

## Communication Patterns of Village Children's Forums in Promoting Child-and-Women-Friendly Villages (Case Study: The Village Children's Forum in the Implementation of DRPPA in Indonesia)

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore in depth the communication patterns practiced by Village Children's Forums (*Forum Anak Desa*) in supporting the Indonesian government's policy on Child- and Women-Friendly Villages (*Desa Ramah Perempuan dan Peduli Anak / DRPPA*). Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research combines in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis in several villages actively implementing DRPPA programs. The findings reveal that the forums apply both consensual and pluralistic communication patterns that encourage active participation, open dialogue, and decision-making based on deliberation and equality among members. Through these approaches, the forums successfully cultivate a sense of togetherness and social responsibility among village children. Nevertheless, the participatory communication process still faces several challenges, such as age limitations, lack of legitimacy among adult community members, and limited institutional support. Despite these obstacles, the Village Children's Forums play a crucial role in strengthening DRPPA implementation through advocacy, peer education, child rights campaigns, and providing policy input to village governments. Their communication practices align with participatory communication principles and the Communication for Development (C4D) framework, emphasizing empowerment, inclusivity, and the active involvement of children as agents of change. This study highlights the importance of enhancing children's communication capacity and institutional support to achieve more inclusive, gender-responsive, and sustainable village development.

**Keywords:** *Communication patterns, Forum Anak Desa, DRPPA, participatory communication.*

## **Pola Komunikasi Forum Anak Desa dalam Mempromosikan Desa Ramah Anak dan Perempuan (Studi Kasus: Forum Anak Desa dalam Implementasi DRPPA di Indonesia)**

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi secara mendalam pola komunikasi yang dipraktikkan oleh Forum Anak Desa ( Forum Anak Desa ) dalam mendukung kebijakan pemerintah Indonesia tentang Desa Ramah Perempuan dan Peduli Anak (DRPPA) . Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini menggabungkan wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen di beberapa desa yang secara aktif melaksanakan program DRPPA. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa forum menerapkan pola komunikasi konsensual dan pluralistik yang mendorong partisipasi aktif, dialog terbuka, dan pengambilan keputusan berdasarkan musyawarah dan kesetaraan di antara para anggota. Melalui pendekatan ini, forum berhasil menumbuhkan rasa kebersamaan dan tanggung jawab sosial di antara anak-anak desa. Meskipun demikian, proses komunikasi partisipatif masih menghadapi beberapa tantangan, seperti keterbatasan usia, kurangnya legitimasi di antara anggota masyarakat dewasa, dan dukungan kelembagaan yang terbatas. Terlepas dari hambatan-hambatan ini, Forum Anak Desa memainkan peran penting dalam memperkuat implementasi DRPPA melalui advokasi, pendidikan sebaya, kampanye hak-hak anak, dan memberikan masukan kebijakan kepada pemerintah desa. Praktik komunikasi mereka selaras dengan prinsip-prinsip komunikasi partisipatif dan kerangka kerja Komunikasi untuk Pembangunan (C4D), yang menekankan pemberdayaan, inklusivitas, dan keterlibatan aktif anak-anak sebagai agen perubahan. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya peningkatan kapasitas komunikasi anak dan dukungan kelembagaan untuk mencapai pembangunan desa yang lebih inklusif, responsif gender, dan berkelanjutan.

**Kata kunci:** *Pola komunikasi, Forum Anak Desa, DRPPA, komunikasi partisipatif.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Village development in Indonesia over the past decade has shown a significant transformation from a physical and economic orientation toward a more inclusive social development. The government has begun to place issues of gender equality and child protection as integral parts of sustainable development. One of the strategic policies born from this orientation is the Child and Women Friendly Village Program (*Desa Ramah Perempuan dan Peduli Anak / DRPPA*), a collaboration between the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) and the

Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendes PDTT) through Cooperation Agreement No. 35/Sesmen/Biro HH/20 dated November 11, 2020.

This policy aligns with Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2017 on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasizes the principle of no one left behind, meaning that every individual, including women and children, has the right to actively participate in and equally benefit from village development (Natalia & Maulidya, 2023). This transformation has positioned Indonesia as one of the developing countries that has begun to formally integrate gender and child rights perspectives into village governancean approach still rarely practiced at the community level in many Southeast Asian countries. This makes Indonesia an interesting context to study as a case of inclusive social development at the grassroots level (Enarsson et al., 2024).

In the global context, gender equality and child protection-based village development remains a challenge in many developing nations (Sudirman et al., 2022). However, Indonesia stands out with formal initiatives such as DRPPA, which integrates child participation into village governance. Nevertheless, academic studies examining how children's participatory communication contributes to the program's success remain very limited. Most communication for development studies in Indonesia focus on women's empowerment or general community participation, while the dimension of children's participation especially in village governance has not been widely explored empirically. This is the gap that this study seeks to fill.

Conceptually, DRPPA aims to create gender-responsive and child-inclusive villages through active participation of community members, including women and children, in the planning and implementation of development programs (Novianti et al., 2025). To achieve this, Village Child Forums (Forum Anak Desa / FAD) were established as representative platforms for children to voice their aspirations, needs, and ideas related to the fulfillment of child rights (Atikah et al., 2024). These forums serve as key instruments for ensuring child involvement in a rights-based approach to development. However, the effectiveness of FAD largely depends on the

participatory communication patterns among children, village governments, and the broader community.

Referring to Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, parents hold the primary obligation to care for, educate, and protect children from all forms of violence, exploitation, and discrimination (Suryantoro, 2025). Article 26 further emphasizes that parents must ensure the fulfillment of children's rights in the best interest of the child, as also stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Prameswari, 2017).

In practice, however, many social problems persist in rural areas, such as child marriage, child labor exploitation, and risky free association among youth, all of which threaten the future of younger generations (Putri et al., 2024). The enforcement of legal norms is often hampered by low legal literacy and limited access to information, especially in rural regions (Samuel, 2025). Therefore, educational activities such as parenting seminars and community-based legal counseling become important strategies to strengthen the family's role as the frontline of child protection. Communication patterns tend to emphasize participatory, deliberative, and equality-based interactions, reflecting a socio-cultural orientation that values collective consensus and inclusive dialogue in community engagement (Emeraldien & Aco, 2024). Yet, most existing research focuses on policy and legal approaches, while studies examining participatory communication patterns of children as development actors remain scarce, particularly at the rural community level in Indonesia.

Within Indonesia's religious and communal sociocultural context, communication patterns at the village level not only reflect message exchange but also embody the social structures and cultural values embedded in society (Khairunnisa & Majidah, 2024). Such communication patterns influence the extent to which children can participate in forums like the Village Child Forum (FAD). Thus, understanding village communication dynamics also means understanding how cultural and religious values shape children's social participation.

Previous studies on communication for development in Indonesia generally focused on the roles of village governments or women, while children's roles as communication actors in development have received little attention (Safitri et al., 2019). The success of FAD is heavily influenced by the communication patterns formed within the forum and with external parties, particularly village governments and the community (Subagja et al., 2024). This raises key questions: *What communication patterns are formed within FAD, how do these patterns contribute to the DRPPA program, and what challenges arise in the process?*

Based on this context, this study aims to explore the participatory communication patterns of children in the Village Child Forum (FAD) and analyze their roles and contributions to the implementation of the Child and Women Friendly Village Program (DRPPA). Theoretically, this research provides new contributions to the development of communication for development and participatory communication studies, particularly by incorporating children's perspectives as social actors in village developmentan area still rarely addressed in Indonesian communication literature. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for village governments, KemenPPPA, and community organizations in strengthening mechanisms of communication and child participation as part of an inclusive and socially just village development strategy.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, allowing the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of social interactions and power relations within real-life contexts, particularly in the participatory communication processes between children, adults, and village officials. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the Village Child Forum, village officials, and community facilitators to capture multiple perspectives and understand how authority, voice, and agency are negotiated across generations.

Observation of the forum's activities was carried out to directly examine patterns of interaction, decision-making processes, and forms of influence or resistance that emerged among participants during meetings and community discussions. Document analysis of village regulations and policies related to the Women- and Child-Friendly Village Program (DRPPA) was conducted to understand the institutional structures and formal mechanisms that shape participation and power distribution at the village level.

The collected data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, integrated with Miles and Huberman's model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through this thematic analysis, particular attention was given to themes related to voice, agency, negotiation, and authority to interpret the power dynamics emerging in participatory communication practices. The research sites were selected purposively from villages actively implementing the DRPPA program so that communication and participation processes could be observed in depth within an established institutional framework.

As a follow-up to the research findings and an effort to strengthen participatory communication practices at the community level, the program was implemented through a Village Based Community Service Program using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method. This approach aimed to enhance comprehensive community engagement in village development by involving residents in all stages of the process planning, implementation, and evaluation. Through this participatory approach, a sense of ownership toward the program was expected to grow, ensuring the sustainability of activities.

The community service activity was carried out in the form of a parenting seminar, designed as a community-based applied research initiative to increase public awareness and skills in practicing parenting patterns that support children's optimal growth and development. During the preparation stage, the implementation team coordinated with the Trotosari Village Government to obtain official permission, followed by surveys and preliminary data collection on family social

conditions and relevant issues such as early marriage and juvenile delinquency. Based on the survey results, the team developed a seminar module integrating legal education and psychosocial approaches tailored to the local community's needs. The series of activities were systematically carried out through preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages, emphasizing collaboration among university students, village officials, and the local community (Setyawan et al., 2025).

In the preparation stage, the implementation team first coordinated with Trotosari Village officials to obtain activity permits, followed by surveys and preliminary data collection regarding family social conditions and relevant issues such as child marriage and risky teenage behavior. Based on these findings, the team developed a seminar module combining legal education and psychosocial approaches appropriate to local needs.

The implementation stage consisted of a parenting seminar that combined lectures and interactive discussions. The materials were delivered by experts in family law, child protection, and educational communication, enabling participants to contextualize and apply the content in everyday life. During the evaluation stage, a reflective discussion was conducted to assess participants' perceptions and formulate follow-up action plans. Activity documentation and participant feedback were also collected as input for future program improvement.

This activity adopted a participatory approach using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, emphasizing the active involvement of participants throughout the entire process. Participants were not merely recipients of information but also engaged in dialogue, shared experiences, and collaboratively developed solutions to family and child-related issues. The seminar materials were designed to be practical and applicable in daily life, particularly concerning parenting and the prevention of child rights violations. The activity also involved community leaders, village officials, and women's group (PKK) members to establish sustainable community collaboration beyond the program's completion.

The program was implemented over five weeks. The first and second weeks focused on coordination and preliminary surveys with residents, community leaders,

and village officials. The third and fourth weeks were dedicated to theme selection, technical preparation, and speaker selection. The fifth week concluded with the parenting seminar held on July 21, 2025, at the Trotosari Village Hall, followed by an evaluation session and the formulation of a post-program action plan.

The activity involved various stakeholders. Participants included parents (both mothers and fathers), PKK cadres, school principals, student representatives from elementary to high school levels, village officials, and community leaders, totaling 68 participants. The implementation team consisted of community service students from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, assisted by external speakers with expertise in child protection and parenting.

In its implementation, the approach emphasized participatory and educational engagement, highlighting two-way interaction between facilitators and participants. Materials were delivered through persuasive and contextual communication, enriched with real-life examples from the Trotosari Village community. In addition, focused group discussions (mini-FGDs) were conducted to explore parenting challenges within families and develop locally relevant solutions. At the end of the session, participants were invited to draft a joint commitment outlining concrete post-seminar actions, such as establishing a Forum Anak Desa as a platform for child and family participation.

The success of this program was measured using several indicators: (1) improved participant knowledge as evidenced by pre-test and post-test results, (2) active participation during Q&A and group discussions, and (3) the emergence of a follow-up plan in the form of participants' commitment to establish a Village Children's Forum (FAD) focusing on parenting, child rights protection, and family resilience. This participatory approach is expected to foster change not only at the knowledge level but also in participants' attitudes and behaviors toward more child-friendly parenting practices

## **FIELD FINDING**

Based on research conducted using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method on the implementation of the Child and Women Friendly Village Program



(*Desa Ramah Perempuan dan Peduli Anak / DRPPA*) in Trotosari Village, several significant findings were identified, reflecting the village's social conditions, institutional structures, and key issues that still require more intensive intervention. One of the initial and encouraging findings is the active organization of women and children through the presence of Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) groups and women's religious organizations that regularly conduct weekly and monthly activities, such as pengajian (Qur'an recitations), sholawat gatherings, yasinan, and multi-age posyandu (community health posts). This indicates that women's participation in social and religious activities is fairly open. However, the lack of specific focus on adolescent girls, particularly regarding reproductive health, is an important note that needs to be addressed through socialization and educational programs.

Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection provides a strong juridical foundation to ensure children's rights to grow, develop, and be protected from violence, exploitation, and harmful practices such as child marriage and child labor. Article 26(1) affirms that parents are responsible for raising, caring for, protecting, and educating their children in the best interests of the child. The principle of "the best interest of the child" serves as a fundamental basis in all policies and actions concerning children, both within national legal frameworks and in practical implementation at the local level (Sibarani et al., 2022). However, the implementation of these legal norms in Trotosari Village remains far from optimal. Based on field observations and interactions during a parenting seminar held on July 21, 2025, it was found that community understanding of the essence of child protection is still limited. Although the law stipulates a minimum marriage age of 19 years, child marriage practices are still commonly found and often socially justified. Group discussions and Q&A sessions involving 68 participants revealed that most parents still lack a full understanding of the legal and social consequences of such practices.

At the institutional and regulatory level, Trotosari Village already has population data that is sufficiently disaggregated by gender and age. Unfortunately, there is no specific Village Regulation (Perdes) addressing women and children's

issues. This indicates that although the village has general administrative regulations, gender and child sensitivity has not yet been translated into concrete policy measures. The absence of such a regulation potentially causes women's empowerment and child protection programs to run without a clear direction, even though village funds have been allocated for posyandu ILP activities and nutritional assistance for vulnerable groups such as undernourished pregnant women and stunted children.

Socially, however, Trotosari Village demonstrates a relatively high level of safety for women and children. Across all hamlets (Krajan, Plampang, Lor Gunung, Campoan), there were no reported cases of violence against women and children, human trafficking, child labor, or risky social behaviors. Village leaders and community figures interviewed emphasized that the social environment supports children's safe and healthy development. This suggests that social norms and informal control mechanisms still function effectively, supported by the influence of religious and customary leaders.

Nevertheless, a concerning finding is the high incidence of early marriage, particularly in the hamlets of Lor Gunung, Plampang, and Campoan. Data indicate an increasing number of child marriages each year, both through official and unregistered (*sirri*) unions. The primary factors driving early marriage include economic hardship, low educational attainment, social pressure, and fear of promiscuity. This phenomenon indicates that, although physical violence and exploitation are not evident, another form of child vulnerability persists through tolerance of early marriage practices. Therefore, community counseling, parenting education, and adolescent literacy on reproductive health are key strategies that need to be urgently implemented to establish a more holistic child protection system.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

The results of this discussion are relevant to the process of interpersonal communication that influences the parenting education process in each family in the village. Efforts to realize this vision make community service a structured system that is interconnected with all aspects of life. Realizing the dream and hope of a women-

friendly and child-caring village must certainly be complemented by complete and complex elements. Communication views each of these elements as having a very close and interrelated relationship, which can determine the success of communication itself (Nurjaman & Umam, 2012).

Communication has a role as a provider of necessary information for both individuals and groups, which is used to make decisions by delivering data to identify and evaluate available options (Robbins & Judge, 2011). The community service activity conducted directly within the community is a program that empowers students as facilitators. The context mentioned earlier refers to students who act as providers of the necessary information for both individuals and groups. In this regard, a major decision is made concerning solutions to the problems occurring in the service location.

The communication process in the development of the DRPPA Program of Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya acts as an agent of change. An agent of change is an institution that influences clients' innovation decisions (Syarifuddin & Daher, 2019). The function of a change agent in development activities serves as a communication link between two or more social systems, namely, the pioneering social system and the client social system in the process of change.

The success variables of the proposed program are among the expectations and discussions to be explained in this article. The increase in public understanding of new insights arising from existing problems will move to the next level in the form of direct action. By involving someone influential in a particular field of expertise, ordinary people are generally affected by it. This is a real example of the persuasive communication concept case study. To ensure that persuasive communication achieves its goals and targets, careful planning is necessary (Effendy, 2009). Behavior refers to a tendency or inclination to act in a certain way, while belief is a sense of confidence in the existence or truth of something. Behavior in persuasion refers to actions that are clear and observable (Soemirat & Hidayat, 2014).

Socio-economic conditions also reinforce practices that contradict the spirit of child protection. In many cases, families with low education levels and unstable

income view child marriage as a pragmatic solution to reduce economic burdens (Erwati et al., 2021). Similarly, the involvement of children in domestic or agricultural work is seen as a normative contribution to the family, without realizing that such practices may constitute child exploitation as prohibited by law.

Based on the same understanding and objectives, the selected village community groups decided to complement each other. The synergy created cannot be separated from the communication strategy that had been carefully designed beforehand by the students. Thus, this affects the results obtained. Understanding the groups in Trotosari Village aligns with the opinion that a group is a collection of people who have a common goal, interact with one another to achieve that goal, know each other, and view themselves as part of the group (Mulyana, 2007). Communication in small groups involves an exchange of messages among people engaged in face-to-face meetings, where all participants gain impressions or strengthen relationships with one another.

The sustainability program, which is an extension of the major seminar event, is the establishment of the Village Children's Forum, which is directly supervised and managed by the local social institution. The results of the discussions between both parties are part of the group communication process, in which equality allows each person to develop their potential. The presence of KKN (student community service) participants does not immediately bring instant changes or impacts. However, as an extension of the service system, the presence of KKN students within the village's structure gradually assists the process of change and the community's perspectives, forming a solid foundation and a good starting point to improve basic communication, enabling progress to the next stage such as parenting, which is part of interpersonal communication.

Communication within the family as the smallest social unit plays an important role in shaping the pattern of interaction within the village community. The communication patterns built within families often become real examples that are imitated in daily social life in the surrounding environment. In rural communities like Trotosari Village, values such as care, mutual cooperation, and curiosity about others

are still strongly preserved. Therefore, strategies to address family resilience issues through communication approaches can be an effective first step in strengthening the social structure of society. This communication approach not only functions to convey information but also fosters collective awareness of the importance of the family's role as the foundation of child protection and women's empowerment. In the context of national development, the role of women is recognized as a strategic factor that directly contributes to societal welfare.

The government, through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), places women's empowerment in four main sectors of development, namely: (1) education, focusing on increasing women's access to and quality of education to strengthen capacity and social literacy; (2) health, emphasizing reproductive health services, maternal and child nutrition, and reducing maternal mortality rates; (3) employment, promoting women's economic roles through training, entrepreneurship, and labor protection; and (4) violence prevention, encompassing legal and social protection efforts for women and children from various forms of violence and discrimination (Mirza, 2022).

Research findings show that the Village Children's Forum (FAD) functions not only as a platform for participation but also as a medium of social communication that shapes dialogical structures between generations at the village level. The communication patterns that develop reflect a hybridization between traditional values and modern participatory principles. This aligns with the research of Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2002), which states that communication patterns in small groups often reflect family communication patterns, where hierarchical and dialogical relationships interact with each other.

The context of DRPPA in communication between children and village officials is not only related to information exchange but also to the process of social and cultural awareness transformation. Children learn to express opinions argumentatively, while village officials learn to listen and accommodate children's perspectives as part of decision-making. This approach aligns with the Communication for Development (C4D) paradigm, as described by sources, which is

communication oriented toward participatory and equality-based social change (Melkote & Steeves, 2015).

The dominant communication patterns are consensual and pluralistic, in which children are given the space to express opinions and dialogue with village officials. However, in certain situations, protective communication patterns still occur due to the dominance of officials or mentors. The Village Children's Forum actively supports the implementation of DRPPA through advocacy activities, outreach, and providing input in village meetings. The challenges faced include age limitations, lack of communication literacy, and legitimacy still being questioned by some stakeholders.

In the context of the Village Children's Forum, several types of communication patterns can be observed in interactions between children, forum administrators, and village officials. The consensual communication pattern is characterized by a combination of open communication with an orientation toward compliance. In this pattern, each party has the opportunity to express opinions, but final decisions are usually made through joint deliberation emphasizing agreement and mutual respect. This can be seen when children and village officials discuss to determine the forum's work programs, where decisions are made by consensus after considering everyone's opinions. Meanwhile, the pluralistic communication pattern shows a high degree of freedom with little orientation toward authority. This pattern provides broad space for children to express ideas, opinions, or criticisms openly without pressure from older or more powerful figures. In practice, this can be seen when children freely express ideas about forum activities or social issues they consider important, and these ideas are listened to and appreciated by mentors and village administrators.

In contrast to the two previous patterns, the protective communication pattern emphasizes authority dominance and is one-directional. Village officials or forum mentors usually do most of the talking and give directions, while children tend to be listeners or executors of the given instructions. This pattern often appears in formal situations or activities related to village policy, where authority still holds full control over decisions. There is minimal communication and involvement among participants in such conditions. In this situation, children tend to be passive and do

not actively participate in forum activities, either due to lack of motivation, support, or space to express opinions. As a result, interactions between children and village officials become limited and unproductive. This pattern usually appears when there is no strong mentoring or when the forum lacks a clear communication structure. These four patterns demonstrate variations in the communication dynamics within the Village Children's Forum, ranging from democratic and participatory patterns to those that are passive and authoritarian. Each pattern provides an illustration of how relationships among forum members are formed and the extent to which children are given meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

### ***Consensual and Pluralistic Communication Patterns***

The consensual communication pattern found in this study demonstrates a balance between openness and respect for authority. Children in the forum are given space to express their ideas, but decisions are still made through collective deliberation. In the regular meetings of the Trotosari Village Children's Forum (FAD), for example, children use group discussion techniques and simple voting to determine activity priorities, such as anti-child marriage campaigns and children's rights education. This is consistent with Ritchie's (1988) research, which explains that consensual communication can enhance a sense of cohesion and social responsibility within the group.

Meanwhile, a pluralistic communication pattern emerges in thematic forums such as peer education activities and child advocacy training (Fonataba, 2025). In these settings, children are freer to express their opinions without hierarchical constraints, often generating innovative ideas such as developing educational content through local social media platforms. This pattern reflects an egalitarian and creative form of communication, as described by Freire (1970) in his concept of dialogical communication, where education and communication serve as processes of liberation through critical dialogue. However, within the strong communal and religious values of Indonesian society, implementing this pluralistic communication model is not without challenges. Cultural norms that emphasize respect for adults, as

well as the dominant roles of religious leaders and village officials, sometimes limit children's autonomy in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the Child Forum in Trotosari has managed to navigate these resistances by adapting a dialogical communication approach that continues to respect social structures and religious values. Through the use of moral and religious narratives about shared responsibility for children's well-being, the forum successfully creates a culturally accepted space for participation, maintaining the spirit of equality and creativity in participatory communication.

### ***Structural and Cultural Barriers***

However, the implementation of participatory communication patterns is not without obstacles. First, there are age and social legitimacy factors that still limit the acceptance of children's voices in the context of village governance. Village officials often view that children do not yet possess sufficient rational capacity to participate in policy formulation. Children's participation in village development is often seen as symbolic (tokenistic participation) rather than substantive (Dewi et al., 2022).

Second, the lack of institutional support is a significant challenge. Participatory modeling can enhance stakeholder engagement and result in more informed decision-making (Carrera et al., 2017). The absence of institutional support poses major obstacles, for instance, when there are no specific Village Regulations (Perdes) concerning children and women, which leaves the FAD program without a strong legal foundation. Effective development communication must be supported by regulations and public policies that ensure the sustainability of interactions between the community and institutions (Mardikanto, 2010).

Third, the strong patriarchal culture that persists in some rural communities also influences communication patterns between children especially girls and authority figures. Citing Walter (2014), several researchers argue that culture has a major influence in shaping gender roles and power dynamics between men and women. Village girls also often refrain from speaking in public forums. This is



supported by Nova's (2022) findings, which highlight that the role of rural women in development is still limited by socially constructed gender biases.

### ***Communication as an Instrument of Empowerment***

Within the framework of the Communication for Empowerment theory, effective communication not only conveys messages but also builds the social capacity of individuals and groups to make their own decisions (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). In the case of the Trotosari Village Children's Forum (FAD), activities such as parenting seminars, children's digital literacy training, and gender equality campaigns play an important role as spaces for social learning.

This practice also reflects the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), in which children are not merely objects of research but also participate as active subjects involved in formulating and implementing activities. This PAR approach aligns with Stringer's (2014) findings, which state that direct participation strengthens participants' critical capacity to understand and transform their social realities.

### ***The Role of Media and Technology in Children's Forum Communication***

This study also found that the younger generation in the village has begun utilizing simple digital media as tools for communication and social campaigns. Media representations that display gender stereotypes have a significant impact on the development of children's perceptions from an early age (Prentice & Miller, 2006) as well as during adolescence (Gehrau et al., 2016). For example, children involved in the Village Children's Forum (FAD) utilize WhatsApp Groups and Instagram to disseminate campaign messages, such as "Stop Child Marriage" and "Empowered Village Children." The use of social media as a participatory communication tool not only broadens the reach of messages but also strengthens solidarity and engagement among members of the village community (Reindrawati et al., 2023).

This aligns with the research of Nurdin et al. (2021) in the Journal of Development Communication, which highlights the role of social media in strengthening community-based development communication. Technology serves as

a medium for bottom-up communication, allowing children's voices to reach stakeholders more broadly. This approach generally involves stakeholders as an integral part of the process, aiming to integrate local knowledge as well as sector-specific expertise (Nelman & Yudhanti, 2020). The bottom-down method is designed to promote local-level decision-making, strengthen community participation, and facilitate grassroots movements (Panda, 2007). Collaboration and engagement between experts and local communities are essential to minimize failures in decision-making, often caused by a lack of understanding of local contexts, and to enhance the effectiveness of participatory workshops (Fraser et al., 2006).

### ***Dynamics of Intergenerational Relations***

The interaction between the children of the forum and village officials reflects a distinctive process of intergenerational communication. Studies show differences in communication styles across generations that affect the effectiveness of communication flow, where children act as social innovators, while village officials serve as facilitators (Indrawan & Toni, 2025). Furthermore, intergenerational communication in traditional Indonesian communities is often characterized by politeness and caution; however, with the right participatory approach, such relationships can become collaborative and productive (Mulyana, 2007).

The presence of KKN students from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya also helped strengthen this intergenerational communication bridge. Intergenerational learning highlights the two-way exchange of knowledge between individuals from different generations, whether or not they share family ties. Quoting Sanchez (2014), in this process, each age group has the opportunity to learn from one another, emphasizing the importance of interaction and mutual relationships between generations (Heffenan et al., 2019). Through training and mentoring, the students serve as communication mediators linking the formal language of village policy with the everyday language of children. This model aligns with the community facilitation approach in development communication (Servaes, 2008).

### ***Social and Policy Implications***

Field findings show that the existence of the Village Child Forum (FAD) has had a tangible impact on social change. For example, following the implementation of parenting seminars and the establishment of the FAD, children's participation in village activities increased by 45% (based on attendance records). In addition, there was a noticeable rise in public awareness of issues related to early marriage and child abuse. This supports the theory of behavioral change communication (BCC), which posits that social behavior change occurs through a continuous communication process rather than through one-time campaigns (Piotrow et al., 1997). Thus, the Village Child Forum can be positioned as a BCC instrument at the local level.

The village government has begun to show a positive response toward the existence of the Village Child Forum (FAD). In the following year's Village Meeting (*Musyawarah Desa*), FAD representatives were invited to provide input for the preparation of the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes). This step marks an institutional recognition of children as stakeholders in village development. Children's involvement in this planning process also indicates a paradigm shift in development communication from a top-down model toward a participatory one that positions the community, including children, as active agents of social change. According to information from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), the Village Friendly to Women and Care for Children (DRPPA) program was initiated in 2021 in ten pilot villages fully funded by the national budget (APBN). This number increased significantly in 2022 to 132 villages and continued to grow to 156 villages and 70 sub-districts in the following year.

The growth of the DRPPA indicates a collective awareness across regions about the importance of women's empowerment and child protection within the framework of sustainable village development. However, to grasp its deeper meaning, the indicators formulated by KemenPPPA should not be viewed merely as an administrative checklist, but rather as a framework for development communication that connects national policy with social practices at the village level. Indicators such as the organization of women and children, the establishment of

child- and women-friendly village regulations, and the allocation of village budgets for empowerment essentially reflect efforts to build a participatory communication ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups. This aligns with the findings of Dewi et al. (2022), who emphasize that the success of participatory development depends on the ability of local actors to build equitable and dialogical communication.

The findings of this study reveal that the Village Child Forum (FAD) serves as an important medium for translating empowerment indicators into concrete social practices. Activities such as the “Stop Child Marriage” campaign and digital literacy training reflect the application of the Communication for Development (C4D) principles, which emphasize empowerment and participation (Sugiarto, 2023). The integration of the C4D framework aligns with participatory communication theory, where communication patterns are pluralistic and dialogical. Meanwhile, pluralistic patterns emerge in thematic forums such as peer education activities and child advocacy training (Fonataba, 2025). In these forums, children are freer to express their opinions without hierarchical constraints, often generating innovative ideas such as developing educational content through local social media platforms. This form of communication reinforces Freire’s (1970) notion of dialogical communication, emphasizing that education and social transformation can only occur through egalitarian dialogue rather than one-way instruction. Thus, the effectiveness of integrating the C4D framework with participatory communication theory is reflected in how FAD creates spaces for critical and collaborative dialogue, enabling children to actively participate in building an inclusive village development process.

The DRPPA indicators share conceptual similarities with various global initiatives that promote gender equality and child participation in local governance. For instance, UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) emphasizes the involvement of children in decision-making, protection from violence, and equal access to basic services. Similarly, the Gender Equality Seal for Local Governments by UNDP highlights institutional transformation through gender-responsive policies and equitable accountability mechanisms. When compared to these global initiatives,

DRPPA exhibits unique characteristics, namely a bottom-up, community-based governance approach operating within Indonesia's rural socio-cultural structure. This approach offers a context more adaptable to local values, particularly in areas still influenced by religious norms and communal traditions. However, compared to international practices, DRPPA still requires strengthening in data-driven monitoring and evidence-based communication to ensure sustainability, transparency, and institutional legitimacy at the village level.

Thus, positioning DRPPA within a global framework reveals that this program is not merely a local policy but also part of the broader global development movement that emphasizes inclusivity, equality, and child participation. The alignment of DRPPA with the principles of Communication for Development (C4D), particularly in the dimensions of empowerment and social dialogue, demonstrates Indonesia's contribution to strengthening international discourse on gender-equitable development. The adoption of cross-country models and the enhancement of participatory communication capacity at the village level can enrich DRPPA's implementation, making it more adaptive to social dynamics while aligning with global standards centered on children and women.

## **CONCLUSION**

The development of the DRPPA program implementation underscores the importance for both national and local governments to strengthen institutional mechanisms that support participatory communication at the village level. The findings of this study indicate that strengthening children's participatory communication is not only essential for realizing inclusive and gender-equitable villages but also serves as a concrete policy entry point to ensure the sustainability of the *Desa Ramah Perempuan dan Peduli Anak* (DRPPA) program. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for policy direction, providing stronger structural legitimacy for Village Child Forums, encouraging schools to enhance children's communication literacy through formal education and extracurricular activities, and guiding forum facilitators to continuously develop children's

participatory communication capacity to ensure their sustained involvement in village development.

This study affirms that the communication patterns formed within the Village Child Forum reflect multilayered dynamics of social participation, shifting from traditional hierarchies toward more egalitarian and dialogical participation. The consensual and pluralistic communication model has proven crucial in fostering democratic and empowering interactions among children, facilitators, and village officials. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including age-related limitations, social legitimacy, and the absence of institutional support within village regulations. The Village Child Forum has demonstrated its capacity as an agent of social change, particularly in promoting gender equality and child protection within the context of village development. Through the Communication for Development (C4D) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches, the forum has successfully strengthened synergy between the community, government, and youth. However, the sustainability of these participatory communication practices remains a challenge once external facilitation such as university involvement or government programs ends. Thus, institutionalizing children's participatory communication through local policy integration and continuous capacity-building efforts is vital to ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of the Village Child Forum within the DRPPA framework.

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