

## **The Impact of Changes in Social Policies Aimed at Eradicating Poverty on Remote Indigenous Communities in North Gorontalo Regency**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research examines in-depth changes in social policy aimed at poverty alleviation targeting Isolated Indigenous Communities (KAT) in North Gorontalo Regency. Poverty among isolated indigenous groups is not simply a manifestation of material economic inadequacy, but rather the accumulation of geographic isolation, limited access to basic services, and long-standing structural marginalization. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research explores two main focuses: the impact of poverty alleviation policies and the forms of change experienced by KAT communities following the implementation of empowerment programs and settlement relocation. Data were collected through participatory observation techniques, in-depth interviews with informants from local government, community support staff, community leaders, and KAT heads of families, as well as documentation studies. The results show that this policy has had a highly transformative, multidimensional impact. Socially, the shackles of isolation have been broken; economically, stable livelihood diversification has been created; and in health and education, accessibility to basic services has drastically increased. The changes are manifested at three fundamental levels: the individual, who transforms to become more economically independent and proactive; the household, who experiences housing stability and food security; and the community, who becomes more cohesive through the reactualization of the local wisdom of mutual cooperation (Huyula). The success of this policy demonstrates the relevance of Merilee S. Grindle's implementation theory, where the policy content is able to respond to objective needs and the implementation context is fully supported by the high responsiveness of the target group.

**Keywords:** Social Policy, Poverty, Remote Indigenous Communities, Community Empowerment, Welfare.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The discourse on empowerment programs for Remote Indigenous Communities (ICCs), often referred to internationally as Indigenous and Renaissance Communities, has become a crucial agenda in various countries, with varying degrees of achievement (IWGIA, 2023). Globally, Australia has implemented the Closing the Gap policy to address the profound

inequality between Indigenous communities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and the general public (Altman 2024).

This policy includes expanding access to health and education, recognizing customary land rights through the Native Title system, and supporting local entrepreneurship through the Indigenous Rangers Program, significantly increasing their economic independence. Elsewhere, Canada has implemented the Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Policy, which provides autonomy for the protection of language and culture, and the provision of basic amenities through Self-Governance Agreements (Papillon, 2026). Similarly, the Brazilian government, through FUNAI, has established strict protection zones for indigenous Amazonian communities from industrial exploitation, and the Philippines has emphasized the importance of a multidimensional, data-driven approach to alleviating extreme poverty among the Agta Tabangnon group. (Raya, M. & Rayes, M. 2021)

In the national context of Indonesia, awareness of upholding the dignity of remote indigenous communities aligns with global commitments, such as achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have now transitioned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Bappenas, 2020). The Indonesian government has implemented a family- and community-based poverty alleviation policy through the Remote Indigenous Community Empowerment Program (PKAT). This policy has a strong legal basis through Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 186 of 2014 concerning Social Empowerment of Remote Indigenous Communities (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014), which was later elaborated more technically through Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2015 (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

The regulation defines Indigenous Peoples (KAT) as a group of people bound by geographic, economic, and socio-cultural unity, who are poor, isolated, and socio-economically vulnerable. The direction of this policy is not simply to provide charitable assistance, but rather a systematic effort aimed at empowering, increasing capacity, and trusting remote indigenous communities to solve their own problems in order to achieve the fulfillment of basic needs and social integration (Suharto 2019).

Poverty is a disease in the economy and must therefore be cured or at least reduced (Munandar, M., & Mahmuddin, M. 2019). Policy ethics evaluations confirm that transparency, distributive justice, and accountability are crucial for the success of poverty alleviation policies (Mulyawan, W., et al., 2024). Poverty has broad dimensions, both structural and cultural, individual and social, relative and absolute, and encompasses other impacts such as regional, social, and political issues (Sofianto, A, 2017). Poverty itself is a complex situation in which individuals are unable to fully meet their basic needs, often forcing them to become trapped by short-term interests and hindering vertical social mobility. The government's new policy, the village fund, is a development of previous policies aimed at improving the welfare of rural communities, improving the quality of life, and alleviating poverty (Jamaluddin, 2018). (Kuncoro, M 2013) In Gorontalo Province, poverty is a primary focus of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan.

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Gorontalo Province, the percentage of the poor population has shown a gradual downward trend, from 15.42 percent in 2022 to 14.57 percent in 2024. (BPS Gorontalo Province, 2024). However, North Gorontalo Regency still recorded a relatively high poverty rate, reaching 16.86 percent in 2024, with an absolute total of 18,990 people. (BPS North Gorontalo Regency, 2024). This indicator is directly proportional to the Human Development Index (HDI) of North Gorontalo Regency, which stood at 68.83 in 2024. Although categorized as moderate and steadily increasing, it still requires accelerated intervention from the local government. (BPS Gorontalo Province 2024)

Specifically in North Gorontalo Regency, the phenomenon of poverty is closely linked to the presence of the KAT community, who live scattered across various remote areas. Initial observations indicate that the KAT population in this region reaches 280 families, or approximately 1,070 people, spread across administrative areas such as Bintana, Pulohenti,

Tanjung Karang, Potanga, Iloheluma, and Juriati villages. (North Gorontalo Regency Social Service, 2023). Prior to the intervention of integrated settlement policies, these communities lived in extremely poor conditions. They inhabited difficult-to-reach valleys and mountain slopes, with a degree of isolation that cut them off from market dynamics. Absolute dependence on weather and local natural resources results in high vulnerability to food crises (Nurdin, I., et al. 2021). In terms of education, the vast distances contribute to high dropout rates for indigenous children, while the lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity and clean water, as well as the lack of health facilities, forces them to rely on exclusive traditional healing methods.

In response to these structural problems, the North Gorontalo Regency Government reoriented its poverty alleviation policy by shifting the development paradigm from charitable to holistic empowerment. (Dunn, 2018) Through cross-sectoral synergy, the government relocated indigenous communities to new, habitable settlements and distributed productive economic assistance.

This policy is expected to not only change the residents' geographic location but also their social, economic, and cultural structures. Therefore, this research is crucial and urgent to unravel the complexities of these changes. This study addresses two fundamental questions: how poverty alleviation policies impact remote indigenous communities in North Gorontalo Regency, and what real changes have occurred in the lives of these remote indigenous communities following the policy's implementation. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

In answering the research question regarding the impact and form of social policy change, this study bases its analysis on three main theoretical pillars: Public Policy Implementation Theory, Poverty and Empowerment Theory, and the Sociological Approach to Local Wisdom (Huyula). (Kadji, Y. 2015)

The first pillar uses the policy implementation model developed by Merilee S. Grindle (Grindle, M.S. 1980). In this theory, she assumes that the success of a public policy is determined by two main groups of variables: the content of the policy and the context of implementation (Kadji, Y. 2015); (Subarsono 2005). The content of the policy includes the extent to which the interests of the target group are accommodated, the types of benefits generated, the degree of expected change, the location of decision-making, who implements the program, and the resources deployed. On the other hand, the implementation context involves the power and strategies of the actors involved, the characteristics of the institutional regime, and the level of compliance and responsiveness of both implementers and target groups (Tachjan 2006). The limited reach of poverty alleviation programs means that results fall far short of residents' expectations and require more serious intervention by local governments (Sidqi, R. J., & Mahmudin, M. 2019). Poverty alleviation policies at the regional level are not fully data-driven and often lack measurable evaluation systems, thus limiting their impact on community welfare (Bandjar, A., & Rosdawiyah, R. 2025). This approach is highly relevant for analyzing whether housing and economic assistance interventions in North Gorontalo Regency truly address the root causes of the problems experienced by the KAT community.

The second pillar rests on the concept of multidimensional poverty and participatory empowerment theory. Poverty is not only measured by low calorie intake or nominal rupiah deficits but also encompasses cultural dimensions (a culture of resignation and apathy) and structural dimensions (marginalization from political access and development). (Sumodiningrat, G. 1999). (Suharto, E 2005). Empowerment is present as a bridge to alleviate poverty. (Sidiq, R. S. S. 2020). The participatory development approach emphasizes that the community should not only be positioned as the object of the project, but as the main subject of development. (Usman, S 1998). This concept requires a social learning process that values the initiative of citizens to actualize themselves, thus creating independent and sustainable local institutional capacity. (Kurniawan, et al. 2015); (Wulandari, et al. 2022). Social capital (norms and social networks) of the community contribute significantly to poverty alleviation, while the role of the government is considered to have no direct impact on welfare if it only focuses on economic assistance (Nasution, W. R. 2021). Poverty is a person's inability to fulfill basic living needs resulting in social conditions that are visible from the physical condition of the house,

low education and lack of health to limited access to interaction relations both horizontally and vertically (Mukramin, S., et al., 2023).

The third pillar is the mainstreaming of a local cultural approach known as the Huyula concept. (Yunus, R 2014) For the Gorontalo ethnic group, Huyula is the crystallization of the values of mutual cooperation and mutual assistance based on the principle of reciprocity or symmetrical reciprocal relationships. (Abdussamad 1985). There are several variants of Huyula, such as Ambu (mutual cooperation for public interests such as road construction), Hileiya (helping others during disasters or grief), and Ti'ayo (alternating labor assistance for personal work such as building a house or farming). The use of the Huyula theoretical approach is crucial in this study because the adaptation of the KAT community in new settlements cannot be separated from the way they reconstruct social capital. (Feld 2003); (Hatu & Hatu 2023). Reciprocity in Huyula ensures that newly relocated communities do not experience anomie or social confusion, but instead accelerate their integration process through egalitarian cooperative mechanisms (Hatu 2023).

## **METHOD**

This research was designed using a qualitative approach with a case study (Moleong, 2006). This approach was chosen based on the characteristics of the problem, which requires an in-depth understanding of the meaning, processes, and dynamics of social interactions among Isolated Indigenous Communities in their natural habitat without any manipulation of external variables. The research location was purposively determined (Sugiono, 2017) in North Gorontalo Regency, Gorontalo Province, considering that this region is home to a large number of Isolated Indigenous Communities (KAT) communities who have received integrated empowerment programs from the government.

The data sources in this study are divided into primary and secondary data (Sugiono, 2007). Primary data were obtained directly from 37 informants consisting of various stakeholders, including the Provincial Social Empowerment Office, the North Gorontalo Regency Social Service, the North Gorontalo Regency Education Office, the North Gorontalo Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPPEDA), village empowerment program facilitators, sub-district government officials, village government officials, and 19 Isolated Indigenous Communities (KAT) communities. This research was conducted through in-depth interviews and participatory observation. (Moleong, 2006). Key informants were selected based on their level of involvement and capacity, including government officials. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from various official documents, laws and regulations, and BPS statistical reports relevant to the study's focus.

The data analysis technique adopted the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, in which the analysis process occurs simultaneously with data collection (Sugiono, 2007). The analysis stages included data reduction, which sorted and focused important information from field transcripts, data presentation organized into a comprehensive narrative text, and drawing conclusions that were consistently verified for accuracy in the field. To ensure the validity of the scientific data, researchers applied credibility standards through extended observation techniques in KAT settlements, source triangulation to compare information from bureaucrats with reality at the community level, and method triangulation by cross-checking interview results with observational findings and documentation. (Moleong, 2006; Sugiono, 2007)

## **RESULT AND DISCUSION**

The empowerment program for Isolated Indigenous Communities (KAT) in North Gorontalo Regency was implemented from 2009 to 2020 through a livable housing program facilitated by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and implemented by the Gorontalo Provincial Social Service. This program aims to improve the quality of life of the KAT community by providing adequate housing, with 517 beneficiaries. In addition to housing development, the program also includes economic empowerment through assistance for productive businesses in the agriculture, livestock, and home-based businesses sectors.

These empowerment activities have reached approximately 280 families, or 1,070 people, as an effort to increase the community's economic independence. This research was conducted in several sub-districts in North Gorontalo Regency to assess the extent of the implementation of the KAT community empowerment policy in North Gorontalo Regency. We will examine the human development index in North Gorontalo Regency.

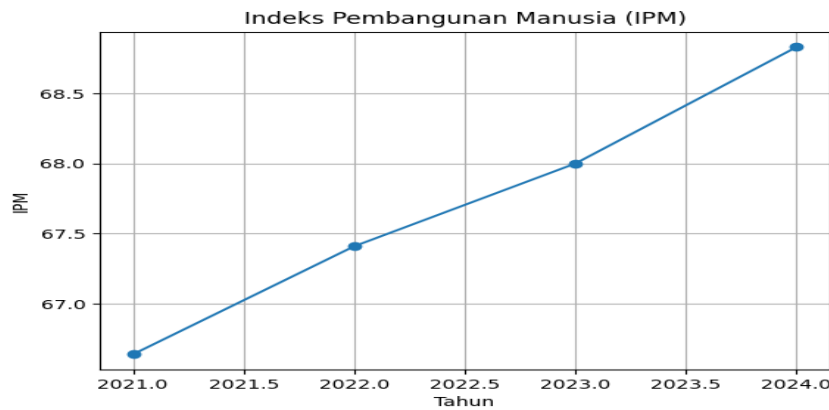


Figure 1. Human Development Index Trends in North Gorontalo Regency, 2021–2024

Figure 1 shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) of North Gorontalo Regency has increased year after year. However, this achievement remains in the moderate category, indicating that the quality of life of the community, particularly vulnerable groups such as the remote, still requires ongoing policy intervention.

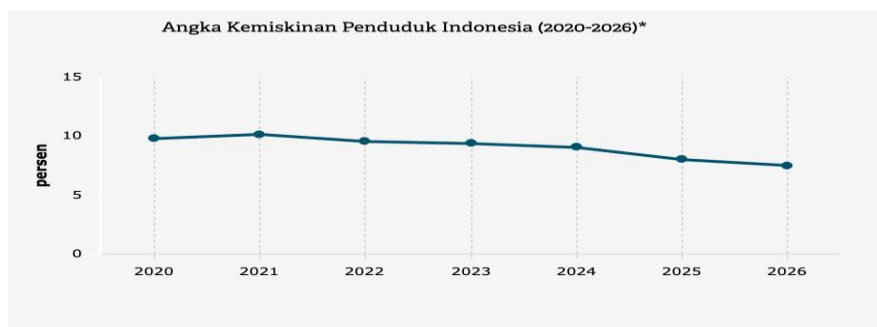


Figure 2. Trend in the Percentage of Poor Population in North Gorontalo Regency

Figure 2 shows that the poverty rate in North Gorontalo Regency has decreased, but not significantly. This indicates that poverty alleviation programs have not fully reached the most vulnerable groups, including Remote Indigenous Communities (KAT). Several previous studies on the implementation of poverty alleviation policies in various locations reveal several important variables in poverty alleviation. For example, research conducted by Anirwan (2022), in his dissertation entitled "Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Policies in Makassar City," showed that the implementation of poverty alleviation policies in Makassar City did not significantly reduce the poverty rate over the past five years, namely 0.01 percent from 2014 to 2019. This insignificant decline in poverty is caused by organizational and inter-organizational behavior. Policy implementers are not optimal due to ineffective commitment and coordination, resulting in inaccurate data collection and aid distribution, and a lack of uniformity in the use of poverty data by relevant policy implementing agencies.

Further research by Nur Yuliany. (2022) Dissertation Title Analysis of Poverty and Influencing Factors in Indonesia. The results of the study indicate that 1) people's business credit has an indirect effect on poverty through economic growth and employment absorption. However, it does not have a direct effect on poverty, 2) it has an indirect effect on poverty

through employment absorption. However, it does not have a direct effect on poverty and indirectly through economic growth, 3) investment has an indirect effect on poverty through economic growth. However, it does not have an indirect effect through employment absorption. 4) economic growth has an indirect effect on poverty through employment absorption. However, it does not have a direct effect on poverty, 5) employment absorption does not have a direct effect on poverty in Indonesia.

Research by Djonet Santoso, (2017) Dissertation entitled Handling Transient Poverty: Agenda-Setting Discourse in the Process of Formulating Poverty Alleviation Policies. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that, first, the position of the transient poor population group is outside the poverty alleviation policy scheme. Bandjar & Rosdawiyah's (2025) research on strengthening the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of RPKD in West Seram increased the technical understanding of officials, cross-sector coordination, and awareness of the importance of evidence-based evaluation to improve poverty alleviation strategies.

Table 1. Distribution of the Remote Indigenous Community Empowerment Program (PKAT) in North Gorontalo Regency

| Regency         | Sub-district | Target Village | Number of Households | Population | Type of Empowerment                             |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| North Gorontalo | Atinggola    | Bintana        | 46                   | 113        | Cake Production Business Assistance             |
| North Gorontalo | Sumalata     | Pulohenti      | 35                   | 151        | Goat Farming Business Assistance                |
| North Gorontalo | Tomilito     | Tanjung Karang | 45                   | 125        | Fertilizer and Agricultural Medicine Assistance |
| North Gorontalo | Biau         | Potanga        | 50                   | 336        | Agricultural Business Facility Assistance       |
| North Gorontalo | Anggrek      | Iloheluma      | 50                   | 160        | Business Development Assistance                 |
| North Gorontalo | Monano       | Juriati        | 54                   | 185        | Business Development Assistance                 |

Source: North Gorontalo Regency Social Service Data (processed), 2024.

Based on the data in the table above, it shows that various policies that have been implemented by the regional government, in this case the North Gorontalo Regency government, over the past five years have programmed the Empowerment of various businesses in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry and home businesses with the aim and target of being able to realize the community so that it can meet various needs in the short, medium and long term, especially for the Remote Indigenous Community (KAT) in various sub-districts and villages spread across North Gorontalo Regency with a total of 280 Heads of Families (KK) and 1,070 people who have experienced the Remote Indigenous Community Empowerment (PKAT) program.

### **The Impact of Poverty Alleviation Policies on Indigenous Communities in North Gorontalo Regency**

Based on the distribution of empowerment programs mentioned above, the implementation of the resettlement and assistance policies has had a highly holistic impact on

community life. The first impact is social, where this policy has successfully broken down the walls of isolation that have confined indigenous communities for centuries. Based on fieldwork and the account of an informant named AM (a relocated resident in Tanjung Karang Village),

"My family and I have been living in the government-provided settlement for two years, and many things have changed. My family and I have access to various public facilities to support our activities, such as education, health care, and other social services. Our lifestyle has changed, from where we rarely engaged in activities other than farming to what we experience now. We have experienced many new things."

The changes in their lifestyle have also been significant. In their previous settlement, their family activities were almost entirely focused on farming, with few other activities to support their economic and social development. However, after settling in the new settlement, conditions changed. They began to learn about and participate in various social, economic, and public services. We experienced and learned many new things, from more regular daily routines, access to schools for children, to easier access to healthcare. The second impact touches on the economic dimension. The economic impact of poverty alleviation policies on Isolated Indigenous Communities (ICCs) demonstrates an ambivalent character, presenting both opportunities and challenges in the socio-economic transformation process. Thus, the policy serves not only as an instrument of assistance but also as a means of inclusive and resilient socio-economic transformation. This was conveyed by a female SP from the ICC community in Didingga village as follows:

"In our residential areas, we always try our best to meet basic needs, especially food for our families. In addition to receiving various government assistance, such as basic food supplies, we also prepare other food supplies for the next day. We use various government social assistance funds to start small home businesses, allowing us to survive while waiting for the agricultural harvest" (interview, August 10, 2025).

The interview results above indicate that the community is not solely dependent on government assistance, such as basic food supplies, but also actively strives to meet basic needs, especially food. Analytically, this phenomenon can be explained through the perspective of public policy implementation. Within Grindle's framework, this condition relates to the types of benefits and target group response. While government social assistance provides immediate benefits (short-term benefits), it has not yet fully achieved sustainable economic independence. Therefore, the community has developed adaptive strategies by transforming the assistance into productive economic resources, such as home businesses.

The third impact of cultural interactions with outside communities, from poverty alleviation policies in Isolated Indigenous Communities (ICCs), reflects the dynamic between modernization processes and efforts to preserve local culture. Implementation of poverty alleviation policies in ICCs must prioritize a culture-sensitive approach. This approach requires respect for local wisdom as part of the community's social capital, the active involvement of traditional leaders in policy planning and implementation, and the integration of traditional values into development programs. Thus, the changes that occur are not imposed but grow organically from within the community. This approach also allows for inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable cultural transformation, without losing the indigenous identity of the ICCs. This was conveyed by the members of the ICC community union (SP) in Didingga village as follows: "Previously, we rarely interacted with other residents in the area. Our activities were limited to farming, making it difficult for us to obtain information from the outside world. However, once we arrived in this settlement, we were greatly assisted by the community. We interacted extensively with other residents, allowing us to carry out activities that were sometimes difficult to do alone, and we could collaborate with other residents." (interview, August 28, 2025).

Analytically, this situation indicates a transformation in the community's social structure, from a closed one to a more open and participatory one. This relates to target group response and social benefits. Increased social interaction is one form of non-material benefit of the policy, namely increased social cohesion, solidarity, and social networks (social capital).

## **Forms of Change in Poverty Alleviation in Indigenous Communities in North Gorontalo Regency**

Based on the distribution of these empowerment programs, the implementation of the resettlement and assistance policies has had a highly holistic impact on community life. The first form is social, where this policy has successfully broken down the walls of isolation that have confined indigenous communities for centuries. Based on fieldwork and the account of an informant named AM (a relocated resident of Tanjung Karang Village),

"Since moving to this settlement, we have participated more frequently in various activities together, such as community service (gotong royong), celebrations, and religious activities. In our old place, we rarely gathered because the distance between us was so great, requiring time and opportunity to be together. Furthermore, it was difficult for us to obtain information from the village government. Being in the settlement has had a very positive impact. In addition to the community service activities, we also interact together during our activities, fostering a sense of solidarity among each other." (AM, September 26, 2025).

The explanation above aligns with information provided by the village head of Leayo, who explained that:

"During my tenure as village head, we have done many things in the residential areas of remote indigenous communities. We have implemented this so that togetherness among fellow residents of the settlement is always well-established, there are no exceptions, all residents receive the same behavior, so that when there are various programs that we carry out in the residential area, they are always enthusiastic in carrying out work, for example community service, clean Fridays in public places, various activities for residential residents, as well as meetings that we hold, they always attend so that interaction and solidarity among residents of the settlement always run well" (AP, September 26, 2025).

The two interview results above indicate a significant change in the community's level of social participation after moving into the new settlement. Prior to the relocation, the dispersed geographical conditions, with large distances between residences, were a major factor in the low intensity of social interaction. This limitation prevented community participation in collective activities, as gatherings required time, energy, and special opportunities. In addition to geographic barriers, limited access to information also posed a significant obstacle. Difficulty obtaining information from the village government resulted in community involvement in both formal and informal activities. This reflected social isolation, which impacted low community participation in social life.

The second aspect touched on the education and health dimensions of massive restructuring. Past isolation forced the KAT community to live a subsistence system, where field crops lacked access to adequate markets. Post-relocation, spatial proximity to traditional rural markets automatically reduced logistics costs and accelerated cash flow. As noted by informants MR from Potanga Village and AP from Leayo Village, the new settlement provided employment diversification options beyond farming.

"Our conditions in the new location are much better than before, considering that the settlement provides various supporting facilities so our children can carry out activities such as school, worship, and other public facilities. This change makes us more comfortable in this settlement. Unlike the previous location, which was far from various public facilities, making it difficult for our children to access services such as school, healthcare, and other services. Furthermore, the community's camaraderie is well-established, allowing us to gain a wealth of information, broadening our knowledge and understanding of areas we didn't previously know. The various public facilities have further enriched our knowledge as residents of the settlement." (MR, September 21, 2025)

In the field of education, improved access is characterized by the availability of educational facilities closer to the community, such as the construction of elementary schools, the provision of teachers, and non-formal education programs. This situation encourages increased participation of children from remote indigenous communities in education, which was previously hampered by geographical factors, isolation, and economic limitations. Furthermore, education also plays a role in broadening the community's understanding of

social and economic changes, thus supporting the transformation process from traditional lifestyles to ones that are more adaptive to current developments.

However, this increased access is not yet fully equitable and optimal. Challenges still faced include limited educational and health personnel, difficult-to-reach geographic conditions, and socio-cultural barriers that affect the community's acceptance of modern services. The third form of interaction with the outside community: Opening up interaction with the outside community is a significant form of social change resulting from the implementation of poverty alleviation policies in Isolated Indigenous Communities (ICM). This interaction is evident in various activities, such as involvement in social activities, economic transactions in markets, participation in communal religious activities, and daily social interactions with the surrounding community. This situation not only expands the social networks of ICM communities but also opens up access to information, knowledge, and economic opportunities that were previously difficult to access.

From a social perspective, this openness to interaction encourages a process of adaptation and social integration, where ICM communities begin to recognize and understand the norms, values, and lifestyles of the broader community. This contributes to increased community social capacity, including in communication, cooperation, and tolerance of differences. However, open interaction with the outside community also carries consequences in the form of potential changes in local values and culture. Therefore, efforts are needed to maintain a balance between the process of social openness and the preservation of the cultural identity of the KAT community, so that the interactions that occur do not lead to the above explanation, in line with what was conveyed by the community in Tanjung Karang village, who explained that;

"After being relocated to the new settlement, we tried our best to adapt to the new environment. It was certainly different from our previous neighborhood, where we and our family didn't live side by side with other residents. Our neighborhoods were very far apart, so interactions among us didn't occur as they did in general society. Our family felt very isolated in various ways, especially in terms of social interaction. However, when we were in the settlement, we had to strive to interact with the community at large, as well as with our neighbors. This openness to information from others allowed us to more freely find various job opportunities beyond our primary occupation as farmers. This positive impact between residents and those outside the settlement provided a sense of comfort for our family." (M1, September 26, 2025)

The two interviews above indicate a significant change in the community's social interaction patterns, particularly in terms of openness and the ability to integrate with the wider social environment. While previously people tended to feel alienated and withdrawn, there has now been a transformation toward a more inclusive and adaptive attitude toward others. The custom of inviting each other to various social events, such as weddings and other community gatherings, reflects the increasing intensity of social interaction among residents. These activities are not merely ceremonial but also serve as an important means of building emotional closeness, expanding social networks, and strengthening a sense of togetherness among community members.

## DISCUSSION

This research focuses on social policy issues in addressing marginalization, poverty, and education. It also evaluates the impact and form of social policy changes to alleviate poverty among isolated communities (KAT) in North Gorontalo Regency. The research findings highlight several impacts related to empowerment policy programs, including social, economic, and educational impacts. In stark contrast to previous research by Anirwan (2022), which focused on urban areas (Makassar City) and highlighted technical bureaucratic failures such as inter-organizational coordination and sectoral egos in poverty data collection, the current research goes further, reaching indigenous communities in the interior, which have unique socio-cultural structures. This research innovation also corrects the limitations of Nur Yuliany's (2022) quantitative macroeconomic study, which viewed poverty in Indonesia solely as an

aggregate of economic growth, investment, and formal labor absorption. While Yuliany's study ignored subsistence realities at the grassroots level, this research reveals how social policy instruments operate in the living spaces of communities untouched by modern capitalism. Furthermore, this research fills the gap left by Djonet Santoso (2017), whose study stalled at the elitist level of agenda-setting formulations for transient poverty. Through a descriptive-qualitative approach, the current research offers empirical novelty by analyzing the concrete forms of existing policy changes and their concrete impacts on the sociocultural existence of indigenous communities experiencing chronic poverty.

This research confirms that the success or failure of poverty alleviation in remote indigenous communities in North Gorontalo Regency is largely determined by the sensitivity of social policy changes to local characteristics. This finding holds significant theoretical significance for readers and policymakers in the fields of sociology and public policy. The significance of these results complements that of Anirwan (2022) by demonstrating that inaccurate targeting of aid to indigenous communities is not simply a technical problem of data administration, but rather the result of the imposition of universal poverty indicators that ignore the communities' inherent rights. This finding is also relevant to address the anomaly in Nur Yuliany's (2022) study—which stated that labor absorption and People's Business Credit had no direct impact on poverty—because this research in North Gorontalo successfully revealed that formal economic modernization-based programs were often culturally rejected because they did not align with local customary institutions. Furthermore, if Djonet Santoso (2017) found that vulnerable groups were often excluded from policy schemes since the formulation process, the core findings of the current research carry new significance: when indigenous communities are finally included in social intervention schemes, the top-down format of social policy changes actually risks triggering culture shock and damaging the subsistence food security system they have maintained for generations.

Despite its novelty, this research demonstrates a consistent relationship with previous studies, confirming Anirwan's (2022) and Djonet Santoso's (2017) arguments regarding the low effectiveness of programs due to the mismatch between policy design and actual needs on the ground. This consistency stems from a persistent pathological tendency within Indonesian bureaucratic culture, namely the dominance of a technocratic-centralistic approach that fails to adequately understand the social realities of the grassroots. However, sharp differences remain at the level of program success determinants: while Anirwan's study's insignificance was influenced by organizational behavior (context) and Yuliany's by macroeconomic variables, the success of poverty alleviation among the marginalized in this study is determined by the variable "cultural value alignment," which falls within Grindle's policy content and implementation context. These differences in findings are strongly influenced by the differences in our deep-qualitative-descriptive methodology, in contrast to Yuliany's macro-quantitative approach, as well as the extreme population differences between the urban Makassar community (Anirwan) and the indigenous communities of the interior of North Gorontalo, which are characterized by homogeneous subsistence.

This research makes a significant contribution to the study of public policy and development sociology by offering a new perspective that bridges the theoretical gap between government policies on empowering indigenous communities and the existential rights of indigenous communities. This scholarly contribution expands the boundaries of Anirwan's (2022) conventional implementation theory, which tends to be rigidly oriented toward internal bureaucratic performance, by presenting a beneficiary-centered impact assessment perspective for vulnerable groups in peripheral areas. Furthermore, this research successfully fills the gap in micro-qualitative data left by Nur Yuliany's (2022) econometric analysis by presenting an in-depth analysis of the power relations between vertical government agencies and local customary institutions. The new perspective offered by this research also successfully transcends Djonet Santoso's (2017) focus on elite political actors by formulating a "Cultural-Based Policy Evaluation Model." This contribution scientifically demonstrates that advances in policy sociology should no longer reduce poverty to mere statistical commodities, but rather

view poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon whose resolution requires full recognition of the living spaces and local wisdom of the indigenous communities involved.

Using Merilee S. Grindle's Policy Implementation Theory analysis, this research's findings have fundamental policy implications. Grindle asserts that the success of public policy outputs depends absolutely on the harmony between the formulation of "policy content" and the dynamic "implementation context" on the ground. Practically and policy-wise, this study in North Gorontalo Regency implies that the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Regional Government can no longer implement a one-size-fits-all model of poverty alleviation policy; Policy content must be transformed from individual charitable assistance to community-based empowerment that is adaptive to the social context, customary law, and local geography of KAT so as not to create new dependencies. Academically, this research provides important implications for the development of implementation theory, particularly in enriching Grindle's taxonomy regarding the variable of the degree of change envisioned when dealing with traditional social structures. As a suggestion for future research (future research agenda), further researchers are recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to measure fluctuations in the sociocultural welfare index of indigenous communities after geographical relocation, as well as develop localized poverty indicators that incorporate aspects of communal asset ownership and social capital of customary institutions in other regions of Eastern Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis, it can be concluded that the implementation of social policies to alleviate poverty for the Isolated Indigenous Communities in North Gorontalo Regency has had a highly transformative impact. The policy of providing livable housing and supporting working capital has successfully liberated the community from demographic isolation. The social impact is evident in the dissolution of cultural exclusivity; the economic impact is seen in the expansion of market access and job diversification, which strengthens food security; the health impact is manifested through improved sanitation and medical interventions that reduce disease vulnerability; and the impact of guaranteed education through the inclusiveness of formal schools for indigenous children. The emerging changes resonate at three levels of social life. At the individual level, an ethos of independence, awareness of future planning, and productivity in earning a living are growing. At the household level, the assurance of physical security in housing reconstructs the domestic space to be more stable and resilient. At the most vital community level, a new social solidarity was formed, catalyzed by the wisdom of local mutual cooperation (Huyula), which binds harmony between the indigenous immigrant community and the original village community, making them the subject of effective and sustainable development.

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