

The Role of Government in Slum Area Management Strategies for Improving the Quality of Life in Batu Bara Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the government's role in slum management strategies in Batu Bara Regency through the Slum Area Social Rehabilitation Program (RSDK). The research employs a qualitative approach with secondary data analysis and interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders. Findings show that RSDK contributes to improving quality of life through entrepreneurship training, housing repairs, and public infrastructure development. Despite challenges in stakeholder coordination and limited training scope, the program promotes community empowerment. Success is driven by active community participation and multi-stakeholder support. The study recommends enhancing coordination and expanding sustainable training to further improve living conditions in slum areas.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Batu Bara Regency, located in North Sumatra Province, officially began on January 2, 2007, through Law Number 5 of 2007. This area has a long history as part of the Batu Bara Kingdom, which existed from the 17th century until the post-independence era in 1946. Batu Bara Regency was established as a result of the division of Asahan Regency, with its capital in Lima Puluh District, and is one of the 16 new regencies/cities formed during 2006. Geographically, Batu Bara spans an area of 904.96 km². In 2020, its population was recorded at 410,678 people, with a density of 454 people per km². This number has continued to grow, reaching 453,887 people by mid-2023, increasing the population density to approximately 500 people per km². This data indicates significant population growth in recent years, which impacts the demand for public facilities, infrastructure, and public services (Andini, I., 2013).

Currently, the administrative structure of Batu Bara Regency is led by an Acting Regent and Deputy Regent. As a relatively new regency, regional development remains focused on improving the welfare of its residents, with key challenges in infrastructure, economic growth, and population management. The regency holds substantial potential, especially in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, which can serve as key pillars for enhancing community welfare and promoting more equitable development.

Batu Bara Regency, like many regions in Indonesia, has several areas categorized as slums, particularly in urbanized regions or areas with high levels of urbanization. Key factors contributing to the emergence of slum areas in Batu Bara include limited access to basic infrastructure such as clean water, sanitation, and drainage, as well as inadequate housing conditions (Marwah, M., et al., 2024).

Slum areas in Batu Bara Regency are typically found in densely populated regions, such as sub-district capitals or rapidly developing outskirts lacking adequate infrastructure. The main challenges in addressing slum areas in Batu Bara involve improving environmental quality, rehabilitating and providing decent housing, and enhancing access to basic facilities. For instance, Bandar Rahmat Village, located in Tanjung Tiram Sub-district, is one of the areas experiencing slum conditions in the region (Wijaya, D. W., 2016).

Slum settlements pose a significant problem for regional development, not only impacting residents' quality of life but also increasing environmental, health, and social risks. Such areas are often characterized by high building density, inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, and limited access to clean water and healthcare services. Furthermore, these areas are vulnerable to natural disasters, such as floods, and face social issues like poverty and crime.

The slum phenomenon in Bandar Rahmat Village is driven by several factors, including the community's limited economic resources, high population density, poor accessibility, and low building quality (Lasaiba, M. A., 2024). Most residents in this area live on limited incomes, making it challenging to improve their housing conditions. This economic constraint is exacerbated by low educational attainment, limiting opportunities for residents to improve

their livelihoods. Additionally, inadequate access to basic infrastructure such as drainage, roads, and sanitation makes the environment increasingly uninhabitable (Safarina, T. S., & Damayanti, V., 2023).

These conditions have numerous adverse effects on both the community and the region as a whole. Living in slum areas raises the risk of disease outbreaks caused by unhygienic environments and limited healthcare facilities. Social issues, such as crime and conflict, often arise from economic pressures and high population density. These challenges demand serious attention and effective interventions to improve the environment and enhance the quality of life for residents (Lasaiba, M. A., 2022).

Sustainable efforts to address slum areas—such as improving basic infrastructure, fostering economic empowerment, and promoting health and hygiene education—are expected to transform Bandar Rahmat Village into a more livable environment. This background underscores the importance of research or studies on slum issues in Bandar Rahmat Village to find practical solutions that can create a healthy, safe, and comfortable environment for its residents (Hariyanto, A., 2010).

The local government has prioritized addressing slum areas in Batu Bara Regency through programs aimed at improving housing quality, developing basic infrastructure, and empowering communities. One such initiative is the Desa Tanpa Kumuh (Slum-Free Village Program), supported by the central government. This program seeks to improve slum conditions through community participation, stakeholder collaboration, and the development of basic infrastructure.

Problem Statement

1. What is the government's role in the strategy for addressing slum areas in Batu Bara Regency?
2. What are the challenges and obstacles faced by the government in improving the condition of slum areas in Batu Bara Regency?
3. How do the public perceive the effectiveness of the slum area management programs implemented by the government?

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the government's role in strategic efforts to address slum areas in Batu Bara Regency.
2. To identify the challenges and obstacles faced by the government in implementing programs to improve slum areas.
3. To explore the public's perception of the effectiveness of slum management efforts carried out by the government, particularly regarding the condition of public facilities and their impact on daily life.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Role of Government in Addressing Slum Areas

The government plays a crucial role in addressing slum areas and improving the quality of life for the affected communities. It is responsible for designing policies, developing programs, and providing funding and facilities to revitalize slum areas (Arifin, 2020). Effective strategies for handling slums include infrastructure development planning, improving access to clean water, and providing adequate health and education facilities (Sudarmanto & Hartati, 2021). According to Susanto (2021), the government also needs to involve the community in every stage of the program, as community participation has proven to enhance the effectiveness of implementation and ensure the sustainability of the facilities built.

Strategies for Addressing Slum Areas

The strategies implemented in addressing slum areas involve several approaches, such as community-based approaches, infrastructure-focused approaches, and integrative approaches that combine various sectors (Handayani, 2019). Research by Firmansyah et al. (2020) highlights that community-based approaches engage residents directly in the planning and implementation processes, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their living environment. On the other hand, infrastructure-focused approaches prioritize physical improvements, such as road repairs, drainage systems, and sanitation facilities, which can directly enhance living conditions in slum areas (Hidayat & Rahmawati, 2021). Meanwhile, integrative approaches combine physical and social aspects, addressing health, education, and the economy of the communities in slum areas, thus creating a more holistic impact on their quality of life (Susanti & Kurniawati, 2022).

Improving Community Quality of Life Through Slum Area Revitalization Programs

Improving the quality of life in slum areas involves not only physical conditions but also social and economic aspects. Research by Wicaksono and Andayani (2020) demonstrates that providing adequate public facilities, such as green open spaces and community activity centers, can enhance the physical and mental health of the community. Moreover, successful slum revitalization programs often include economic empowerment initiatives, such as skills training or access to business capital, which help residents increase their income (Mustofa, 2021). According to Purwanto (2021), collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector is crucial for achieving optimal results, as each stakeholder plays a complementary role in creating more livable areas.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology. The qualitative approach is appropriate for the descriptive nature of the research theme (Nuraini and Thamrin, 2018; Alfiyah et al, 2023; Akbar et al, 2023; Nuraini, 2024). Data collection procedures involve four primary methods: observation,

interviews, documentation, and visual representations (Creswell, 2013; Aris et al, 2024). The qualitative descriptive method is used to obtain secondary data through literature review or document analysis (Moleong, in Mujahidin et al, 2022; Nuraini, et al, 2024). Secondary data is collected from various sources, including books, theses, journals, regulations, internet resources, lecture materials, and mass media (Moleong, in Arisa et al, 2022; Fachri et al, 2023). Meanwhile, primary data is gathered through in-depth interviews with experts or relevant officials who have expertise in the research focus, which is the role of the government in addressing slum areas to improve the quality of life in Batu Bara Regency.

Data analysis is conducted descriptively using a thematic approach, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Moleong, 2000 in Sugiarto & Ramadania, 2023a, Sugiarto & Ramadania, 2023b, Sugiarto et al, 2023; Sugiarto & Ramadania, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Government's Role in Strategic Efforts to Address Slum Areas in Batu Bara Regency

This study highlights the significant role of the government in strategizing the management of slum areas in Batu Bara Regency to improve the quality of life for the local community. The Batu Bara Regency Government has implemented strategic policies to address slum issues through regional regulations governing spatial planning and land use. These policies serve as guidelines and legal foundations to ensure that efforts to rehabilitate slum environments are carried out effectively and with precise targeting. Below is a map illustration:



Image: Batu Bara Regency

Source: <https://petatematikindo.wordpress.com>

Activities and forms of assistance under the Social Rehabilitation of Slum Areas Program (RSDK) and the government’s role in enhancing the quality of life in slum areas of Batu Bara Regency:

Table 1. Social Rehabilitation Program for Slum Areas (RSDK)

Activity	Activity Details	Type of Assistance	Quantity/ Subdistrict
Preparation of UPKM Institutions	Formation/strengthening of UPKM institutions	Work equipment	1 unit
Business Skills Training	- Handicraft business - Culinary business	Materials for handicraft and culinary equipment	20 families
Home Improvement	- Roof repair - Wall repair - Floor repair	Building materials and home repair work (valued at 5 million each)	20 homes
Other Components	Development of additional public facilities	-	-

This table highlights the focus of the RSDK program, which aims to empower communities and improve the quality of facilities in slum areas. The program not only provides entrepreneurial skills training but also enhances housing conditions to improve the overall living standards of its beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the government plays an active role in providing essential infrastructure such as drainage systems, neighbourhood roads, electricity, clean water, and sanitation facilities that are crucial for the community. With strong collaboration between the government, the private sector, and community organizations, infrastructure improvements progress more swiftly and have a direct impact on residents' comfort and health.

Additionally, budget allocations from the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) and support from the central government, such as through the Special Allocation Fund (DAK), enable the financing of slum area interventions to proceed sustainably. This sustainable budget planning forms the foundation for the program’s continuity, ensuring its positive impact can be felt over the long term.

The government also prioritizes empowering local communities to maintain and care for their environment. Through socialization and training,

the community is encouraged to actively participate in keeping their surroundings clean and preserving the infrastructure that has been developed. This study shows that community involvement makes slum area management programs more effective and fosters a sense of ownership for a healthier environment.

Table 2. Strategies for Handling Slum Areas and Their Impact on the Quality of Life of the Community in Batu Bara Regency

Aspect	Government Role Description	Impact on Quality of Life
Policies and Regulations	The government sets policies and regional regulations that govern spatial planning and the management of slum areas.	Provides a strong legal basis for program implementation and ensures clear direction in addressing slum areas.
Provision of Basic Infrastructure	The construction of basic infrastructure such as drainage, local roads, electricity, clean water, and sanitation in slum areas.	Increases comfort, health, and cleanliness of the environment, as well as reduces the risk of diseases.
Budget Allocation and Financing	Allocation of funds through the Regional Budget (APBD) and assistance from the central government, such as the Special Allocation Fund (DAK).	Enables continuous implementation of slum handling programs and directly impacts the community.
Community Empowerment	Involving the community in planning, implementation, and maintenance of facilities through socialization and training.	Increases a sense of ownership and responsibility among the community for their environment, and strengthens the sustainability of the program.
Partnership with the Private Sector and NGOs	Establishing partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to accelerate and expand the scope of the handling program.	Increases program effectiveness and accelerates improvements in the environmental quality of slum areas.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation	The government conducts regular monitoring and evaluation to improve program effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.	Refines the program and ensures the achievement of the target improvements in the quality of life of the community in slum areas.
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This table provides a concise overview of the government's primary roles and their impact on the quality of life for the residents of Batu Bara Regency in addressing slum areas. Partnerships between the government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have significantly contributed to expanding program coverage and accelerating implementation. For instance, the private sector supports project financing and the provision of basic services, while NGOs assist with community education and guidance on environmental maintenance. To ensure the program's success, the government conducts regular monitoring and evaluation. These evaluations help the government adjust ongoing programs, enabling them to address challenges more effectively and improve program quality in the future.

This study concludes that the government's role in addressing slum areas has positively impacted the quality of life for the residents of Batu Bara Regency. The provision of basic infrastructure, improved access to healthcare facilities, and community involvement in maintaining the environment have been shown to enhance residents' welfare. The government's comprehensive and sustainable approach demonstrates a genuine commitment to creating a liveable environment and improving community well-being through integrated and long-term slum management.

Challenges and Obstacles Faced by the Government in Implementing Slum Improvement Programs

In implementing slum improvement programs, the Batu Bara Regency government faces various complex challenges and obstacles. One of the primary challenges is budget constraints, as the need to improve basic infrastructure and public services often exceeds the available funding allocation. This results in some programs progressing slowly and sub optimally. Additionally, coordination among government agencies and with private sector and NGO partners sometimes encounters difficulties. Each party has its own priorities and interests that require alignment, necessitating additional time and effort to reach consensus.

Table 3. Challenges and Obstacles Faced by the Government in Implementing the Slum Area Improvement Program in Batu Bara Regency

Challenges and Obstacles	Description of Obstacles	Impact on Program Implementation
Budget Constraints	Limited funding allocation compared to the need for	The program progresses slowly and does not optimally improve basic

Challenges and Obstacles	Description of Obstacles	Impact on Program Implementation
	infrastructure improvement and public services in slum areas.	infrastructure.
Inter-agency Coordination	Coordination among government agencies, private sector, and non-governmental organizations often faces obstacles due to differing priorities and interests.	This causes delays in program implementation and difficulties in reaching agreements.
Community Resistance	Communities that have lived in slum areas for a long time often resist relocation or environmental changes, coupled with inadequate socialization.	Public participation in facility maintenance is low, hindering the program's sustainability.
Geographical and Environmental Challenges	Some slum areas are located in flood-prone or hard-to-reach areas, making it difficult to transport materials and labor.	The program's time and costs increase, and accessibility becomes limited.
Bureaucratic Obstacles	Slow and bureaucratic licensing and procurement processes delay infrastructure and facility improvements.	This results in delays in program execution and postponements in providing basic infrastructure.
Community Participation	Low public understanding of the program's benefits and minimal involvement in environmental maintenance.	This reduces the sustainability of the program's results and the quality of the environment, increasing the need for periodic maintenance by the government.

This table illustrates the main challenges and the perceived impacts of implementing slum area improvement programs, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies and more active participation from various stakeholders.

The primary obstacles include resistance from the local community, particularly regarding changes in spatial planning and lifestyle patterns. Residents who have lived in these areas for a long time often oppose relocation or proposed environmental improvements. Insufficient socialization efforts may lead to a lack of understanding among the community about the program's benefits, ultimately resulting in low participation in maintaining the built facilities.

Geographical and natural challenges in some slum areas also pose significant obstacles, especially in flood-prone regions or areas with limited accessibility. These conditions make it difficult for the government to deliver construction materials and workforce, often increasing the time and cost of program implementation. Bureaucratic obstacles in permitting and procurement processes further delay program execution, impacting the timeliness of infrastructure and facility improvements.

These challenges call for a more integrated and strategic approach from the government. Enhancing budget allocations, aligning cross-sectoral programs, and increasing community participation are essential to ensure the smooth implementation of slum area improvement programs and to deliver positive impacts on the quality of life for residents in Batu Bara Regency.

Public Perception of the Effectiveness of Government Efforts in Addressing Slum Areas, Particularly Regarding Public Facilities and Their Impact on Daily Life

Public perceptions of the effectiveness of the government's efforts in addressing slum areas show varied results. Most residents feel that the government's efforts to improve public facilities, such as road infrastructure, drainage, sanitation, and access to clean water, have had a significant positive impact on their quality of life. These facilities are considered to have created a cleaner, safer, and more comfortable environment, thereby improving public health. The positive effects are directly felt in daily life, particularly through reduced cases of diseases related to slum environments and enhanced mobility and accessibility.

On the other hand, some residents believe the program's effectiveness can still be improved. Several respondents noted that maintaining the public facilities built under the program remains a challenge, with facilities often deteriorating over time. Irregular maintenance raises concern that slum conditions will return if ongoing care is not provided. Additionally, some residents feel that access to public facilities is still limited in certain areas, especially in hard-to-reach or flood-prone zones, meaning the program's benefits are not evenly distributed across all regions.

The following table summarizes public perceptions of the effectiveness of government efforts in addressing slum areas in Batu Bara Regency, particularly regarding public facilities and their impact on daily life:

Table 4. Public perceptions of the effectiveness of government efforts in addressing slum areas in Batu Bara Regency

Aspect	Positive Public Perception	Negative Public Perception
Public Facility Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement in road, drainage, sanitation, and clean water access. - Cleaner and healthier environment. - Reduced risk of diseases related to slum conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inconsistent maintenance of facilities, leading to a decline in quality. - Some facilities are damaged due to lack of ongoing maintenance.
Health Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in disease cases due to improved environmental conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns about the return of slum conditions if maintenance is not done regularly.
Accessibility and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved accessibility and mobility for people in slum areas, especially with better local roads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public facilities are not evenly distributed across the area, especially in hard-to-reach or flood-prone areas.
Program Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active community participation in facility maintenance creates a sense of ownership and supports program sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of community involvement in facility maintenance reduces the program's effectiveness.
Daily Life Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People's quality of life improves with better facilities and a cleaner environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some people feel that the improved quality of life is only experienced in certain areas due to the lack of equitable distribution of facilities.

This table illustrates the public's perspective on the government's role in improving slum areas in Batu Bara Regency, as well as the various positive impacts and challenges encountered, particularly regarding sustainability and equitable access to public facilities.

The study also found that the public's perception of the effectiveness of slum improvement programs is significantly influenced by their involvement in maintaining the environment. When communities actively participate in maintaining cleanliness and the infrastructure provided, they tend to have a more positive view of the outcomes of government programs. This indicates

that the sustainability and effectiveness of slum improvement initiatives rely not only on the government but also on the community's participation in maintaining the facilities.

In conclusion, while the public appreciates the government's efforts in enhancing slum areas, long-term maintenance and equitable access to facilities remain critical factors in improving the program's effectiveness over time.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's role in addressing slum areas in Batu Bara Regency is particularly evident in improving the quality of life of the community. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the government, through the Slum Area Social Rehabilitation Program (RSDK), plays a significant role in empowering communities and improving environmental conditions in slum areas.

The program includes skills training, such as culinary and handicraft production, and helps with home repairs and public infrastructure development aimed at enhancing the community's quality of life. Community empowerment through skills training and business capital assistance has had a positive impact on economic improvement, although challenges persist, such as the limited frequency of training sessions (only twice), which hinders the program's full potential.

Additionally, the government has made infrastructure improvements, such as roads, bridges, and drainage systems, contributing to better living conditions in slum areas. However, a lack of coordination between the government and the community has affected the smooth implementation of the program. Despite these challenges, the RSDK program and other government services have made significant contributions to improving the quality of life in slum areas.

The success of this program is greatly influenced by active community participation in supporting government policies, empowerment initiatives, and services, as well as the need for better coordination to achieve more optimal development outcomes.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research should focus on optimizing the Slum Area Social Rehabilitation Program (RSDK) in Batu Bara Regency. Key areas include enhancing training programs through increased frequency and diverse content, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, and assessing the program's long-term impact on community empowerment. Additionally, exploring community engagement models and evaluating policy effectiveness will support sustainable outcomes for slum management.

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