

# Policy and Practice of Village Fund Allocation and Agro-Downstreaming: Evidence from Wotay Village, Central Maluku

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the Policy and Practice of Village Fund Allocation and Agro-Downstreaming: Evidence from Wotay Village, Central Maluku. Wotay Village is one of the second-largest coconut-producing areas in Maluku Province, with 221 farmers and coconut-processing business actors. A total of 70 respondents were selected from this population using purposive and simple random sampling. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The results show that Village Fund Allocation has no significant effect on community welfare, despite the village receiving IDR 757,282,000 in 2024, due to limited community participation, low transparency, and a predominantly top-down budgeting process. In contrast, Coconut Product Downstreaming has a positive and significant effect on welfare, as higher levels of processing and value addition contribute to increased income and improved living standards. Overall, both variables explain 47.2% of the variation in community welfare, emphasizing the need for effective downstreaming strategies and participatory, transparent Village Fund management to enhance sustainable welfare and support the development of village policies and local agro-industrial economic empowerment.*

## Introduction

Rural development constitutes a central pillar of national development policy aimed at reducing inequality and improving community welfare through the strengthening of local economic capacity. Within this framework, villages function not merely as administrative units but as key actors in implementing public policies that directly affect rural livelihoods. One of the main policy instruments supporting village development in Indonesia is the Village Fund Allocation (ADD), which is

designed to enhance service delivery, stimulate local economic activities, and promote community welfare through participatory and accountable governance mechanisms (Amalia et al., 2024).

From a public policy perspective, the effectiveness of Village Fund Allocation depends not only on the amount of funds disbursed but also on how policies are implemented, targeted, and integrated with local economic potential. Good governance theory emphasizes that transparency, accountability, and community participation are essential to ensuring that public funds generate tangible welfare outcomes. However, empirical evidence indicates that Village Fund management in many rural areas remains characterized by top-down planning, limited public participation, and weak accountability, resulting in suboptimal development outcomes (Pitoy et al., 2024; Zacharias & Iskandar, 2025). These governance shortcomings raise questions regarding the capacity of Village Fund policies to effectively improve rural welfare.

In line with national regulations, at least 20% of Village Funds must be allocated to food security programs, reflecting the government's commitment to strengthening village-level economic resilience and self-reliance (Kesaulya & Behuku, 2023). Food security policies are closely linked to rural industrialization strategies, particularly agro-downstreaming, which aims to increase value added through local processing of agricultural commodities. Theoretically, agro-downstreaming contributes to welfare improvement by increasing household income, creating employment opportunities, and reducing vulnerability to price fluctuations (Kinanda et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the linkage between Village Fund policy and agro-downstreaming initiatives has rarely been examined within a unified analytical framework.

Central Maluku Regency is one of the major coconut-producing regions in Maluku Province, where coconut-based livelihoods dominate rural economic structures. Wotay Village represents a relevant case for examining the interaction between Village Fund policy and agro-downstreaming because its local economy is heavily dependent on coconut farming and processing, involving 221 farmers and processors. From a theoretical standpoint, villages with strong commodity-based potential should benefit most from policies that integrate public fund allocation with value-added production strategies. However, despite the availability of Village Funds and the existence of coconut processing initiatives, community welfare outcomes in Wotay Village remain uneven (Sahlan et al., 2024).

Wotay Village received IDR 757,282,000 in Village Funds in 2024, including the mandatory allocation for food security (Sa'adah, 2024). Although this allocation is relatively small compared to other villages in Central Maluku, its effective utilization should theoretically support coconut downstreaming activities such as training, equipment provision, and market development. In practice, however, it remains unclear whether Village Funds have been strategically directed toward strengthening downstream coconut production or whether they have been absorbed by less productive programs. This uncertainty points to a policy implementation gap between regulatory intent and welfare outcomes.

Previous studies on Village Funds have predominantly focused on budget absorption, transparency, and participation (Suhartono et al., 2025), while research on coconut downstreaming has largely examined value-added processing and farmer income at the enterprise level (Sahlan et al., 2024). These strands of literature remain analytically disconnected and do not sufficiently explain how Village Fund policies can be leveraged to support agro-downstreaming as a pathway to community welfare. Consequently, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the combined role of Village Fund Allocation and agro-downstreaming within the broader framework of rural public policy.

This study addresses this research gap by examining the interaction between Village Fund Allocation policy and the coconut product downstreaming and their joint implications for community welfare in Wotay Village, Central Maluku. The study explicitly investigates how policy implementation, governance mechanisms, and downstreaming practices influence welfare outcomes. By integrating public policy analysis with rural industrialization theory, this research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how village-level policies can optimize local economic potential and improve rural welfare. The findings are expected to contribute both to academic debates on rural public policy and to practical policy recommendations for strengthening Village Fund governance and sustainable agro-downstreaming in rural Indonesia.

## Literature Review

### *Village Fund Governance and Accountability*

Village fund governance has become a critical issue in decentralization and rural development discourse, particularly in developing countries. Effective governance of village funds requires accountability, transparency, and community participation to ensure that public resources generate meaningful development outcomes. Agrawal and Ribot (1999) argue that decentralization will only succeed when local institutions possess both authority and accountability to manage resources in accordance with local needs. Without these elements, decentralization risks becoming merely administrative rather than transformative.

Mansuri and Rao (2013) further emphasize that participatory governance mechanisms are essential for improving development effectiveness at the local level. Their analysis of community-driven development programs shows that weak institutional capacity and elite capture often undermine welfare outcomes. In the context of village fund management, this implies that governance quality directly affects how funds are translated into productive economic activities rather than consumptive spending.

Recent studies (Araral, 2020; Andersson & Ostrom, 2021) highlight that governance arrangements combining formal accountability mechanisms and informal social control tend to perform better in rural development programs. This suggests that village fund governance must be understood not only as a financial

management issue but also as an institutional process shaping local economic transformation.

### *Local Economic Empowerment and Downstreaming*

Downstreaming, or the development of value-added activities at the local level, has increasingly been recognized as a strategy for strengthening local economies and reducing dependency on primary commodity extraction. Porter's (1985) value chain theory explains that economic value is maximized when production processes move beyond raw material extraction toward processing, distribution, and marketing. In rural contexts, downstreaming can transform village funds into productive capital that stimulates local enterprises and employment.

Kaplinsky and Morris (2016) argue that local value chain development enables regions to capture greater economic benefits while enhancing resilience against market volatility. When village funds are directed toward downstream activities, such as agro-processing, local manufacturing, or village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) – they can foster sustainable economic empowerment rather than short-term welfare assistance.

Empirical studies from Asia and Africa (UNDP, 2021; World Bank, 2022) demonstrate that downstream-oriented rural investments contribute significantly to fiscal independence and income diversification at the local level. In Indonesia, comparative studies across Java, Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara (Prabowo et al., 2020; Suryanto & Rahman, 2023) show that villages implementing downstream strategies tend to experience stronger local economic multipliers and improved administrative capacity.

### *Social Welfare and Well-being Perspective*

The ultimate objective of village fund governance and downstreaming policies is the improvement of social welfare. Sen's (1999) capability approach conceptualizes welfare not merely as income growth but as the expansion of individuals' capabilities to live lives they value. From this perspective, downstreaming initiatives supported by village funds should enhance employment opportunities, skills development, and access to basic services.

Chambers (1997) emphasizes a people-centered development approach, arguing that poverty reduction strategies must empower communities rather than impose top-down solutions. When village fund governance aligns with downstream economic activities, it creates pathways for inclusive welfare improvements, particularly for marginalized rural populations.

Recent welfare studies (OECD, 2019; Alkire et al., 2022) underline the importance of linking economic policies with social outcomes. These findings suggest that village fund downstreaming initiatives must be evaluated not only in terms of economic output but also their contribution to well-being, social cohesion, and long-term development sustainability.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes village fund governance as an institutional foundation that determines the effectiveness of

downstream economic strategies, which in turn influence social welfare outcomes. Accountable governance ensures that village funds are allocated toward productive downstream activities, strengthening local value chains and fiscal independence. These processes collectively contribute to improved welfare through enhanced employment, income stability, and community empowerment. This integrated framework bridges governance theory, value chain development, and welfare economics, offering a comprehensive analytical lens for examining the impact of village fund management on rural development outcomes.

## **Research Methods**

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to analyze the relationship between Village Fund Allocation, coconut product downstreaming, and community welfare in Wotay Village. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to measure the magnitude and direction of relationships among variables using numerical data and statistical analysis, thereby allowing objective and generalizable conclusions (Creswell, 2018). The research design is explanatory, as it seeks to explain causal relationships between independent and dependent variables.

The study was conducted in Wotay Village, Teon Serua District, Central Maluku Regency. This location was selected based on theoretical and empirical considerations. From a theoretical perspective, villages with strong commodity-based potential are expected to benefit from policies that integrate public fund allocation with downstreaming strategies. Empirically, Wotay Village represents one of the major coconut-producing villages in Central Maluku, which involved 221 coconut farmers and processing business actors (Piley et al., 2021). This context makes it a relevant case for examining the linkage between Village Fund policy, local economic downstreaming, and welfare outcomes.

The population of this study comprises all 221 coconut farmers and coconut-processing business actors in Wotay Village. The sample size was determined using a purposive sampling approach combined with simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents met specific criteria, namely individuals actively involved in coconut-related economic activities and those who had benefited from Village Fund programs. Subsequently, simple random sampling was applied to reduce selection bias among eligible respondents. Based on these criteria, a total of 70 respondents were selected, which is considered sufficient for multiple linear regression analysis and meets minimum sample size requirements for explanatory quantitative research (Neuman, 2014).

Data were collected through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire administered during the field survey period (specify month-year). The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The research variables were operationalized as follows: Village Fund Allocation was measured through indicators of transparency, participation, and accountability; coconut product downstreaming was measured through

indicators of processing activities, value addition, and market access; and community welfare was measured through indicators of income improvement, employment opportunities, and perceived living standards. Before data analysis, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Validity was assessed using Pearson product-moment correlation, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient value of  $\geq 0.70$  indicating acceptable reliability.

Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to examine both partial and simultaneous effects of Village Fund Allocation and coconut product downstreaming on community welfare. Before estimating the regression model, classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure the robustness of the model. The regression results were interpreted based on coefficient values, significance levels, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which indicates the explanatory power of the model.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Data were collected anonymously and used solely for academic purposes. By adhering to these methodological standards, this study ensures the validity, reliability, and ethical integrity of the research findings.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study provide an initial overview of the influence of Village Fund Allocation and Coconut Product Downstreaming on the welfare of the Wotay Village community, Teon Nila Serua District, Central Maluku Regency. The data indicate that although the village received IDR 757,282,000 in Village Funds in 2024, the benefits have not been evenly experienced by the community. The planning process, which tends to be top-down, combined with limited transparency, has restricted community participation. Meanwhile, coconut downstreaming activities through UD Wootay Coconut have produced several processed products, however, marketing constraints and the fact that some farmers continue to sell raw copra reduce the potential economic value added (Paley et al., 2021). With a population of 221 farmers and coconut-based business actors, this study highlights the importance of integrating Village Fund management with downstreaming strategies to enhance sustainable community welfare. The following section presents the research results using parametric statistical analysis.

### ***Regression Results***

This study examines the influence of Village Fund Allocation and Coconut Product Downstreaming on community welfare in Wootay Village, Teon Nila Serua District, Central Maluku Regency. Although Wootay Village received IDR 757,282,000 in Village Funds in 2024, the distribution of benefits has not been evenly experienced by the community. Limited community participation, top-down planning mechanisms, and transparency constraints have reduced the effectiveness

of Village Fund utilization. In contrast, coconut downstreaming activities have shown greater potential in improving welfare through value-added processing and income generation.

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to analyze the partial and simultaneous effects of Village Fund Allocation (X1) and Coconut Product Downstreaming (X2) on community welfare (Y). Prior to regression analysis, classical assumption tests—including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests—were conducted, and the results confirmed that the data met the required statistical assumptions. The analysis involved 70 respondents selected from a population of 221 coconut farmers and coconut-processing business actors.

**Table 1.** Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t-Value	Sig.	Remark
<b>Village Fund Allocation (X1)</b>	-0.128	0.102	-1.25	0.216	Negative, not significant
<b>Coconut Product Downstreaming (X2)</b>	0.547	0.094	5.82	0.000	Positive, significant
<b>Constant</b>	12.450	1.867	6.67	0.000	-

*Source: Primary data processing, 2025.*

The regression results show that Village Fund Allocation has a negative but statistically insignificant effect on community welfare. The coefficient value of -0.128 indicates that an increase in Village Fund Allocation does not necessarily lead to improved welfare outcomes. This insignificant relationship ( $p = 0.216 > 0.05$ ) suggests that financial transfers alone are insufficient to enhance welfare when governance quality is weak. From a governance perspective, this finding reflects the absence of strong accountability, transparency, and participation mechanisms, as emphasized in decentralization theory (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

Conversely, Coconut Product Downstreaming has a positive and statistically significant effect on community welfare. The coefficient of 0.547 ( $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that increased downstream processing of coconut products substantially improves welfare outcomes. This finding supports value chain and competitive advantage theories, which argue that local value addition enhances income, employment, and economic resilience (Porter, 1985; Kaplinsky & Morris, 2016).

The regression equation is expressed as follows:

$$Y = 12.450 - 0.128X_1 + 0.547X_2$$

Where:

Y = Community welfare

$X_1$  = Village Fund Allocation

$X_2$  = Coconut Product Downstreaming

The model indicates that downstreaming contributes more strongly to welfare improvement than Village Fund Allocation, highlighting the importance of productive economic activities over purely budgetary interventions.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using t-tests for partial effects, an F-test for simultaneous effects, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to assess explanatory power.

**Table 2.** Results of t-Test

Independent Variable	Coefficient (B)	t-Value	Sig. (p)	Remark
Village Fund Allocation (X1)	-0.128	-1.25	0.216	Not significant
Coconut Product Downstreaming (X2)	0.547	5.82	0.000	Significant, positive

*Source: Primary data processing, 2025.*

The t-test results confirm that Village Fund Allocation does not have a significant effect on community welfare, while Coconut Product Downstreaming significantly improves welfare outcomes. This suggests that welfare gains in Wotay Village are driven more by economic empowerment through downstreaming than by fiscal allocation alone.

**Table 3.** Results of F-Test and Coefficient of Determination

Model	F-Value	Sig. (p)	$R^2$	Remark
$X_1$ and $X_2 \rightarrow Y$	25.76	0.000	0.472	Significant simultaneously

*Source: Primary data processing, 2025.*

The F-test indicates that Village Fund Allocation and Coconut Product Downstreaming jointly have a significant effect on community welfare. The  $R^2$  value of 0.472 shows that 47.2% of the variation in community welfare is explained by the two independent variables, while the remaining 52.8% is influenced by other factors such as market access, human resource capacity, and institutional strength.

### Discussion

The findings reveal that Village Fund Allocation does not significantly improve community welfare in Wotay Village, whereas Coconut Product Downstreaming plays a decisive role. The insignificant effect of Village Funds can be attributed to governance issues, including top-down planning, limited transparency, and low community participation. This result aligns with previous studies in Sulawesi and Eastern Indonesia, which emphasize that Village Funds fail to improve welfare when accountability mechanisms are weak (Suhartono et al.,

2025). In contrast, studies in Java report more positive impacts due to stronger administrative capacity and participatory governance (Amalia et al., 2024; Prabowo et al., 2020).

The significant effect of coconut downstreaming confirms the relevance of value-added processing in improving rural welfare. Similar findings have been reported in plantation-based regions such as Indragiri Hilir and other parts of Eastern Indonesia, where downstreaming strengthened local value chains and increased farmer income (Kinanda et al., 2023; Sahlan et al., 2024). In Wotay Village, downstreaming reduces dependence on raw copra sales, stabilizes income, and creates local employment opportunities.

From a policy perspective, these results imply that Village Fund Allocation should be strategically integrated with downstreaming programs. Village governments need to prioritize productive economic activities within Village Fund planning, particularly by supporting processing facilities, training, and market access. Strengthening downstreaming not only improves welfare but also enhances village fiscal independence by expanding the local economic base and reducing reliance on external markets.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the linkage between governance quality, local economic empowerment, and welfare outcomes. In line with Sen's (1999) capability approach, welfare improvement depends not merely on resource availability but on the capacity of communities to utilize those resources effectively. Coconut downstreaming enhances community capabilities by increasing income opportunities and economic participation.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The focus on a single village and a relatively small sample size may limit generalizability. Moreover, external factors such as price volatility, institutional capacity, and broader market integration were not included in the model. Future research should adopt comparative and mixed-method approaches to further examine the interaction between Village Fund governance and agro-industrial downstreaming in shaping rural welfare.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals that Village Fund Allocation has a negative and statistically insignificant impact on community welfare in Wotay Village, highlighting that fiscal transfers alone do not guarantee improved welfare outcomes. This ineffectiveness is attributed to weak governance practices, limited transparency, and low community participation, which collectively undermine the optimal utilization of village funds. In contrast, Coconut Product Downstreaming demonstrates a positive and significant effect on community welfare, indicating that value-added processing of local resources plays a more direct and substantial role in income generation and economic advancement. Both variables influence welfare outcomes, but downstreaming emerges as the more dominant factor.

These findings contribute to the rural economic governance literature by emphasizing that welfare improvement depends not only on fiscal decentralization but also critically on governance quality and productive economic activities. The results support decentralization and accountability theories by underscoring the necessity of participatory and transparent governance to maximize the impact of public funds. Furthermore, the study reinforces value chain theory, showing that down-streaming enhances local welfare through increased value addition and economic empowerment. From a welfare perspective, the evidence aligns with capability-based and people-centered development theories, which prioritize empowering communities through both governance and financial opportunities.

Based on these insights, village governments are encouraged to strengthen transparency, accountability, and community participation in managing Village Funds. Additionally, policy efforts should focus on integrating Village Fund allocations with downstream strategies, such as supporting local agro-industry development, improving market access, and building the capacity of farmers and small enterprises. These combined measures can strengthen local value chains and promote sustainable improvements in rural welfare.

However, it should be acknowledged that the study is limited by its focus on a single village and reliance on cross-sectional quantitative data. Future research should adopt qualitative approaches and conduct comparative studies across different regions to deepen understanding of how governance practices and downstreaming strategies interact to influence rural welfare outcomes.

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