

THE ROLE OF THE VILLAGE GOVERNMENT IN INCREASING REGIONAL POTENTIAL IN THE SIPOLHA HORIZON VILLAGE, SIMALUNGUN REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

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Sipolha Horison Village, located in Pematang Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, has been designated by the local government as a priority for regional development and tourism along Lake Toba's shores. Despite this designation, the village continues to face significant challenges in harnessing its regional potential due to limited governmental intervention, particularly at the Local Government level, which serves as the principal administrative actor. This study aims to examine the role of the Local government in developing the regional potential of Sipolha Horizon Village. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and verified through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that the government's role as regulator is reflected in infrastructure improvements and tourism revitalization efforts; however, the absence of supporting policies undermines its effectiveness. As a catalyst, the government remains insufficient, as evidenced by community dissatisfaction with administrative services and access to information. In its facilitator role, the government has introduced business loan assistance and engaged in private-sector collaborations for farmer group training; however, these measures are still insufficient to support community and regional needs fully. The study concludes that enhancing institutional capacity, establishing stronger regulatory frameworks, and increasing community engagement are crucial to advancing the sustainable development and competitiveness of Sipolha Horizon Village.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's decentralization and regional autonomy reforms have shifted considerable responsibilities for development and public services from the central government to local governments. Under Law No. 23/2014 on Regional Government and its implementing regulations, local governments are expected to design and deliver context-sensitive policies that harness local resources and capacities to improve welfare and regional competitiveness. At the frontline of this decentralized system are the sub-municipal administrative units of local government, which, although administratively different from *desa*, function as the closest formal government interface with urban and peri-urban communities and thus play a critical role in translating higher-level policy into local outcomes. Effective local government is therefore pivotal for community empowerment, public service provision, and the sustainable utilization of regional potential.

Sipolha Horison (often shortened to Sipolha) is a local government in Pematang Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, located on the eastern shoreline of Lake Toba, a nationally prioritized tourism region under the National Strategic Tourism Areas program. The area boasts multiple endowments, including shoreline and beachscapes (Pantai Larepa), scenic hills (Bukit Sipolha), historical tourism assets (the Tugu Ikan Mas replica), and agricultural lands

that support paddy cultivation, horticulture, coffee production, and fish farming. Despite this multifaceted potential, the development trajectory of Sipolha has been uneven: many tourist sites remain underpromoted or physically neglected, infrastructure access (notably road approaches) is deficient, community-based organizations (notably farmer groups) face limited capacity and access to resources, and local administrative services exhibit gaps in responsiveness and facilitation. These empirical observations are documented in the primary field data of the present thesis and corroborated by interviews with local actors, including the Head of Local Government, community leaders, farmer-group heads, and tourism managers.

Scholarly work on local government roles in Indonesia has produced significant insights into participatory governance, leadership, and policy implementation. For example, studies have shown that participatory and well-coordinated local governance can spur community economic initiatives and strengthen institutional resilience (Suryadi, 2020; Hasni Maddimurni, 2015; Goestyari, 2021). Research focused on tourism villages and rural empowerment underscores the capacity of local policies and public-private partnerships to expand income opportunities and institutionalize value chains (Febrison et al., 2019). However, much of the Indonesian literature concentrates on village government, leaving a relative paucity of empirical

and theoretical exploration at the local government level, particularly for local governments situated in tourism-adjacent, peri-urban landscapes, such as Sipolha Horizon. The institutional modalities, administrative constraints, and participatory dynamics at the local government scale differ from *desa* and therefore merit focused analysis.

The theoretical lens adopted in this study is Labolo's (2010) typology of local government roles: regulator, catalyst, and facilitator, which provides operational indicators to evaluate local government effectiveness in steering development, mobilizing community action, and enabling resource access. This tripartite framework is beneficial for diagnosing where local government functions perform well (in infrastructure initiatives or formal program rollouts) and where deficits persist (in information access, institutional coordination, or community capacity building). The empirical material of the thesis applies and tests this framework in the context of Sipolha Horizon, revealing the disaggregated strengths and weaknesses across the three roles.

From the literature review and the local evidence, a research gap emerges: while previous studies document local government roles in rural and tourism governance, there is limited empirical analysis of how local government administrations operating under subdistrict supervision and typically with constrained budgets operationalize the triadic roles of regulator, catalyst, and facilitator to develop regionally strategic sites that combine tourism and agriculture. In particular, the interactions between local government policy actions, community institutions (such as farmer groups), and private/public partners (including banks, NGOs, and regency programs) remain under-examined in peri-urban, tourism-adjacent settings. This gap motivates the present inquiry.

Accordingly, this study asks the following primary research question: How does the local government exercise its roles as regulator, catalyst, and facilitator to enhance regional potential in Sipolha Horizon Village, Simalungun Regency? Secondary questions probe which institutional and policy instruments have been applied, how local actors perceive the effectiveness of local government actions, and what structural constraints limit role fulfillment (budgetary limits, intergovernmental coordination, infrastructural deficits, and community capacities).

The novelty of this paper is twofold. First, it shifts empirical attention to local government-level governance in a tourism-agriculture mixed landscape, thereby extending debates that have concentrated mainly on rural *desa* governance. Second, it operationalizes Labolo's role typology in a localized, evidence-based manner, combining interviews, observation, and document analysis to offer actionable policy diagnostics for sub-municipal administrators. The study's findings advance theoretical understanding of how constrained local bureaucracies can nevertheless act as effective intermediaries between higher-level policy and community initiatives, and they provide concrete, context-sensitive recommendations for policy redesign, capacity building, and partnership models that would improve the region's development trajectory.

In the following sections, the paper presents a literature review and conceptual framework, followed by a concise explanation of the qualitative methodology (including interviews, observation, and triangulation). The empirical findings are then organized around the three role

dimensions, and a discussion synthesizes lessons for both theory and practice. Ultimately, this study aims to inform both academic debates on sub-municipal governance and the practical policymaking of Simalungun Regency and other regions with similar peri-urban tourism potentials.

2. METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine and understand the role of the local government in enhancing regional potential in Sipolha Horizon Village, Simalungun Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to describe, interpret, and analyze social phenomena that numerical data cannot represent. As Williams (cited in Hardani et al., 2020:16) explains, qualitative research differs from other approaches in its fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and the subjects, the possibilities of generalization and causal explanation, and the influence of values on the research process. Creswell (2015:5) defines qualitative research as an inquiry aimed at describing existing phenomena—both natural and human-made—by exploring their forms, activities, characteristics, relationships, similarities, and differences. In line with this perspective, the study aimed to obtain a deep understanding of how local governance is practiced at the local government level and how it influences the process of developing regional potential.

The research was conducted in Sipolha Horizon Village, located in Pematang Sidamanik District, Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra Province. According to Nasution (2003:43), the research location should represent a social setting consisting of actors, places, and activities that can be directly observed. Sipolha Horizon was selected purposively because it represents a distinctive area with a combination of tourism, agricultural, and community-based potentials located along the shores of Lake Toba. Despite its abundant resources, the area has not yet achieved optimal development due to the lack of government involvement and inadequate coordination between administrative levels. These conditions make Sipolha Horizon a relevant and strategic setting for understanding how a local government performs its duties as the closest administrative unit to the community in promoting local development.

Data for this study were collected from a range of informants who were considered knowledgeable and relevant to the research focus. As Sugiyono (2020:286) notes, qualitative research does not rely on the concept of population and sample but instead on informants who can provide accurate and trustworthy insights regarding the phenomena under study. The informants were identified using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling, as defined by Ibrahim (2018:72), involves selecting participants who are deliberately chosen to meet the research objectives. In contrast, snowball sampling, as explained by Ibrahim (2018:73), allows for the identification of new informants through referrals from previous ones. The research involved thirteen key informants, including the Head of the District of Pematang Sidamanik, the Local Government Head of Sipolha Horizon, the Chairperson of the Community Empowerment Institution (LPM), several representatives

from farmer groups, a tourism site manager, farmers, and residents. These informants were selected because of their roles and experiences related to local governance, community development, and the utilization of regional potential.

The process of data collection involved both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were gathered through interviews and direct observation in the field. Interviews were conducted using semi-structured guidelines that allowed flexibility in exploring each informant's perspectives. Moleong (as cited in Ibrahim, 2018, p. 88) defines an interview as a purposeful conversation involving an interviewer who asks questions and an interviewee who provides responses that reveal meaningful information. Observation was also used as a complementary technique to understand the behaviors, practices, and conditions related to local governance and community participation. Bungin (as cited in Ibrahim, 2018, p. 81) emphasizes that observation involves the use of human senses to record phenomena and events in their natural context systematically. These two methods allowed the researcher to capture both spoken information and observable realities in the field.

In addition to primary data, secondary data were obtained through a review of relevant literature, including books, academic journals, government reports, and other official documents. This literature review provided theoretical support and contextual understanding of the research problem. The researcher also utilized documentation, which included visual materials, reports, and written records related to the administrative and developmental activities of the local government. As Sugiyono (cited in Ibrahim, 2018, p. 94) explains, documentation serves as a non-human source of information that complements interview and observational data.

The analysis of qualitative data followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (cited in Sugiyono, 2012, p. 246), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In the first stage, data reduction involved simplifying and organizing large volumes of field data to focus on essential aspects relevant to the study's objectives. During the second stage, data display, the researcher arranged the data into narrative descriptions and analytical relationships to allow clear interpretation of the findings. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved synthesizing and verifying emerging patterns to ensure that the conclusions accurately represented the realities observed in the field. The conclusions were drawn inductively, progressing from specific observations to a broader conceptual understanding. This iterative process was maintained throughout the research to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employed triangulation techniques. According to Sugiyono (2012:270-273), triangulation is a method of checking data validity by comparing information from different sources, using various techniques, and collecting data at multiple times. In this research, both source triangulation and technique triangulation were applied. Source triangulation was performed by comparing data from different informants, including government officials, community leaders, and residents, to ensure the consistency of information. Technique triangulation was achieved by

cross-checking data obtained through interviews, observations, literature reviews, and documentation. The combination of these methods strengthened the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings, thereby ensuring that the interpretations and conclusions were grounded in trustworthy and verifiable data.

Overall, the research design, data collection, and analysis were structured to provide a comprehensive and credible understanding of how the local government performs its roles as a regulator, catalyst, and facilitator in developing the regional potential of Sipolha Horizon Village. The qualitative descriptive approach, supported by triangulation and systematic analysis, enabled the researcher to capture both the formal and informal dimensions of governance, drawing meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness and challenges of local government roles in promoting sustainable regional development.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal how the local Government of Sipolha Horizon performs its roles in enhancing local potential, particularly in tourism, agriculture, and community development. The analysis is structured using the framework of government roles proposed by Muhadam Labolo (2010:32), which categorizes the roles of local government into three main functions: regulator, catalyst, and facilitator. These roles collectively describe how the local government translates authority, policy, and leadership into tangible developmental outcomes.

The research results were obtained from extensive interviews, observations, and documentation, supported by triangulation techniques to validate the consistency of the data. The findings indicate that while the local government has demonstrated inevitable progress in infrastructure improvement and inter-institutional collaboration, challenges remain in sustaining participation, responsiveness, and administrative effectiveness.

The Role of the Local Government as Regulator

The government's regulatory role is crucial in setting the direction of development and formulating public policy to ensure order, consistency, and sustainability. According to Ryaas Rasyid (in Muhadam Labolo, 2010:32), the role of the government as a regulator involves establishing policies that guide development efforts and exercising administrative control. Similarly, Rian Nugraha (2003:13, as cited in Meysi Arniza, 2022) defines regulatory governance as the issuance of rules that determine the course of development, both physically and in terms of human capacity building.

In Sipolha Horizon, the local government, supported by the Simalungun Regency administration, has undertaken regulatory initiatives primarily focused on infrastructure development, environmental rehabilitation, and tourism revitalization. These efforts align with the national and regional objectives to promote economic growth through tourism and agriculture.

a. Infrastructure Development as a Regulatory Initiative

The improvement of road networks leading to tourism destinations in Sipolha Horizon represents a significant regulatory milestone. Under the leadership of Regent Radiapoh Hasiholan Sinaga, the Simalungun Regency Government, in coordination with the Presidential Staff Office, prioritized the construction and rehabilitation of access roads connecting Simpang Bage, Haranggaol, Tigaras, and Sipolha. During a coordination meeting with KSP officials, the Regent emphasized that *“if access roads are improved, investors and entrepreneurs will come, and tourism growth will follow”* (Mimbar Umum, 2023).

Empirical data support this statement: observations and interviews with residents and tourism actors—such as Mr. Perry Manik, manager of Aek Batu Beach—show that road rehabilitation has indeed increased tourist arrivals, thereby stimulating local business. As a regulatory policy, this infrastructure improvement is directly tied to the long-term vision of the *Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Nasional (KSPN) Danau Toba* initiative, which aims to connect regional tourism nodes through sustainable infrastructure.

b. Environmental Rehabilitation and Policy Coordination

Another significant regulatory initiative is the environmental rehabilitation program conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK). On January 14, 2024, the Simalungun Regency participated in a national tree-planting campaign led by the Vice President of Indonesia. The event, held in Sipolha Horizon, involved the planting of 200 tree seedlings, 185 avocado and 15 durian trees on five hectares of community forest under the *Kelompok Tani Hutan Sipolha Nauli*. The Acting Governor of North Sumatra attended the program, along with the Director General of Forestry Planning and Environmental Management (PKTL) and local government officials.

Statements by key figures highlight the government’s regulatory commitment. The Director General of PKTL, Hanif Faisol Nurofiq, emphasized that *“tree-planting must continue in the rainy season, consistent with the President’s directive”* (KLHK, 2024). Likewise, Acting Governor Hassanudin urged, *“the trees must not only be planted but nurtured to yield environmental and economic benefits.”* These remarks reflect a shift in policy toward sustainable land use, integrating ecological restoration into local development planning and management.

c. Tourism Revitalization as a Regulatory Strategy

The revitalization of the *Ikan Mas* tourism site in Sipolha Horizon further illustrates the local government’s regulatory approach to development. During an inspection visit, Regent Sinaga insisted that the project *“must not be done carelessly but should include proper landscaping, parking, and cultural facilities to attract more visitors”* (Snipers News, 2023). The revitalization is intended to improve the tourist experience, strengthen regional revenue (PAD), and enhance Sipolha’s visibility as a tourism hub.

d. Community Perception of Regulatory Efforts

Community responses to these regulatory efforts have been generally positive. As one local leader, Mr. Rikkot Damanik, noted, *“We are grateful for the road*

improvements that the people have long awaited” (Interview, January 9, 2023). The sense of appreciation demonstrates growing public trust in local governance, although residents still express the need for more consistent policy implementation and maintenance of public facilities.

In summary, the regulatory role of the local government, in conjunction with its coordination with higher administrative levels, has yielded tangible improvements in infrastructure and environmental management. However, the effectiveness of these regulations remains limited by inconsistent policy follow-up, inadequate budget allocation, and weak local enforcement capacity. Strengthening institutional frameworks and community-based monitoring mechanisms could enhance the sustainability of regulatory interventions in Sipolha Horizon.

The Role of the Local Government as Catalyst

In Labolo’s (2010:32) framework, the catalytic role of government focuses on mobilizing community participation and stimulating social innovation when challenges arise during development processes. The government is expected to act as a dynamic intermediary, motivating citizens and facilitating dialogue among stakeholders.

However, findings from the field reveal that this catalytic role in Sipolha Horizon remains underdeveloped. The most visible challenge is the lack of functional administrative facilities. The local government office, which should serve as the operational center for governance and community interaction, has long been neglected. The building’s deterioration forced the relocation of administrative services to the district government office in Pematang Sidamanik.

a. Impact of Institutional Weakness

This relocation has generated frustration among residents who now face longer distances and additional costs to access administrative services. According to community leader Pohan Manalu, *“people have lost motivation to engage with the government because even the office no longer functions properly”* (Interview, November 10, 2022). Similarly, members of local farmer groups expressed disappointment over the government’s lack of responsiveness. Mr. Jasmen Sinaga, a farmer, explained that *“administrative delays hinder our ability to access agricultural aid and official documentation”*.

These testimonies illustrate how weakened institutions erode public participation and trust, undermining the catalytic function that government should play. The office’s inactivity symbolizes broader issues of administrative neglect and bureaucratic inefficiency.

b. Community Self-Initiative and Government Response

Despite these constraints, local farmer groups in Sipolha have shown resilience by maintaining self-organized meetings and independent agricultural monitoring. As noted by farmer leader John Damanik, *“We now meet weekly to discuss crop progress and share knowledge, even without government assistance.”* This self-organized structure reflects community initiative but also exposes the absence of adequate governmental support.

The lack of direct government facilitation has limited farmers’ access to training, resources, and market networks.

While NGOs such as the CFK Foundation occasionally provide technical assistance, the absence of consistent government involvement hinders the sustainability of these efforts. The catalytic role should, therefore, not only involve mobilization but also continuous mentorship and institutional backing.

c. Analytical Reflection

The weak performance of the catalytic role in Sipolha Horizon demonstrates a structural gap between policy formulation and implementation. The local government's inability to provide consistent guidance, coordination, and response to local concerns reduces community engagement and perpetuates dependency on external organizations. To fulfill its catalytic role effectively, the government must rebuild administrative facilities, strengthen local coordination networks, and actively engage in participatory planning that empowers community groups to co-manage development initiatives.

The Role of the Local Government as Facilitator

The facilitative role emphasizes the government's function in enabling and supporting community capacity-building, access to resources, and self-reliant economic development. As Ryaas Rasyid (in Labolo, 2010:32) defines, facilitation involves creating favorable conditions for development through training, education, technical support, and funding assistance.

a. Financial Facilitation: Microcredit Program

In Sipolha Horizon, the local government has initiated a microcredit program to provide business capital for local entrepreneurs and farmers. Head of local government, Ronald Damanik, collaborated with Bank BRI to launch a loan system that allows residents to borrow funds ranging from IDR 10 million to IDR 30 million, using a land title deed as collateral. The head of local government stated, "This program is designed to make it easier for residents to access capital without bureaucratic obstacles or hidden costs" (Interview, January 20, 2023).

This financial innovation has improved access to credit for small-scale business owners, though it still faces challenges related to repayment monitoring and loan sustainability. To mitigate these issues, the local government requires borrowers to submit formal land title deed documentation, which simultaneously contributes to tax registration and enhances property tax revenue collection. This linkage between financial facilitation and fiscal administration reflects an emerging model of integrated local governance consistent with Law No. 12 of 1985 on Land and Building Taxation.

b. Capacity Building and Agricultural Training

Beyond financial initiatives, the local government also engaged in partnerships for agricultural training and capacity-building programs. Through collaboration with Cipta Fondasi Komunitas, a local NGO focusing on poverty alleviation and community development, farmer groups in Sipolha received training in sustainable coffee cultivation and land management. Documentation and interviews show

that CFK facilitators provided instruction on soil treatment, pest control, and coffee processing techniques.

The purpose of this collaboration is to empower farmers to produce high-quality coffee while maintaining environmentally friendly practices. However, the Local Government Head of Damanik Village acknowledged that participation levels were still low. "Unlike other regions such as Sei Buntu, where coffee cultivation has become a source of local pride, Sipolha's farmers are still hesitant to adopt new techniques," he explained. This indicates that facilitation efforts require both technical assistance and behavioral transformation.

c. Challenges and Policy Implications

The main challenges to the facilitative role include limited community motivation, insufficient institutional follow-up, and inconsistent coordination between government and partner organizations. While the facilitative programs have introduced meaningful opportunities, their impact remains short-term unless institutionalized into formal local government work plans and budget allocations.

To strengthen its facilitative role, the local government must prioritize long-term mentorship, consistent funding, and active monitoring. Building trust through transparent program management and visible results is crucial for enhancing community participation and sustaining development outcomes.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the local government of Sipolha Horizon performs its developmental role through a complex and uneven interaction of three primary functions: as a regulator, a catalyst, and a facilitator. These functions, as formulated by Muhadam Labolo (2010:32), provide a comprehensive analytical lens to assess the effectiveness of local government performance. The empirical evidence gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis reveals that, while the regulatory dimension has shown visible progress through the implementation of infrastructure and tourism policies, the catalytic and facilitative dimensions remain less optimal. This condition indicates that the local government is in a transitional phase of administrative development, one that still relies heavily on top-down direction from higher levels of government, but is beginning to explore more participatory and collaborative approaches at the community level.

From a regulatory perspective, the Sipolha Horizon local government has benefited from the integration of regional development priorities set by the Simalungun Regency Government. The implementation of infrastructure policies, particularly road construction projects connecting Simpang Bage, Haranggaol, Tigaras, and Sipolh, has directly enhanced accessibility to tourism areas and stimulated local economic activity. These achievements reflect how local governance can effectively align with broader frameworks such as the *Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Nasional (KSPN) Danau Toba* program. However, the sustainability of such initiatives still depends on continuous policy reinforcement, adequate budget allocation, and strong coordination between the local government and higher administrative units. Without these elements, regulatory policies risk

becoming symbolic rather than transformative, providing only temporary improvements without addressing the underlying structural needs.

In contrast, the catalytic role of the local government remains the weakest among the three. The absence of a functioning local government office has created a tangible administrative vacuum, limiting citizens' access to public services and diminishing community engagement. This situation exemplifies what scholars of local governance describe as "institutional fragility," in which the physical and organizational capacity of local governments fail to meet their social obligations. As the findings demonstrate, community members have had to adapt by organizing self-managed initiatives, particularly within farmer groups, to sustain agricultural activities and foster local cooperation. While such community-led initiatives indicate social resilience, they also expose the lack of structured government support. The catalytic role requires more than community enthusiasm; it requires the presence of government as a motivator, coordinator, and connector of diverse actors. The limited responsiveness and lack of guidance from the local government have thus constrained the potential for collective action in local development.

Meanwhile, the facilitative role presents a more balanced yet still developing picture. The local government's collaboration with Bank BRI through the microcredit program and its partnership with the CFK Foundation in agricultural training represent concrete steps toward empowering local communities. These initiatives demonstrate a growing awareness among local leaders about the need to support entrepreneurship, expand access to financial resources, and improve human capacity. Nevertheless, their long-term impact is contingent on consistent monitoring, effective coordination, and broader community participation. The microcredit program, for instance, is beneficial in stimulating small-scale economic activity but requires precise repayment mechanisms and transparent administrative procedures to avoid financial mismanagement. Similarly, agricultural training programs facilitated by CFK have introduced valuable technical knowledge, yet their effectiveness is hindered by low community participation and limited follow-up from government institutions.

The discussion of these three dimensions reveals an important theoretical implication: the success of local governance depends on the balance and interaction of regulatory, catalytic, and facilitative functions. When one dimension dominates, such as regulatory control through infrastructure policy without the support of the other two, development outcomes tend to be fragmented and unsustainable. The findings from Sipolha Horizon affirm Labolo's (2010) assertion that effective governance requires synergy between government authority and community participation. The government must not only regulate but also catalyze local initiative and facilitate access to resources that empower citizens to become co-actors in development.

Practically, these results highlight the urgent need to strengthen local administrative capacity. The local government must re-establish a functioning office that serves not merely as an administrative center but as a hub for community dialogue and coordination. Restoring institutional presence would enhance citizens' trust and make public services more accessible. Furthermore,

participatory mechanisms should be institutionalized within the local government decision-making processes, allowing farmer groups, tourism actors, and residents to contribute directly to local planning and evaluation. In doing so, the catalytic role of the government could evolve from passive responsiveness to active collaboration.

Another key discussion point concerns the importance of integrating local development programs with higher-level government policies. The success of the road rehabilitation project and environmental restoration efforts demonstrates that vertical policy alignment among the local government, regency, and national government can yield tangible benefits when implemented coherently. However, such alignment must also be complemented by horizontal cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and community-based organizations. The partnership with the CFK Foundation exemplifies this potential, but further institutional frameworks are needed to ensure continuity and accountability in these collaborations.

In essence, the findings suggest that the local government of Sipolha Horizon stands at a critical juncture between dependency and autonomy. While it has begun to embrace its regulatory and facilitative responsibilities, it must still evolve into a more catalytic institution that empowers its citizens to co-create development outcomes. The discussion highlights that the sustainability of regional potential development in Sipolha Horizon will depend not only on infrastructure and policy, but also on the social relationships, institutional trust, and participatory culture that the government can nurture within its community. By achieving this balance, the local government can transform from an administrative extension of higher authorities into a proactive agent of sustainable and inclusive local development.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the role of the local government in enhancing regional potential in Sipolha Horizon Village is multidimensional and interconnected through its functions as regulator, catalyst, and facilitator, as outlined by Labolo (2010). The research findings reveal that the local government's regulatory capacity has made visible progress, particularly through policy implementation in infrastructure improvement, environmental rehabilitation, and tourism revitalization. The coordination between the Simalungun Regency Government and the Presidential Staff Office has led to the development of improved road access and the initiation of environmental and tourism programs, which positively contribute to local economic growth. However, these regulatory advances have not yet been supported by adequate local innovation or comprehensive community participation, which are essential for ensuring that such improvements lead to sustainable development outcomes.

The catalytic role, which ideally serves to mobilize citizen participation and strengthen social cohesion in development, remains the most underperforming function of the local government. The prolonged inoperability of the local government office has significantly reduced public trust and limited the accessibility of administrative services, weakening the government's ability to respond promptly to community needs. Although residents and farmer groups have shown resilience through independent initiatives, the

absence of institutional guidance has led to fragmented and uncoordinated efforts. This condition underscores the need to revitalize the local government as a functional administrative center and a catalyst for community empowerment.

Meanwhile, the facilitative role has shown gradual improvement through programs such as the microcredit initiative and agricultural training conducted in collaboration with the CFK Foundation. These efforts demonstrate the local government's awareness of the importance of enabling economic participation and capacity building among residents. Nonetheless, the sustainability of such initiatives depends on consistent monitoring, transparent governance, and the integration of these programs into a broader long-term development strategy. Without institutional continuity, facilitative programs risk becoming short-lived interventions rather than sustainable mechanisms for community empowerment.

In a broader sense, the conclusion of this study emphasizes that the effectiveness of local governance in developing regional potential lies in the balance and interaction of these three roles. When regulatory efforts dominate without catalytic engagement or facilitative support, local development becomes administratively efficient but socially shallow. Conversely, when strong regulatory frameworks do not support facilitation and community participation, development remains fragmented and lacks policy continuity. The findings thus reaffirm the importance of a governance model that harmonizes authority, participation, and empowerment—allowing local governments to act not only as executors of higher-level policies but as true agents of community-based development.

Despite its comprehensive qualitative exploration, this research recognizes certain limitations. The study was conducted within a single local government context, which may not fully represent the diversity of local governance experiences across other regions. Furthermore, limited access to administrative documentation constrained the verification of some policy outcomes. Nevertheless, these limitations provide valuable insights for future inquiry, suggesting the need for comparative studies or mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative assessment of community satisfaction and development performance.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that the local government of Sipolha Horizon prioritize the restoration of its administrative facilities as a foundation for rebuilding institutional trust and improving public service delivery. Strengthening the catalytic role requires more inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms, where citizens are actively involved in planning, decision-making, and monitoring processes. The facilitative function should be expanded through partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations to sustain financial support, training programs, and capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, integrating local initiatives with regional and national development agendas will ensure policy alignment and long-term sustainability. Future studies are encouraged to explore inter-local government comparisons, focusing on how the interplay between regulation, participation, and

facilitation can foster more resilient and autonomous local governance systems in Indonesia.

Ultimately, the findings of this research contribute to a broader understanding of how local governments can transition from administrative entities into proactive catalysts of sustainable development. The case of Sipolha Horizon illustrates that the success of decentralization does not solely depend on formal structures or policy mandates, but on the government's ability to engage, empower, and evolve together with its community toward shared prosperity.

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