



RESEARCH ARTICLE

How Successful the Community Conservation Partnerships Empowering the Local Community in Lore Lindu National Park, Indonesia?



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ABSTRACT

The community-based conservation partnership (CCP) implemented in Lore Lindu National Park (LLNP) is a community empowerment policy that provides legal access to local communities for forest utilization within the conservation area while strengthening their capacity for economic improvement. This policy strategy aims to support the preservation of conservation area ecosystems while simultaneously supporting the economic well-being of communities surrounding the forest. This study evaluates the performance and effectiveness of CCP in LLNP, focusing on their impact on conservation area functionality and local economic development. The research was conducted in 56 villages surrounding LLNP that have implemented conservation partnerships with park management since 2018. Using structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, data were collected from relevant stakeholders. The study applied quantitative and qualitative approaches, including Likert-scale assessments and Mann-Whitney U statistical analysis, to evaluate CCP performance across different management areas. The findings reveal that the CCP program has contributed to improving the functionality of the conservation area through participatory conservation and monitoring initiatives. However, the program has not yet significantly boosted the local economy. The capacity of the local community to develop enterprises remains limited. The local community's capacity to develop the enterprise remains limited. The empowerment process implemented by LLNP managers through CCP focused on strengthening individual and organizational capacities. It necessitates policy support from the local government through assistance for programs that strengthen the local economy, incorporation of business development, and reinforcement of marketing networks for locally produced goods.

1. Introduction

Governance policies in conservation areas in Indonesia have begun to shift from complete control by the government to community involvement and sharing of roles and responsibilities (Massiri et al. 2024b; Nadhira and Basuni 2021). Local communities are no longer seen as a threat to conservation management but as a strength that should be empowered (Boedhihartono 2017). The existence of the local communities that live and depend on the resources in conservation areas is a characteristic of conservation areas in Indonesia (Massiri et al. 2019; Zamzami et al. 2020). This situation is the basis for policies on the need for management that involves the local community (Agatha et al. 2022).

The local community's dependence on the conservation area is not only on forest resources to support the community's life but also on land for plantation (Meilani et al. 2019; Wardah et al. 2022). This situation often leads to conflicts in the management of conservation areas (Jumiyati et al. 2019). The government of Indonesia has issued a conservation partnership policy to address this problematic situation (Massiri 2019; Prayitno 2020). The issuance of this policy has resulted in a paradigm shift in conservation area management that recommends the need for local community involvement in conservation area management.

Conservation partnerships are also a form of community empowerment in conservation area management (Massiri et al. 2024b; Munandar et al. 2022). Community empowerment has a broad scope of activities and programs, including providing access, authority, and control over resources, and increasing community awareness and capacity (Joseph 2020; Kruahong et al. 2023). In Indonesia's policy narrative of conservation area management, community empowerment is intended to gain community support in conserving conservation areas (Massiri 2022). The ultimate goal of community empowerment should not only be to gain community support but should go beyond that. Community empowerment should include sharing roles, control, and authority. It can be achieved when the capacity of the community is strengthened (Drasopolino et al. 2023). However, in many cases, community capacity still needs to improve in forest management, including conservation area management.

Community empowerment depends on the process of community empowerment activities (Mardikanto and Soebiato 2012; Steiner and Farmer 2018). In addition, the success of community empowerment is also influenced by community characteristics (Haryanto et al. 2022). It reinforces that the community empowerment process must adapt or adjust to the characteristics of the community. The common problem with community empowerment activities in conservation areas is that they only focus on providing access and economic assistance programs to communities. Conservation partnerships should not only be seen as providing access to utilization and economic assistance to communities. It is a collaboration in management between conservation area management units and local communities.

The conservation partnership policy has been implemented in almost all conservation areas in Indonesia. However, implementing this policy has yet to overcome the conflict problems in conservation areas (Fatimah and Sahide 2019). In Lore Lindu National Park, Central Sulawesi Province, the conservation partnership policy has been implemented in almost all villages bordering the LLNP area since 2018. The implementation of this policy became massive in LLNP because it received funding from two foreign funds, namely Enhancing the Protected Area System in Sulawesi/EPPASS and Forest Program III Sulawesi. 56 villages out of 76 bordering the LLNP area have built conservation partnerships with LLNP managers. However, information on the success of the conservation partnership policy in LLNP has yet to be widely revealed in scientific articles or research reports. Many factors can affect the implementation of community-based forest management policies, including local community capacity, community social capital, physical capacity, formal institutional structure, empowering process, and the roles of stakeholders. This research described the effects of each factor on CCP performance in LLNP. Many factors can affect the implementation of collaborative management policies in community forest management, including local community capacity, community social capital, physical capacity, formal institutional structure, empowering process, and the roles of stakeholders (Massiri et al. 2015, 2023, 2024a,b; Drasopolino et al. 2021). This research described the effects of each factor on CCP performance in LLNP.

Implementing a policy or program requires evaluation to reveal the impact of a policy, policy constraints, and performance (Christie and Lemire 2019; Meijaard et al. 2021). The policy evaluation stage is one of the most significant phases of the policy cycle. Policy evaluation aims to determine the extent to which policy objectives have been attained and what obstacles must be overcome to enhance performance (Dunn 2015). CCP is a form of community empowerment policy in conservation areas, granting access to forest resources in traditional zones of national park areas and enhancing community knowledge and capacity. This policy seeks to preserve the conservation area's function and boost the local economy. The policy implementation is determined by its potential institutional capacity and community empowerment process (Pujo et al. 2018). This article describes community empowerment as the process of empowering community-based conservation partnerships. In addition, this study evaluates the performance and effectiveness of community-based conservation partnerships to promote the preservation of area functions and economic development in the community.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in 56 villages surrounding the LLNP, which have implemented a conservation partnership with the LLNP management. **Fig. 1** shows the research location.

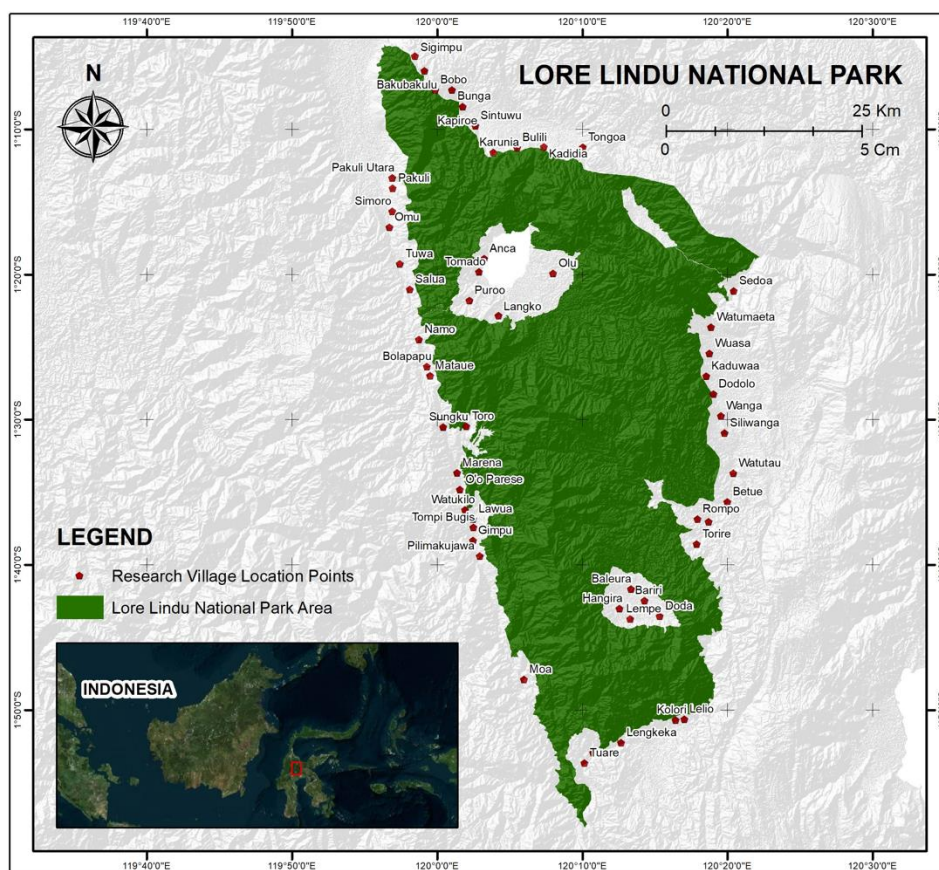


Fig. 1. Research location in Lore Lindu National Park.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected over four months in 2022 using a structured and in-depth interview approach and focus group discussions (FGDs). Structured interviews were conducted with 10 LPKD members and administrators from each sample village to reveal data on the performance of the CCP and the potential institutional capacity of the LPKD. In-depth interviews were conducted with regional facilitators, LLNP administrators, village administrators, and LPKD officials to elicit data on partnership building, mentoring processes, and barriers to implementing the Community Conservation Partnership. We also conducted FGD in three LLNP management areas to discuss and validate the findings on CCP performance and constraints. Participants in the FGDs included LPKD leaders, village leaders, village facilitators, and LLNP staff at the resort, section, and area management levels. The number and categories of respondents in the data collection process are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Category and number of respondents

Data collection method	Purpose and objectives of data collection	Category and number of respondents
Structured interviews	to reveal data on the performance of the CCP and the potential institutional capacity of the LPKD	10 LPKD members and administrators in 56 villages
In-depth interviews	to elicit data on partnership building, mentoring processes, and barriers to implementing the Community Conservation Partnership	3 regional facilitators 3 LLNP administrators 56 village administrators 56 LPKD officials 56 LPKD leaders 56 village leaders
Focus group discussions in three LLNP management areas	to discuss and validate the findings on CCP performance and constraints	3 village facilitators 3 LLNP staff at the area management levels 6 LLNP staff at the section 18 LLNP staff at the resort level,

2.3. Data Analysis

This study applied a Likert scale and descriptive quantitative data analysis to determine the outputs of CCP. There are three indicators to assess each criterion's assessment factors: 3 = high, 2 = moderate, and 1 = low. Evaluation criteria and indicators are presented in **Table 2**.

In addition, we analyzed differences in CCP performance between areas of regional management using Mann-Whitney U statistical analysis. This study also applied descriptive qualitative analysis to determine performance-impacting issues and variables.

Table 2. Criteria and indicators for evaluating the implementation of the management function of the community conservation partnership

Criteria	Indicator	Assessment Methods
Planning	- The procedure for developing the plan - Availability of planning documents - Clarity of planning objectives and strategies for attaining objectives - Schedule and funding	Descriptive using a Likert scale (3=good, 2=moderate, 1=poor)
Organizing	- Legality and structure - Understanding of organizational functions - Persons and positions - Understanding of authorities and responsibilities - Participation	Descriptive using a Likert scale (3=good, 2=moderate, 1=poor)
Program implementation	- Utilization of forest resources - Business development - Preservation of the area - Participatory forest monitoring - Capacity building program	Descriptive using a Likert scale (3=good, 2=moderate, 1=poor)
Monitoring and evaluation	- Implementation monitoring activities - Internalization of monitoring and evaluation results into the planning process - The availability of activity report documents	Descriptive using a Likert scale (3=good, 2=moderate, 1=poor)

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Formation Process of Community Conservation Partnerships in LLNP

Since the early 2000s, the Integrated Development And Conservation Project (IDCP) of the Nature Conservancy has facilitated the formation process of community conservation agreements in LLNP (Massiri 2019). This series was closely related to designing and implementing the community Conservation Partnership program in LLNP. The development and spirit of community participation in managing conservation areas in the LLNP continue. At that time, the implementation of community conservation agreements was hindered by regulatory barriers, particularly those governing community access to the use of forest resources in conservation areas.

The development of a Community Conservation Agreement (CCA) in LLNP cannot be separated from foreign funding support and the role of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2008, the IDCP project of Central Sulawesi concluded. Nonetheless, the CCA agreement provided a legal foundation for local communities and village governments to negotiate their rights to manage and utilize forest resources in the LLNP. Local NGOs were dominant stakeholders in defending the CCA's sustainability through external funding support.

In addition, from 2017 to 2020, the Enhancing Protected Area System in Sulawesi (EPASS) Project supported funding for the continued implementation of community conservation agreements. Since 2017, this EPASS project has strengthened CCA and village conservation institutions in 16 villages surrounding LLNP. In 2018, the management of LLNP obtained funding support for CCA sustainability through the Forest Programme (FP3) Project, which facilitated community conservation agreements in forty villages surrounding the LLNP.

The LLNP management adopted CCA as a model for community empowerment under Conservation Partnership Formal Rules Number P6 of 2018. Implementing community-based conservation partnerships strengthens the proposed community conservation agreement. The CCAs facilitated since the early 2000s and the CCPs adopted by the LLNP Manager did not differ significantly. The fundamental difference is the location and type of resources that comprise the community's access area. The difference between CCA and CCP is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. The difference between community conservation agreement and community conservation partnership

Criteria	Community Conservation Agreement	Community Conservation Partnership
Location	Not specific; community conservation areas including outside the LLNP area and within the LLNP area in all zones	Specific; Within the LLNP area, particularly in the traditional zone
Utilized forest resources	Not Specific; Based on community needs, including NTFPs and tourism development	Regulated specially; only for the utilization of NTFPs and not permitted for tourism development
Local Institution	Village conservation agency	Village conservation management agency
Time period	Not specifically regulated	Limited to five years, but can be extended after an evaluation process

Three primary enabling factors support the continuation of CCA towards conservation partnerships in LLNP. The first consideration is the availability of rules as a legal basis for implementing the CCA. The following regulations are the legal basis for continuing CCA in the LLNP: a) Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. P.43/2017 on community empowerment around nature reserve areas and nature conservation areas; b) Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. P.44/2017 on procedures for cooperation in the implementation of nature reserve areas and nature conservation areas; and c) Regulation of the Director General of Conservation Regulation No. P.6/2018 on the implementation of nature reserve areas and nature conservation areas.

Second, in 2018, the LLNP Manager revised the LLNP management zoning, which provides a traditional zone as a space for community use to benefit the traditional needs of the local community, covering 25,229.6 hectares (11,7% of the total LLNP area). It seeks to accommodate traditional interests or requirements within the LLNP region. It is located in the traditional zone. Thirdly, available donor funding supports the development and strengthening of CCA in LLNP, specifically Forest Programme 3 and EPPAS.

The management of LLNP applies a tiered area-based approach, namely areas, regional sections and resorts. The LLNP region is divided into three management areas: 1) Saluki, 2) Makmur, and 3) Poso. Each management area is divided into two regional management sections, each containing two resorts. Each regional management was responsible for building conservation partnerships with the assistance of regional section staff, resorts, and village facilitators. Twenty-four villages have established CCP in Area 1 management, ten in Area 2 management, and twenty-two in Area 3 management.

The procedure of establishing a CCP at LLNP did not strictly adhere to the technical regulations mandated by the government. However, it did not disregard the administrative requirements specified in the technical guidelines. The process stages commenced with a survey to determine community reliance on forest resources, followed by developing understanding and consensus at the sub-district and village levels to ensure that the community and parties are willing to collaborate on a conservation partnership. At both the sub-district and village levels, the stakeholders signed the formulation of the agreement and understanding. This agreement affirms the community's agreement to develop a conservation partnership through access to the use of forest resources in the traditional zone of the LLNP area.

The village government forms a Village Conservation Management Agency or *Lembaga Pengelola Konservasi Desa* (LPKD) to carry out the conservation partnership cooperation agreement. This LPKD was previously named Village Conservation Agency. The roles and functions of the LPKD include facilitating communication between the community and the LLNP central office, together with the LLLNP management, preparing a program implementation plan and annual work plan, disseminating the CPP to the community, carrying out planning participatory with the LLNP central office, supervise the implementation of the CCP, evaluate the implementation of the CCP, and report the results of the CCP evaluation to the Village Head.

The scope of the CCP agreement activities in LLNP is a form of community empowerment. Community empowerment is strengthening community access and capacity (Massiri 2022). Community access granted in the utilization of forest resources is limited to the traditional zone, with the type of utilization being non-timber forest products and using forest resources for traditional needs. Each LPKD's program of activities includes five components: a) human resource and institutional capacity building, b) limited use of forest resources in traditional zones, c) business development, d) area conservation, and e) participatory area monitoring.

3.2. Performance of Community Conservation Partnerships

The evaluation results show that the performance of the 56 conservation partnerships in LLNP was moderate. The statistical analysis results indicated a significant difference in CPP performance between the management of Area 1 and Area 3. However, the performance of CCP in the management of Area 1 and the management of Area 2 was not significantly different, and neither was the management of Area 2 and Area 3. The highest CCP performance was in the area management sector, while the lowest was in the area management area 3, presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Performance of the community conservation partnership in the LLNP

Performance	Area management						International funding			
	Community Conservation Partnership in Area 1		Community Conservation Partnership in Area 2		Community Conservation Partnership in Area 3		Community Conservation Partnership Facilitated by EPASS		Community Conservation Partnership Facilitated by FP3	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	9	37.50	4	40.00	2	9.09	2	12.50%	13	32.50%
Moderate	13	54.17	3	30.00	18	81.82	10	62.50%	25	62.50%
Low	2	8.33	3	30.00	2	9.09	4	25.00%	2	5.00%
Total	24	100.00	10	100.00	22	100.00	16	100.00%	40	100.00%
Average	2.19		2.04		1.94		1.86		2.15	
Standard deviation	0.36		0.58		0.26		0.32		0.39	

The CCP empowerment process was facilitated by EPASS and FP3 funding. The outcomes of the statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between the performance of CCPs facilitated by EPASS and FP3. This condition has occurred because, since 2021, EPASS project funding support has ended, while FP3 project funding support was still available until 2023. There is a tendency for CCP effectiveness to decline after the funding support ends. These findings indicate that institutional sustainability remains a significant issue for foreign-funded institutions. An overview of the performance of CCPs funded by both EPASS and FP3 is presented in **Fig. 2**. This research also revealed that CCP has a high performance in planning and organization, while program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation were moderate, as presented in **Fig. 3**.

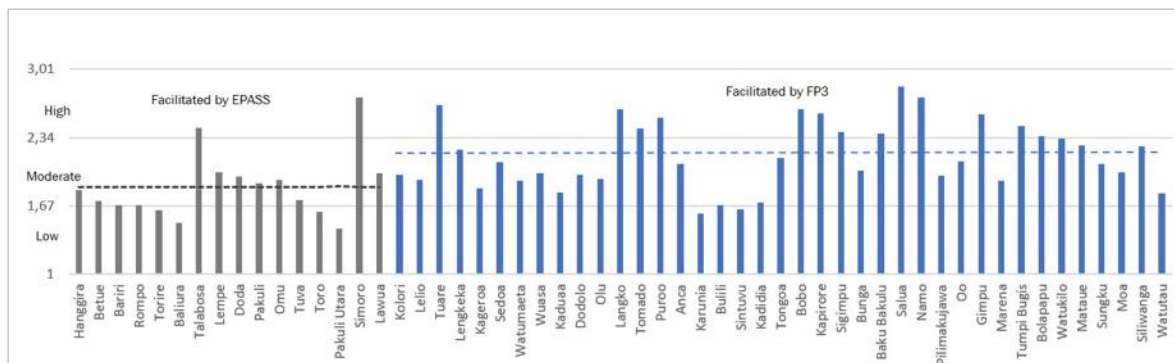


Fig. 2. Performance of the community conservation partnership in all the villages around the LLNP area, supported by foreign funding.

3.2.1. Preparation of CCP program planning

Preparing the CCP plan was participatory by the LPKD and the Regional manager and resort of LLNP and facilitated by the Facilitator. The plan preparation method applied a Conservation Action Plan (Dudley et al. 2007; Lees et al. 2021) modified based on field conditions (Massiri 2019). The planning method was modified because the conservation management paradigm is no longer just protection and preservation. The management paradigm of conservation areas in Indonesia emphasizes empowerment, sustainable use, protection, and preservation (Badi'ah et al. 2022; Gunawan et al. 2022).

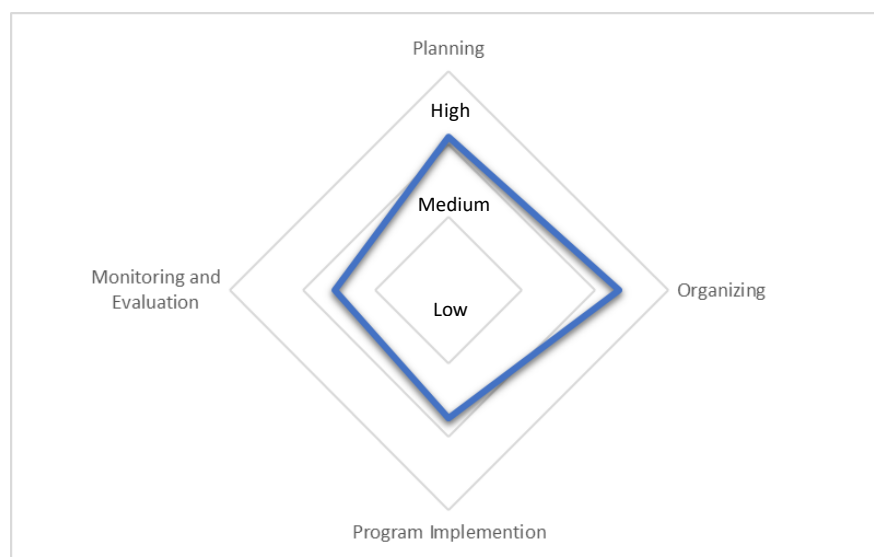


Fig. 3. Performance of management functions by the community conservation partnership.

This participatory conservation partnership plan has advantages, including a) the resulting decisions are joint because the community explores them in a participatory manner, b) the strategies and programs formulated are based on potential resources and problems faced by the community related to resources in the area, c) the implementation of the programs formulated is collaborative because they are carried out through the process of identifying parties with interest in forest resources and identifying authorities who have a strong role in supporting the utilization and preservation of forest resources in the area

The application of the participatory planning approach to the development of the conservation partnership program at LLNP is predicated on the complex nature of the problems associated with the preservation, protection, and utilization of national plantation areas. Each stakeholder has restricted knowledge, necessitating collaboration to complement one another. This planning concept emphasizes incorporating local community knowledge and formal knowledge of forest administrators.

The framework for preparing CCP planning was a participatory study of the system of resources, situations, stakeholders, strategy, and success. The preparation of the implementation plan for the conservation partnership program begins with identifying the potential of natural resources in traditional zones in a participatory manner, assessing the situation of each of these resources, identifying interested stakeholders and arranging their role in regulating, controlling and supporting the use and preservation of natural resources in the area.

3.2.2. Organizing the Program

The implementation of the CCP plan is highly dependent on the LPKD, as the organization in the village whose function is to run the conservation partnership program. The village chief selected the LPKD members, while LPKD administrators were selected through discussions with LPKD members. The LPKD's administration comprises a chairperson, a secretary, and members. The number of LPKD participants in each village ranged from 15 to 20 individuals.

Representation from authorities in village and local communities with high access to forest resources is required for LPKD membership. In many villages, the members of the LPKD were determined by their closeness to the village chief. According to the findings of this study, in some villages, the LPKD members were dominated by village officials, and very few members of the LPKD were from local communities who access the area. It further indicates that the local actors determine local decisions.

LPKD management and members have a good understanding of conservation partnerships and the functions and roles of the organization. LPKD management also has a good understanding of duties and responsibilities. However, member participation is still relatively moderate, especially in implementing program activities. It is one of the obstacles to the organization of the village. Participation is important

in the organization, especially in formulating decisions and implementing program sustainability (Donaldson and Preston 1995).

3.2.3. Program Implementation

This study revealed that the performance of the CCP program implementation was generally medium to high, except for business development programs, which performed poorly. Only 5% of the 56 LPKDs have expanding and profitable business divisions. These LPKD business units have received support for production facilities, infrastructure, and capacity-building training. Fig. 4 shows an overview of the performance of the implementation of the conservation partnership program in LLNP.

This finding confirms that the CCP program has effectively achieved forest area sustainability in most villages surrounding the LLNP area. This conservation partnership program has not been successful in boosting the local economy. The capacity-building program in the form of training was executed effectively per the planned objectives, but this did not affect the business unit's performance. CCP is a form of community empowerment that necessitates capacity development. Increasing institutional capacity is insufficient to improve individual skills; network and policy support is also required (Shakya et al. 2018).

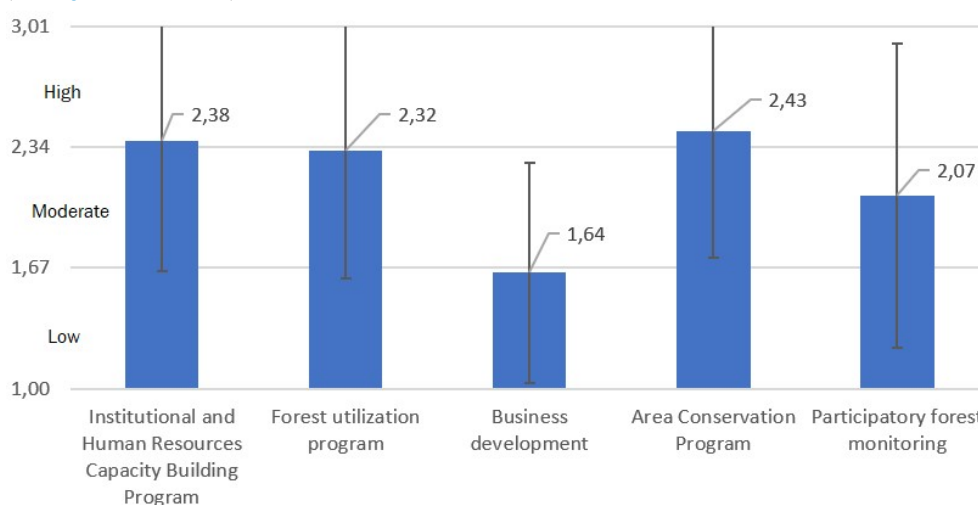


Fig. 4. Performance of the program implementation for the community conservation partnership.

3.2.4. Monitoring and evaluation the program of CCP

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the CCP program, the managerial staff of the LLNP Centre, together with area management administrators, conducted regular monitoring and evaluation. Interviews and focus group discussions were used in the monitoring and evaluation technique. The monitoring and evaluation process can enhance the performance of an organization.

The benefits of monitoring and evaluation activities include determining the program's progress and the obstacles that impede its success. The outcomes of the evaluation activities provide the basis for future revisions and planning. However, interviews with LPKD officials revealed that the CCP's monitoring and evaluation results had yet to be extensively integrated as a basis for plan development.

3.3. Institutional Problem of CCP in LLNP

The CCP implemented at LLNP is a form of community empowerment in a conservation area. Community empowerment in conservation areas aims to improve the area's function and the community's economy through community capacity building. The results of the assessment of the implementation of the CCP program to increase area functions were generally effectively achieved, namely generally in the medium to high category. However, implementing the CCP program to improve the community's economy has yet to be achieved effectively, which was typically still in the low category. Business development program initiation has been carried out, and infrastructure assistance has been provided but has yet to progress. The program for increasing institutional capacity and human resources has yet to improve community capacity in developing businesses for the LPKD group.

Several issues indicators were identified concerning the objective of increasing the economy of the local community through CCP based on the findings of in-depth research into FGDs with LPKD management. Issues related to local institutions from LPKD include, namely, a) human resources, b) knowledge and skills, c) funding, d) social capital, and e) production facilities and infrastructure that cannot be used. This problem is a subject of institutional capacity. Individual potential capacity in LPKD describes individual technical capabilities in LPKD for managing conservation partnerships, including forestry and conservation-related expertise, management and administration, and product and business development. The majority of LPKD members were village officials with no business experience. It has implications for the poor business development performance of conservation partnerships. **Fig. 5** shows mapping issues in community conservation partnerships in LLNP.

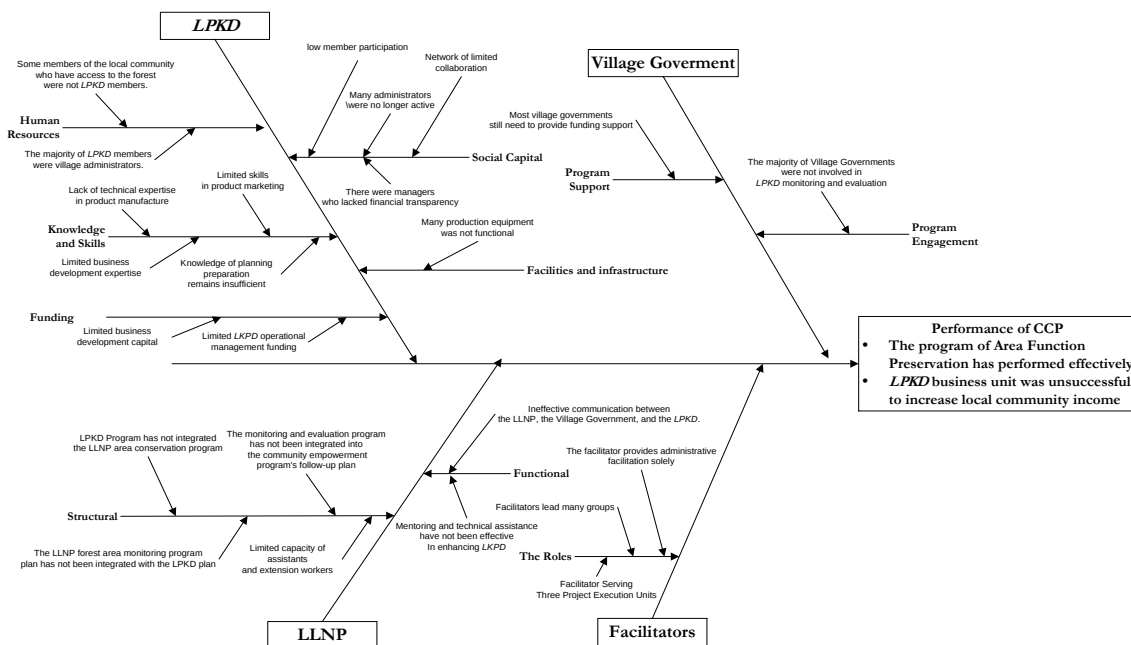


Fig. 5. The problems of the community conservation partnership based on FGD results.

As shown in **Fig. 5**, the results of identifying problems associated with the LPKD's resource capacity are as follows: First, LPKD members are more dominant as village officials. However, some local communities who access the forest area were not included in the LPKD group. Second, knowledge and skills regarding product development, business development, product marketing, and planning were still in low capacity. This has implications for the third and fourth issues, namely the inability of LPKD members to utilize facilities and infrastructure, as well as the ability to develop business capital. LPKD capacity at the organizational and management levels also faces social capital-related issues, such as low member participation, several inactive administrators, and the need for more openness about finances among administrators.

CCP implementation depends on two primary aspects, namely resources and processes. In this context, resources refer to the potential capacity LPKD possesses to implement the CCP program. Meanwhile, the process represents community empowerment activities and stakeholder support for transforming resources into effective performance.

Institutional capacity describes an individual's ability in an organization or a particular unit to carry out its duties efficiently, effectively, and sustainably (Domorenok et al. 2021). Community institutional capacity is a factor that determines or hinders social forestry performance in the program (Massiri et al. 2020, 2024b; Pujo et al. 2018). In the institutional context, performance is determined by three levels of potential institutional capacity: a) the micro level, which describes potential capacity at the individual level; b) the meso level, which describes potential institutional capacity at the organizational and management level; and c) the macro level, which describes institutional capacity within a broader context (Willems and Baumert 2003).

The performance of conservation partnerships is a representation of potential capacity and the transformation of potential capacity into effective performance. The empowerment process depends on the role of the facilitator (Massiri et al. 2024a). However, this study reveals that the facilitator does not have a dominant role in strengthening local institutional capacity because the facilitator only functions to facilitate the administrative aspects of the project, which is carried out by three project implementing units, namely the LLNP Officer, the Social Forestry and Environmental Partnership Center, and the Poso Watershed Management Center.

The performance of local institutions also depends on the governance structure of formal institutions, as well as the role of stakeholders in supporting and strengthening regional institutions (Massiri et al. 2024a). The sustainability and capacity of the CCP depend on formal institutions, such as the village government and the LLNP officer. A structural problem associated with community-based conservation partnerships is related to program integration. Ostrom (1990) emphasized the importance of applying the principle of nested enterprises in realizing institutional sustainability. Community conservation partnership is a form of collaboration in managing collaboration, which requires intense communication between partnering parties (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

4. Conclusion

The community conservation partnership in LLNP is a community empowerment strategy in managing conservation areas that seek to improve the area's function and the local community's economy. The CCP program, which seeks to enhance the area's functionality, is carried out successfully. Area conservation programs with living boundary activities and participatory area monitoring perform moderately well. However, this CCP program has yet to boost the local economy around LLNP successfully. Even though they have received assistance in acquiring production facilities, infrastructure, and training to increase their business development capacity, LPKD's business development programs are not typically successful. The limitations of LPKD's corporate development represent a potential capacity issue. Most LPKD management and members are village officials with limited business experience. The process of community empowerment within the community conservation partnership program has yet to optimally convert the potential capacity of LPKD to its maximum performance. The empowerment process in CCP must begin with strengthening commitment, coordination, effective communication, and capacity building on the individual, institutional, and organizational levels.

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