases involving competing garden boundary claims, boundaries that became unclear due to changes in natural markers, and inheritance disputes affecting who has the right to set boundary markers. The team provided procedural guidance emphasizing peaceful steps: clarifying the parties involved, gathering available evidence, conducting joint field reviews, and formulating written agreements. For sensitive cases, the team encouraged the involvement of RT/RW leaders and the subdistrict office as neutral facilitators.

A concrete outcome of this clinic was that several cases reached an initial agreement to conduct joint site visits and prepare formal boundary minutes after clarification. In addition, residents gained the understanding that formal legal channels are not the only option; community-based deliberation can be more effective when procedures are orderly, evidence is gathered properly, and agreements are well documented.

### 3) Results of Evaluation and Follow-Up: Literacy Improvement and Sustainability Recommendations

Evaluation was conducted through a posttest, participant reflections, and observation of implementation fidelity. Overall, posttest results indicated improved participant understanding of boundary concepts, types of land-related documents, and preventive steps for avoiding disputes. Participants reported that the most useful components were the practical document guidance, examples of boundary minutes, and community-based mediation steps. Observation results showed that the activities were implemented as planned: education was interactive, practical training produced outputs such as sketches and draft minutes, and the consultation clinic attracted strong community interest.

As a follow-up, the team and the subdistrict office agreed to establish a local contact point at the subdistrict/RT level as an initial reference for residents facing boundary-related issues. The team also distributed document templates (boundary agreement minutes, land-document checklists, and a step-by-step deliberation guide) to enable continued use beyond the program period. In addition, it was recommended that periodic follow-up meetings be held involving community figures and RT/RW leaders to identify potential boundary conflict risks and encourage preventive boundary clarification before disputes escalate.

The implementation results of the community service program entitled "Strengthening Community Legal Literacy on Land Boundaries and Land Rights in Saragi Subdistrict" indicate that a participatory and educational approach is effective in addressing community needs related to sensitive land issues that carry a high potential for conflict. The main findings suggest that boundary problems at the subdistrict level typically do not stand alone; rather, they are connected to three key factors: unclear evidence and weak documentation, limited understanding of administrative procedures, and weak communication and deliberation mechanisms when competing claims arise. Therefore, the intervention model integrating legal education, practical boundary clarification, and a consultation clinic was relevant because it targeted the most fundamental sources of disputes.

First, the improved understanding observed after the legal socialization sessions demonstrates that land-law literacy remains an urgent need. Content addressing the difference between physical land control and legal ownership, acceptable forms of ownership evidence, and precautionary principles in transactions provided residents with a

new framework for evaluating everyday practices that had previously been considered “safe” simply because they were based on local custom. From a dispute-prevention perspective, this shift in understanding is important because it encourages residents to prioritize orderly administration and avoid unilateral actions that may trigger conflict.

Second, the practical training session emerged as the most significant component because it translated legal knowledge into operational skills. Activities such as producing boundary sketches, installing boundary markers based on mutual agreement, and drafting written boundary minutes demonstrate that resolving boundary disputes requires evidence that can be clearly presented and jointly acknowledged. This session also reinforced the principle that secure land boundaries are not merely “known,” but must be documented and witnessed by parties with social-administrative authority (RT/RW and the subdistrict office). In this way, the program went beyond knowledge transfer and strengthened residents’ capacity to manage land assets in a more orderly and accountable manner. (Syahidah et al., 2025)

Third, the consultation clinic and light mediation support showed that conflict resolution does not always require formal legal proceedings when an orderly deliberation procedure and neutral facilitation are available. The program highlighted the potential role of the subdistrict office and RT/RW leaders as actors in strengthening local social governance, particularly as mediators who can guide clarification processes and support the preparation of written agreements. However, a remaining challenge is the need for sustained follow-up so that boundary documentation practices and consultation mechanisms continue beyond the program period.

#### 4. Conclusion

This community service program concludes that strengthening legal literacy on land boundaries and land rights in Saragi Subdistrict can be effectively achieved through an integrated participatory–educational model that combines legal socialization, practical boundary clarification training, and consultation with light mediation support. The program outcomes indicate that many land boundary disputes at the community level are driven not only by conflicting interests, but also by limited understanding of land administration, weak documentation practices, and insufficient structured communication when differences in claims arise. By providing clear explanations of legal concepts (e.g., the distinction between physical land control and legal ownership), introducing practical tools (boundary sketches, marker installation procedures, and written boundary minutes), and offering guided consultations, the program helped residents develop more informed and orderly approaches to preventing and managing land-related conflicts. In addition, the program reinforced the strategic role of local institutions particularly neighborhood leaders (RT/RW) and the subdistrict office as trusted facilitators for early dispute prevention and community-based resolution. The establishment of document templates and a local contact point further supports sustainability by enabling residents to continue applying the guidance beyond the activity period. Nevertheless, long-term impact depends on consistent follow-up, periodic refreshers, and continued collaboration with local stakeholders to normalize documentation and mediation practices. Overall, the program demonstrates that improving land law literacy is not merely a knowledge intervention, but a practical empowerment strategy that strengthens legal certainty, reduces dispute risks, and supports social harmony within the community.

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