



Gendered Procedural Inclusion: Women's Participation and Substantive Power in Village Policy-Making in South-Central Timor Regency, Indonesia

Joseph Mario Monteiro, Kotan Y. Stefanus, Dhesy A. Kase, Rafael Rape Tupen, Megi Octaviana Radji, Marlyani A. Seran, I Putu Yoga Bumi Pradana

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} Department of Law, Faculty of Law, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Indonesia

⁷ Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFORMATION	A B S T R A C T
Received: Mai 22, 2026 Revised: August 11, 2026 Accepted: September 01, 2026 Available online: October 28, 2026	<p>Women's participation in village policy-making is widely promoted as a core element of gender-responsive and participatory governance, yet formal access does not necessarily translate into agenda-setting, regulatory, or allocative influence. This study examines how that conversion occurs across village policy processes in South-Central Timor Regency, Indonesia. Drawing on a qualitative multi-village case study in Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi, the analysis uses 36 purposively selected informants, observation, and village policy and budget documents. The findings show that women are formally present through representative attendance, drafting teams, PKK and Posyandu networks, BPD membership in some villages, and monitoring forums, but their influence is uneven across policy stages. Women's proposals are most consistently translated into health, nutrition, weaving, home-garden, and small-enterprise items; agenda-setting, regulatory initiation, and final budget allocation remain more male-dominated. Cross-village comparison shows that conversion from access to influence is stronger where women hold embedded institutional positions, receive organisational backing, participate repeatedly across policy stages, and connect proposals to recognised policy instruments. It weakens where participation is episodic, policy language is inaccessible, socially legitimate issue frames are narrow, and final authority is concentrated in male-led institutions. Building on invited-space, representation, agency, and feminist-institutionalist scholarship, the article develops gendered procedural inclusion as an integrative mechanism: formal access exists, but gendered filters attenuate the conversion of access into voice and policy authority. The concept therefore specifies how procedural inclusion can produce selective responsiveness without redistributing decision-making power.</p>
KEYWORDS	
Women's participation; gendered procedural inclusion; village governance; substantive representation; gender-responsive budgeting; Indonesia	
CORRESPONDENCE	
Name: I Putu Yoga Bumi Pradana Email:	

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in public policy formulation has become a central concern in contemporary public governance because it reflects the extent to which democratic institutions are able to include citizens whose experiences, needs, and priorities have historically been marginalised (Fung, 2015; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; OECD, 2023). In local development, this issue is especially important. Decisions on infrastructure, health, education, livelihood support, social protection, and village finance are not gender-neutral. They shape the distribution of public resources, define whose problems are recognised as collective problems, and determine whose knowledge is treated as legitimate in public decision-making. When women are excluded from these processes, village development may continue to reproduce unequal access to services, weak responsiveness to care-related needs, and narrow interpretations of community priorities.

The issue is analytically significant in Indonesia because the village has become an important arena of decentralised governance. Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages strengthened the authority of villages to regulate local affairs, formulate village development plans, prepare the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget, and enact Village Regulations. This institutional reform was intended to deepen participatory governance by giving local communities greater space to define development priorities (Antlov et al., 2016; Republic of Indonesia, 2014). However, the existence of participatory mechanisms does not guarantee equal participation. The more critical question is whether women can

transform formal access into substantive influence over agenda setting, regulation-making, and budget allocation.

Existing studies on Indonesia's village governance show that participatory institutions have opened opportunities for community involvement, yet these opportunities remain uneven (Alfirdaus, 2019; Andryanto, 2021; Syukri, 2023; Wijaya, 2020). Village meetings, development planning deliberations, and representative bodies often operate through local hierarchies, elite networks, customary authority, and gendered expectations regarding who should speak in public forums. Women may be invited to meetings and included in representative structures, but their participation is frequently filtered through organisations associated with domestic and welfare roles, such as PKK, Posyandu cadres, women's farmer groups, and religious women's networks. Such inclusion is important, but it can also restrict women's policy influence to practical welfare concerns rather than strategic questions of power, allocation, regulation, and accountability.

This tension is visible in South-Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The original study underpinning this manuscript investigated women's involvement in village development policy formulation in several villages, particularly Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi. These villages provide a meaningful empirical setting because they combine formal village governance institutions with strong customary norms, uneven educational attainment, and gendered social expectations. Preliminary observations indicated that women were involved in Musdes or Musrenbangdes, the drafting of Village Regulations, and the formulation of APBDes, but their involvement was often limited,

representative, and passive. This makes the case analytically valuable for understanding the gap between legal recognition and lived participation in village democracy.

The analytical problem is not simply whether women attend village forums. Participation can be interrupted at several points in the policy process: access may be selective; those admitted may not shape the agenda; accepted proposals may be reframed during drafting; and priorities voiced in deliberation may not survive final regulation or budget allocation. This distinction matters because presence, voice, and policy authority are analytically different outcomes. Counting women in Musdes or drafting teams therefore says little about whether they can define problems, contest priorities, alter regulatory content, or influence the allocation of village resources.

Existing scholarship captures important parts of this problem but leaves the conversion process less explicit. Arnstein's (1969) ladder distinguishes tokenistic consultation from citizen power, while Cornwall (2008) shows that invited participatory spaces are themselves structured by power. Representation scholarship separates descriptive presence from substantive representation and asks when representatives act for group interests (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999; Celis et al., 2008). Kabeer's (1999, 2020) account of agency shifts attention from presence to the capacity to define goals and make strategic choices. Feminist institutionalism, in turn, explains how formal rules interact with gendered informal norms and practices, producing gaps between institutional reform and lived outcomes (Mackay et al., 2010; Waylen, 2014). These traditions are complementary, but they tend to foreground different analytical objects, including degrees of participation, participatory spaces, representation, agency, or institutions, rather than tracing how formal access is converted, stage by stage, into agenda-setting, regulatory, and allocative influence.

The theoretical gap addressed here is therefore a mechanism-level one. Existing concepts show that presence can be symbolic and that institutions are gendered, but they are less specific about where conversion from access to influence breaks down across a sequential local policy process and why the same institutional system can simultaneously accommodate women's welfare proposals while preserving male dominance over regulation and allocation. The four-village design allows that question to be examined comparatively. Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi share a regional institutional and cultural setting but differ in women's organisational location, representation in BPD or drafting structures, repeated participation across policy stages, and evidence of proposal-to-budget translation. This variation is used not merely to document difference, but to identify conditions that strengthen or weaken the conversion of procedural access into substantive influence.

The article uses gendered procedural inclusion as its central analytical concept. The term refers to a condition in which participatory institutions formally admit women, but gendered filters systematically attenuate the conversion of access into voice and of voice into policy authority. Three conversion points are central: entry into participatory and representative arenas; recognition of women's claims as legitimate agenda items; and translation of those claims into regulatory or allocative decisions. Gendered procedural inclusion is therefore not synonymous with non-participation. It can coexist with real policy responsiveness, especially in health, nutrition, household welfare, and small-scale livelihood programmes, while leaving agenda control, regulatory initiation, and final resource allocation comparatively unchanged.

The analytical framework links three stages, namely formal access, substantive agency, and policy conversion, to the gendered institutional filters operating between them. Formal access concerns entry into Musdes or Musrenbangdes, BPD, drafting teams, consultations, and monitoring forums. Substantive agency concerns the ability to speak, frame problems, contest priorities, and sustain a proposal through deliberation. Policy conversion concerns whether a claim is incorporated into a Village Regulation, APBDs allocation, or monitoring decision. Between these stages, participation is filtered by representational selection, policy literacy and language, organisational backing, institutional position, customary authority, gendered expectations about legitimate issue domains, and the location of final decision authority (Cornwall, 2008; Kabeer, 1999; Mackay et al., 2010; Waylen, 2014).

The framework yields a conditional rather than deterministic argument. Formal inclusion is more likely to become substantive influence when women are institutionally embedded rather than episodically invited, possess organisational backing, participate repeatedly across several stages of the policy cycle, and can connect proposals to recognised planning and budget instruments. Conversion is more likely to be attenuated when participation is representative but weakly accountable to ordinary women, when policy language is inaccessible, when women's claims are accepted only within care and welfare domains, and when regulatory or budget authority remains concentrated in male-led institutions. The proposed concept is thus an integrative, mid-range mechanism for analysing a recurrent configuration; it is not presented as a replacement for theories of participation, representation, agency, or feminist institutionalism.

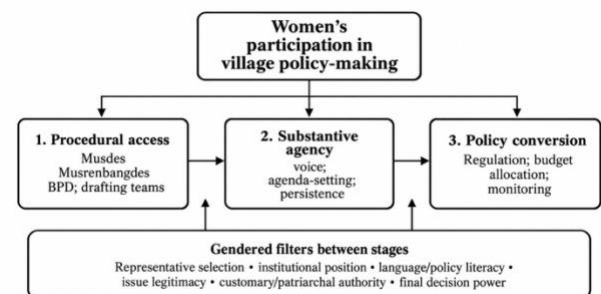


Figure 1. Research Framework: Access, Agency, and Policy Conversion

Source: Authors' construct, 2026

METHOD

Research design

This study employed a qualitative multi-village case study design to examine women's participation in village policy-making in South-Central Timor Regency, Indonesia (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand participation as a social and institutional process rather than as a numerical indicator. The research examines how women are included, how they express aspirations, how their proposals are treated in deliberative and regulatory processes, and how cultural and human-capital constraints shape the quality of participation.

The case study strategy is appropriate because women's participation in village governance is deeply embedded in local institutions, customary norms, household relations, educational background, and village administrative practices (Creswell &

Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014). Rather than isolating variables from their context, the study analyses participation as it occurs within concrete policy arenas: annual village development deliberation, the formulation of Village Regulations, and the preparation of the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget.

Case selection

The research was conducted in villages in South-Central Timor Regency, with empirical emphasis on Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi. These villages were selected because they represent settings where formal village governance institutions coexist with strong customary and patriarchal social structures. They also vary in demographic composition, educational attainment, institutional representation, and the degree to which women participate in village forums. This variation enables comparison across sites while maintaining a shared regional-cultural context.

The case is also important because South-Central Timor is located in Eastern Indonesia, where studies on gender-responsive village governance remain limited. The villages examined are not merely administrative units; they are social spaces in which state law, customary authority, religious institutions, household obligations, and development planning intersect. This makes them suitable for analysing the practical limits of participatory governance.

Table 1. Village Context and Empirical Focus

Village	Demographic/institutional features	Observed policy arena	Gender-related empirical pattern
Boti	2,413 residents; village officials and hamlet-level leaders are predominantly male; BPD lost its female member in 2018 and has not replaced her.	Musdes, Perdes, APBDes, dissemination of regulations.	Women attend through PKK, Posyandu cadres, and selected representatives, but decision-making remains male-dominated.
Bijeli	2,001 residents; village government officials are male; BPD includes two women.	Representative Musdes, RKP, APBDes, draft local levy regulation.	Women attend mainly as representatives; they rarely speak in formal meetings, although female BPD members voice health and nutrition issues.
Anin	1,465 residents; policy drafting uses a Team of Seven involving PKK and religious representatives.	Musdus, village-level discussion, Perdes, APBDes, quarterly monitoring.	Female participation remains limited but contributes to health, education, weaving, and women's farming proposals.
Oinlasi	2,301 residents; educational attainment remains uneven, but female teachers, health workers, PKK, BPD, and church actors participate.	Musdus, Team of Seven, Perdes, APBDes, quarterly evaluation.	Women's proposals influence budget items on stunting, maternal health, weaving, business capital, and agricultural inputs.

Source: Primary data, reconstructed from field findings, 2026

Data Collection and Informants

Fieldwork was conducted in 2026. The actor-level evidence reported in this article is organised around 36 purposively selected informants with direct knowledge of village planning, regulation-making, budgeting, representation, or community participation. Interviews were the principal source for actor accounts; observation was used to examine the institutional context of deliberation; and document analysis covered Village Regulations, APBDes documents, demographic records, and planning materials. Focus-group material was used as supplementary triangulation rather than as a separate sampling

denominator. The available de-identified field profile does not provide a complete session-level FGD log or interview-duration record, so the analysis does not make claims that depend on FGD frequency or interview length.

Informants were selected purposively (Campbell et al., 2020; Etikan, 2016) to secure variation across institutional location and policy role rather than statistical representativeness. Recruitment covered village executives, BPD and drafting actors, women's organisations, maternal-child health cadres, women's livelihood groups, customary and religious actors, and educators. The study does not claim a numerical saturation threshold. Instead, analytical sufficiency was pursued through recurrence and contrast across actor categories, policy arenas, and the four villages, with particular attention to divergent accounts rather than only convergent statements. This design allows the analysis to ask not only whether women are present, but whether institutional position changes the probability that their claims move from deliberation into regulation or budget allocation.

Table 2. Research Informants

Setting	Department/ Actor Group	Number of Informants
Village government actors	Village heads from Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi	4
	Village secretaries and village administrative officials	6
Village representative and policy-making actors	Village Consultative Body/ BPD members and chairpersons	5
	Musdes/ Musdus, RKPDes, Perdes, and APBDes drafting team members	4
Women's community actors	PKK leaders and members	4
	Posyandu cadres and maternal-child health volunteers	4
	Women's weaving, handicraft, farming, and business group representatives	4
Customary, religious, and community actors	Traditional leaders/customary elders	2
	Religious leaders, female pastors, and church elders	2
	Teachers/local educators with knowledge of village development issues	1
Total		36

Source: Primary data, 2026

Participant-profile transparency

Of the 36 informants, 12 are explicitly identifiable as women because they were recruited from women-specific community categories: four PKK leaders or members, four Posyandu or maternal-child-health volunteers, and four representatives of women's weaving, handicraft, farming, or business groups. Additional women are documented among mixed categories such as BPD, religious, and education actors, but the retained anonymised participant profile is organised primarily by actor category rather than a complete sex-by-village cross-tabulation. To avoid retrospective misclassification, the study does not infer sex from names or offices and therefore does not reconstruct a male-female total that the retained metadata cannot support. This limitation is important when interpreting claims about women's voice: accounts supplied by officials are treated as

institutional interpretations, not as substitutes for women's own accounts.

Data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethics

Data analysis followed a thematic and cross-case procedure of data condensation, coding, categorisation, interpretation, and verification (Lochmiller, 2021; Miles et al., 2014). First-cycle codes captured concrete process evidence, including attendance, speaking or silence, proposal formulation, drafting participation, translation into *Perdes* or *APBDes*, allocation authority, institutional position, language accessibility, organisational backing, domestic responsibilities, and customary authority. Second-cycle coding grouped these observations into three process categories: procedural access, filtered agency, and policy conversion. A cross-village matrix then compared how those categories operated in Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi across deliberation, regulation-making, budgeting, and monitoring. The final mechanism was inferred only after comparing recurrent and contrasting configurations across villages rather than from a single illustrative case.

Trustworthiness was strengthened by comparing interviews with observation and documentary evidence and by retaining divergent explanations rather than forcing consensus (Birt et al., 2016; Krefting, 1991; Shenton, 2004). For example, Bijeli officials described women's limited speaking confidence, whereas BPD-side accounts pointed to active female representatives on nutrition issues; the divergence was analysed as evidence that institutional position conditions voice. More generally, statements by village elites about women's confidence or silence were coded as elite interpretations and were not treated as women's self-descriptions. Cross-village comparison functioned as a mechanism test: if similar formal access produced different levels of policy translation, the analysis examined what institutional conditions differed. Informants' statements were treated confidentially, data were used for academic purposes, and sensitive personal information was not disclosed. No formal ethics-approval identifier is reported for this study; accordingly, the manuscript does not claim a prospective approval number that is not documented in the available study record.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings through an explicit evidentiary chain. The analysis begins with empirical observation or an attributed actor account, proceeds to participant or institutional interpretation, then develops a mechanism inference, and finally connects that inference to theoretical interpretation. This distinction is important because some claims about women's silence or confidence originate from village officials rather than from women themselves. Such claims are therefore treated as evidence about how institutional actors interpret participation, not as direct evidence of women's motivations. The analysis then checks those interpretations against women-specific organisational participation, institutional positions, documentary policy outputs, and cross-village variation.

The findings are organised around the conversion sequence introduced above. The first subsection examines procedural access to Musdes, Musdus, and Musrenbangdes. The second and third examine whether access becomes regulatory and budgetary influence. The subsequent sections identify gendered filters and use cross-village variation to specify conditions under which formal inclusion begins to produce stronger substantive agency.

Together, the results show not a binary of inclusion versus exclusion, but unequal conversion across policy stages.

Formal inclusion in village deliberative arenas

The first pattern is broad procedural access combined with selective entry. In Boti, Musdes is formally open to a range of institutional and community actors, while women commonly enter through PKK, Posyandu, and selected representative roles. The important evidence is therefore not absence from the forum but the route of entry: ordinary women are less visible as autonomous participants than women already attached to recognised organisations. Boti also lacks a female BPD member after the loss of its previous female member in 2018. Read together, these features locate the first filter before deliberation itself, specifically who enters the forum with recognised standing and who depends on indirect representation.

Bijeli shows a similar representative logic but a different institutional configuration. Village officials explained that the size of the population makes universal attendance impractical, so participants are selected by hamlet and social category. Female participants therefore tend to come from PKK, Posyandu, religious, or representative roles. The claim that women rarely speak in formal meetings comes primarily from institutional accounts and should not be read as a direct statement of women's preferences or confidence. Importantly, Bijeli's BPD includes two women and BPD-side accounts report that female members raise health and nutrition issues. This within-village contrast indicates that speaking capacity is relational: it changes when women possess a recognised institutional mandate rather than merely an invitation to attend.

Anin and Oinlasi provide stronger evidence of repeated-stage participation. Planning begins at Musdus, women are connected to Team-of-Seven or representative structures, and women from PKK, religious, education, health, or BPD roles remain visible as proposals move toward village discussion and budgeting, with quarterly monitoring or evaluation providing an additional stage of participation, especially in these two villages. Oinlasi displays the broadest cross-institutional female presence. Its significance is not simply that more types of women are present, but that women are institutionally connected to more than one point in the policy chain. The same actors or networks can therefore carry an issue from problem identification to proposal, budget recognition, and implementation review.

Across the four villages, procedural access is thus widespread but unevenly convertible. Education and language matter, but the comparison suggests that they do not operate as isolated individual attributes. Women with organisational experience, religious or professional standing, health-sector roles, or formal BPD membership are more likely to speak because the forum already recognises their institutional standing. Conversely, less-educated women and women without such positions encounter both communication barriers and weaker authority to define what counts as a legitimate public issue. The mechanism is therefore better described as filtered agency than as a simple deficit of confidence.

This finding refines rather than merely repeats the insight that participatory openings do not automatically redistribute power (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2008; Fung, 2015). In these villages, the first conversion problem occurs between attendance and agenda-setting. Formal inclusion creates an opportunity structure, but representational selection, institutional status, language accessibility, and gendered expectations about who

may speak condition whether women can use that opportunity. The empirical question therefore shifts from 'Were women invited?' to 'Which women entered with recognised standing, and could they sustain a claim beyond the meeting?'

Substantive agency in village regulation-making

The second dimension concerns women's substantive agency in the formulation of Village Regulations. Village regulations are important because they formalise collective decisions and provide the legal basis for village programmes, budgeting, and social order. In Boti Village, several regulations have been enacted, including regulations concerning APBDes, alcoholic beverage control, and livestock management. Normatively, the formulation of village regulations follows stages of planning, drafting, deliberation, enactment, evaluation, promulgation, and dissemination. Drafts may originate from the Village Head or the Village Consultative Body. In practice, however, the Boti case shows that drafts have generally been initiated by the Village Head and then discussed with the BPD and relevant stakeholders.

Women are included in the process mainly through dissemination and the Tim Sembilan. In Boti, the Tim Sembilan includes two women, and community outreach is conducted at the neighbourhood level. All residents, including women, may attend dissemination meetings. However, interviews indicate that not all women voice opinions. Inputs usually come from prominent women, especially those with better education or experience outside the village. This shows that participation is not evenly distributed among women. The presence of two women in the drafting structure is institutionally important, but it does not by itself guarantee broad female deliberation.

The regulation on alcoholic beverages provides an important example of women's influence. Women's concerns were considered because alcohol abuse by husbands was linked to neglect of family responsibilities. This demonstrates that women's experiences can shape regulation when their concerns are recognised as socially legitimate. Yet the case also reveals a limitation: women's influence is strongest when issues are framed through family welfare and domestic harm. This is not insignificant, but it suggests that women's policy voice is more readily accepted when it fits existing gender expectations about their role as mothers, wives, caregivers, and guardians of family morality.

Bijeli again demonstrates why actor attribution matters. The Village Secretary interpreted women's limited contribution as a problem of public-speaking confidence, while BPD-side accounts emphasised that female BPD members actively voice community concerns, particularly nutrition. Rather than treating the first explanation as a factual description of women, the analysis reads the contrast as evidence of an institutional-position effect. Women attending as general representatives face a different authority structure from women who hold a recognised BPD mandate. This moves the explanation from an individual trait ('confidence') to a mechanism: institutional status changes whether a woman's intervention is expected, heard, and carried forward.

In Anin and Oinlasi, women are involved through the Team of Seven, which includes female PKK representatives and, in some cases, female religious figures. These teams draft proposals and bring them to hamlet and village-level deliberation. Women's contributions often concern maternal and child health, education, weaving, traditional jewellery, business capital, seeds, fertilisers, and women's farming groups. These are meaningful

contributions because they enter formal village policy documents. However, they also reveal a gendered boundary of acceptable participation. Women's policy influence is concentrated in domains associated with care, household welfare, and small-scale economic support, while broader questions of village authority, enforcement, infrastructure prioritisation, and political accountability remain less visibly shaped by women's voices.

Regulation-making therefore reveals a second conversion gate: issue legitimacy. Women's inputs are not wholly symbolic; some enter regulatory discussion and are translated into policy, as shown by the Boti alcohol-control example and by women's participation in drafting structures. Yet translation is most visible when claims are compatible with socially recognised female responsibilities, including family welfare, health, nutrition, weaving, or small-scale livelihoods. The mechanism is not simply that men exclude women from every decision. Rather, gendered institutions differentiate among claims, making some women's knowledge easier to legitimise than claims about enforcement, authority, infrastructure priorities, or political accountability. This is where procedural access becomes gendered procedural inclusion rather than equal substantive authority.

Gendered participation in APBDes formulation

The third policy arena is the formulation of APBDes. This arena is critical because budget allocation determines whether aspirations expressed in deliberative meetings become material programmes. Women's participation in APBDes is therefore a stronger test of substantive influence than attendance in Musdes alone. In Boti, APBDes formulation is based on proposals recorded during village deliberation. After Musdes, a budget planning meeting is attended by the Village Head, BPD, and hamlet heads. Approval is then sought from the regency-level village empowerment agency. Women's proposals concerning stunting, malnutrition, weaving, green kitchens, maternal health, and early childhood education are taken into account. Yet budget allocation decisions are made by village government and BPD actors, who are predominantly male.

Boti makes the third conversion gate especially visible. Women's proposals can enter aspiration collection, but final prioritisation and allocation are decided in predominantly male village-government and BPD structures. The analytical distinction is between proposal recognition and allocative authority: a proposal may be heard and even recorded without giving its proponents control over whether it is funded, reduced, deferred, or reframed. The absence of a female BPD member after 2018 further weakens institutional continuity between women's aspirations and final budget negotiation. Boti therefore approximates the strongest form of gendered procedural inclusion in the four-case comparison: formal access and selective welfare responsiveness coexist with weak female leverage over final allocation.

Bijeli provides an intermediate configuration. Its two female BPD members create an institutional bridge between community aspirations and formal deliberation, and women's concerns on health and nutrition are reported in APBDes discussion. Yet wider female participation remains representative and relatively quiet, while final budgeting remains elite-centred. The case suggests that descriptive presence inside a decision body can improve substantive influence for particular issues without automatically broadening the deliberative power of ordinary

women. In representation terms, institutional presence is enabling but not sufficient (Mansbridge, 1999; Celis et al., 2008).

Anin and Oinlasi show the clearest proposal-to-budget conversion. The 2024 APBDes includes maternal and child health, Posyandu maintenance, supplementary feeding for stunting prevention, business capital for women's groups, seeds and fertilisers for women farmers, and thread and beads for weaving and handicraft groups. These items matter analytically because they demonstrate that women's claims can survive beyond consultation and enter allocative instruments. The stronger conversion in these villages is associated with repeated participation across Musdus or village discussion, drafting structures, and monitoring, as well as with cross-institutional female roles in PKK, religion, education, health, and BPD. The evidence therefore points to institutional embedding and repeated-stage participation as enabling conditions, not simply to higher individual confidence.

At the same time, these budget gains remain selective. The funded items are concentrated in practical gender needs, including health, nutrition, household income, small-scale production, and care-related services, while there is weaker evidence that women shape strategic decisions about leadership rules, control over village resources, protection and accountability institutions, enforcement priorities, or the architecture of participation itself. The finding should therefore not be read as 'women have no influence.' Rather, influence is domain-specific: some claims convert into expenditure while the authority to define the wider rules of allocation remains less transformed.

The findings suggest that gender-responsive village budgeting requires more than the inclusion of women's proposals (Sahabat et al., 2024; UN Women, 2024). It requires gender analysis of budget priorities, gender-disaggregated data, institutionalised women's forums before Musdes, transparent budget tracking, and mechanisms ensuring women's participation in final allocation decisions. Without these mechanisms, APBDes may fund women-related activities while leaving the gendered structure of decision-making intact.

Table 3. Forms and Limits of Women's Participation in Village Policy-Making

Policy arena	Forms of participation	Evidence of influence	Main limitation
Musdes/ Musrenbangdes	Attendance through PKK, Posyandu cadres, religious leaders, female representatives, and selected community figures.	Women submit proposals on health, nutrition, stunting, weaving, home gardens, and women's groups.	Participation is representative and passive; ordinary women rarely speak directly.
Village Regulations	Women included in dissemination, Tim Sembilan or Team of Seven, BPD membership in some villages.	Women's concerns influence regulations such as alcoholic beverage control and APBDes-related programmes.	Draft initiation and final decisions remain dominated by Village Head, BPD, and male officials.
APBDes	Women's proposals considered in budget formulation; female BPD, PKK, and Posyandu	Allocations appear for maternal health, stunting prevention, business capital, seeds, fertilisers,	Women influence practical welfare items more than strategic budget priorities or allocation authority.

	actors participate in some villages.	weaving materials.	
Monitoring and evaluation	Quarterly village meetings in Anin and Oinlasi include women from BPD, PKK, and religious institutions.	Women remain connected to implementation review in selected villages.	Monitoring is not yet institutionalised as gender-responsive accountability.

Source: Authors' analysis, 2026

Human capital and the unequal capacity to participate

Human-capital differences are relevant, but the cross-case evidence cautions against treating them as a sufficient explanation. In Boti, women who are reported to voice aspirations are often those with more education or experience outside the village. Education can expand policy vocabulary, familiarity with administrative procedure, and confidence in Indonesian-language discussion. Yet these resources matter partly because village forums reward particular communicative styles and bureaucratic knowledge. Human capital therefore operates as a relational advantage within an institutional setting, not simply as an individual deficit located in women.

Bijeli illustrates this distinction clearly. Village officials described public-speaking confidence as a barrier, but that interpretation is weakened if treated as a universal characteristic of women because female BPD members are reported to speak on nutrition issues. The more defensible inference is that confidence and voice are jointly produced by individual resources and institutional standing. A hierarchical meeting dominated by senior male officials imposes a higher participation cost on women who lack formal roles, whereas recognised representatives enter with a mandate to speak. The evidence therefore supports a mechanism of unequal deliberative authority rather than a general psychological claim about women's willingness to participate.

Language creates a second relational barrier. In Boti, policy dissemination sometimes requires explanation in the local language, indicating that Indonesian-language and bureaucratic terminology are not equally accessible to all participants. Terms such as *Perdes*, *APBDes*, *RKPDes*, *authority*, *evaluation*, and *allocation* may be routine for officials but less familiar to citizens with limited administrative exposure. A forum can therefore be procedurally open while its communicative infrastructure remains unequal. The relevant mechanism is not lack of interest, but unequal access to the language through which claims are recognised as policy-relevant.

Human capital is therefore not merely an individual deficit. It is produced through social and institutional arrangements. When women have fewer educational opportunities, less exposure to public organisations, heavier domestic responsibilities, and limited access to policy information, they enter village forums from an unequal starting point. Capacity-building programmes must therefore avoid treating women as passive beneficiaries who simply need training. Instead, capacity-building should be linked to institutional reform: accessible information, pre-deliberation women's forums, mentoring for female representatives, simplified budget documents, and facilitative meeting practices that actively invite women's voices.

Patriarchal customary norms and the gendered structure of village authority

The second structural filter is the gendered organisation of authority. Local institutional accounts describe the patrilineal principle associated with Lasi Naka Toni as reinforcing men's authority in public and family decision-making. Analytically, the important point is not to treat 'culture' as a fixed explanation, but to identify how informal expectations interact with formal village institutions. Leadership, public speech, and final decision authority are more readily associated with men, while women's recognised knowledge is concentrated in domestic welfare, farming, weaving, market activity, childcare, health, and family responsibilities. These informal rules shape whose claims appear authoritative even when formal rules permit participation.

This gendered authority structure does not eliminate women's agency. Women contribute labour, income, care, local production, and policy-relevant knowledge, and the budget evidence shows that some of this knowledge enters village programmes. The filter instead operates through issue classification. Claims about stunting, nutrition, weaving, maternal health, or household livelihoods are readily legible as women's concerns; claims about authority, enforcement, regulatory control, infrastructure prioritisation, or political accountability are less visibly associated with women. This distinction links the case to feminist institutionalist arguments that formal inclusion can coexist with informal rules that reproduce gendered power (Mackay et al., 2010; Waylen, 2014).

Patriarchy also operates through time. Women carry domestic responsibilities that reduce their ability to attend meetings, prepare proposals, follow policy information, or participate in monitoring. Participation is often scheduled and organised according to public institutional routines that assume participants are free from domestic labour. This assumption disadvantages women. Even when women attend, domestic responsibilities may limit their preparation, confidence, and capacity for sustained involvement. Therefore, the problem is not simply cultural belief but the material organisation of everyday life.

The evidence also shows that gendered norms interact with institutional resources. Women with education, organisational experience, religious or professional standing, or formal BPD roles can negotiate the boundaries of public authority more effectively because they possess recognised platforms from which to speak. Women without these resources remain more dependent on indirect representation. The result is layered inclusion: the institution may include 'women' as a category while giving disproportionate voice to women who already hold socially recognised positions. This is why descriptive presence cannot be assumed to represent the diversity of women's interests.

This pattern connects the village evidence to debates on descriptive and substantive representation. The presence of women in a forum or BPD can matter, but it does not guarantee that poorer, less-educated, linguistically marginal, younger, or domestically burdened women are substantively represented (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999; Celis et al., 2008). Gender-responsive governance therefore requires attention not only to the male-female composition of institutions but also to the internal distribution of voice among women and to the organisational mechanisms through which claims are carried forward.

Cross-village variation and the conditions of policy conversion

Cross-village comparison clarifies the mechanism. Boti combines formal access with weak female embedding in final decision bodies: the village executive is male-dominated, the BPD no longer has a female member, and language accessibility remains an issue. Women's concerns can shape family-welfare regulation, but allocative authority is distant from the point at which women enter. Bijeli adds two female BPD members and consequently shows more evidence that women's claims reach formal discussion, yet wider participation remains representative and elite-centred. Anin strengthens continuity through the Team of Seven and quarterly monitoring. Oinlasi shows the strongest conversion because female actors are distributed across BPD, PKK, health, education, religious, and monitoring roles, creating repeated points of institutional access.

The comparison identifies four enabling conditions: embedded institutional position, organisational backing, repeated participation across policy stages, and the ability to connect a claim to an accepted policy instrument. It also identifies four recurrent filters: selective representation, inaccessible policy language, gendered boundaries of legitimate issues, and concentration of final regulatory or budget authority. These conditions explain why the same legal participatory architecture produces different levels of substantive influence. Formal access is therefore not a single treatment with a uniform effect; its consequences depend on how women are positioned within the institutional chain that carries an issue from proposal to decision.

This comparative logic provides the empirical basis for gendered procedural inclusion. The concept applies when women have recognised procedural entry but one or more gendered filters attenuate movement from access to agenda-setting and from agenda-setting to regulatory or allocative authority. It becomes less pronounced when countervailing institutional arrangements, especially embedded female representation, cross-organisational support, repeated-stage participation, and accessible facilitation, allow claims to persist through successive policy gates. In this sense, the four villages are not simply examples of the same exclusion; they display variation in the degree to which procedural inclusion is converted into policy power.

From practical gender needs to strategic gender transformation

The policy outputs identified in this study are important. Budget allocations for Posyandu, supplementary feeding, maternal health, stunting prevention, women's business groups, weaving materials, agricultural inputs, and green kitchens show that women's participation can affect village programmes. These outcomes should not be dismissed as merely symbolic. They represent concrete benefits for women, children, and households, and they show that village institutions can respond to women's practical needs (Kabeer, 1999; UN Women, 2024).

Nevertheless, the findings also show the limits of practical responsiveness. The dominant policy outputs remain located within socially accepted female domains. They improve welfare but do not fundamentally change who governs, who decides, who controls resources, and who defines public priorities. A gender-responsive village does not only allocate money for women-related activities; it also transforms the rules and practices that determine women's authority in the policy process.

The transition from practical gender needs to strategic gender transformation requires institutional change. First, village

regulations should institutionalise minimum standards for women's meaningful participation, not merely attendance. Second, APBDes formulation should include gender analysis and transparent tracking of allocations benefiting women and vulnerable groups. Third, BPD membership and drafting teams should ensure not only the presence of women but also mentoring, information access, and speaking opportunities. Fourth, village deliberations should use local language and accessible formats, enabling women with limited formal education to participate. Fifth, customary, religious, and community leaders should be engaged as allies in reframing women's participation as a collective village interest rather than a threat to tradition.

These reforms follow directly from the conversion mechanism identified above. If the problem were only low attendance, more invitations would be sufficient. The four-village comparison instead shows that the decisive issue is continuity of influence across policy stages. Institutional redesign should therefore reduce the filters between entry, voice, and policy conversion: broaden the social base of representation, make policy language accessible, strengthen women's organisational and BPD positions, create repeated opportunities to follow proposals through budgeting and monitoring, and subject final allocation decisions to transparent gender-responsive review. The objective is not merely more procedural participation, but a stronger capacity to convert women's claims into agenda-setting, regulatory, and allocative authority.

Table 4. Barriers, Mechanisms, and Strategic Responses

Barrier	Mechanism of exclusion	Observed consequence	Strategic response
Low educational attainment	Women lack confidence, technical vocabulary, and familiarity with planning and budgeting documents.	Women attend but rarely speak; only educated women or recognised figures voice aspirations.	Women's policy literacy training, mentoring, simplified planning documents, and pre-Musdes women's forums.
Language and bureaucratic communication	Formal policy language is not easily understood by women with limited Indonesian or administrative exposure.	Dissemination and deliberation become formally open but substantively inaccessible.	Use local language, visual aids, facilitated discussion, and participatory mapping.
Patriarchal customary norms	Men are culturally recognised as authoritative decision-makers in public affairs.	Women's participation is accepted mainly in domestic, welfare, and care-related issues.	Engage customary and religious leaders; reframe women's participation as village welfare and governance quality.
Male-dominated institutions	Village government, hamlet leadership, RT/RW structures, and	Women influence proposals but not final allocation and	Strengthen female representation in BPD, drafting teams, budget teams,

	BPD remain predominantly male in several sites.	regulatory decisions.	and monitoring forums.
Representative participation	Women participate through selected organisations rather than broad-based female deliberation.	Female representation does not always reflect diverse women's interests.	Create inclusive women's caucuses involving poorer, younger, less educated, and ordinary village women.

Source: Authors' analysis, 2026

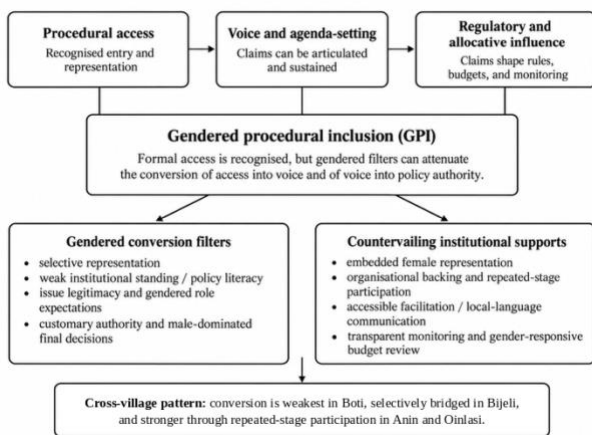
Mechanism Model: Gendered Procedural Inclusion

The findings support a more precise definition of gendered procedural inclusion (GPI). GPI is a condition in which formal institutions create recognised access for women, yet gendered filters at successive policy gates attenuate the conversion of that access into agenda-setting, regulatory, and allocative power. The mechanism has three stages: procedural entry, substantive voice, and policy conversion. Failure at any stage can coexist with success at another, which is why the cases show genuine welfare responsiveness alongside persistent inequality in decision authority. GPI therefore describes a patterned conversion problem, not the mere coexistence of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion.'

The concept is deliberately bounded against adjacent theories. Arnstein's (1969) tokenism classifies levels of citizen power; GPI asks which gendered institutional filters prevent movement from an invited position to policy authority across a sequential policy process. Cornwall's (2008) invited-spaces perspective explains how access is structured by power; GPI specifies the conversion gates through which women's claims must pass after entry. Descriptive-substantive representation scholarship asks whether the presence of women produces representation of women's interests (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999; Celis et al., 2008); GPI extends the question to participatory arenas in which many women are not elected representatives and follows claims into regulations and budgets. Kabeer's (1999) agency framework identifies the capacity to define goals and act on them; GPI locates that agency within an institutional sequence that can recognise, narrow, or block its policy effects. Feminist institutionalism is the closest foundation because it theorises the interaction of formal and informal gendered rules (Mackay et al., 2010; Waylen, 2014); GPI operationalises that insight as a stage-specific conversion mechanism in village policy-making.

The contribution should therefore be read as an integrative mid-range refinement rather than a claim to a new general theory. The four cases suggest that conversion from access to influence strengthens when women hold embedded institutional positions, have organisational backing, participate repeatedly from agenda formation through monitoring, and can translate claims into recognised policy instruments. It weakens when entry is episodic, communication is inaccessible, women's claims are legitimate only within narrow welfare domains, and final regulatory or budget authority is concentrated elsewhere. This mechanism explains the empirical difference between Boti's weak conversion, Bijeli's selective institutional bridge, and the stronger proposal-to-budget pathways visible in Anin and Oinlasi. It also generates a testable proposition for future comparative work: similar levels of formal inclusion should

produce different substantive outcomes depending on the configuration of these gendered filters and countervailing institutional supports.



Source: Authors' construct, 2026

CONCLUSION

This study examined how women's formal access to village policy-making is converted, or fails to be converted, into substantive influence across deliberation, regulation-making, budgeting, and monitoring in Boti, Bijeli, Anin, and Oinlasi. Women are not absent from governance. They participate through PKK, Posyandu, BPD, religious, education, health, drafting, and monitoring roles, and their proposals can enter Village Regulations and APBDes. The key empirical finding is variation in conversion: access is widespread, but the movement from access to agenda-setting and from agenda-setting to regulatory or allocative authority differs across villages and policy domains.

That variation is explained by the interaction of gendered filters and institutional supports. Boti shows the weakest institutional bridge between women's entry and final allocation, Bijeli shows selective gains associated with female BPD presence, and Anin and Oinlasi show stronger proposal-to-budget conversion where women are embedded across several organisations and stages. Education, policy language, and public-speaking experience matter, but they operate through institutional standing rather than as isolated personal deficits. Likewise, patriarchal norms operate not simply by excluding women from every forum, but by shaping whose speech is authoritative, which issues are treated as legitimate women's concerns, and where final decision power is located.

The conceptual contribution is therefore narrower and more precise than the original formulation. Gendered procedural inclusion names a patterned institutional condition in which women obtain recognised procedural access while gendered filters attenuate the conversion of access into voice and of voice into agenda-setting, regulatory, or allocative power. Its added value is not to replace tokenism, invited spaces, substantive representation, agency, or feminist institutionalism, but to connect those insights in a sequential policy mechanism and specify the conditions under which procedural access is more or less likely to become substantive influence. The concept is best treated as an empirically grounded, mid-range proposition to be tested beyond this case.

The practical implication is correspondingly specific. Increasing attendance alone targets only the first stage of the problem. Village governments and local governments need

arrangements that support women through the full conversion chain: accessible information and local-language facilitation before deliberation; broader and more accountable women's representation; stronger positions for women in BPD, drafting, and budget teams; organisational support that allows proposals to persist between meetings; gender-responsive budget tracking; and monitoring forums in which women can verify whether accepted proposals are implemented. Customary, religious, and community leaders remain important because informal recognition of women's public authority can either reinforce or weaken these formal reforms.

Several limitations bound the claims. The study is a qualitative four-village case study in one regency and supports analytical rather than statistical generalisation. The retained participant profile is stronger on actor categories than on a complete sex-by-village matrix: 12 women are explicitly identifiable from women-specific groups, while additional women in mixed categories cannot be defensibly counted without retrospective inference. The evidence is also stronger on institutional process, attributed accounts, and documentary policy outputs than on verbatim quotations from ordinary women outside organised representative roles. For that reason, the revised analysis treats elite statements about women's confidence as institutional interpretations rather than women's self-descriptions and avoids making psychological claims that the evidence cannot support. Future research should use complete sex-by-village participant metadata, record more verbatim accounts from non-elite women, and compare settings with different customary and institutional arrangements to test the proposed conversion mechanism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors express their appreciation to village governments, community representatives, women's groups, customary leaders, religious leaders, and all informants who contributed to the study.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Joseph Mario Monteiro, Kotan Y. Stefanus, Dhesy A. Kase, Rafael Rape Tupen, Megi Octaviana Radji, Marlyani A. Seran, and I Putu Yoga Bumi Pradana contributed to the study and manuscript development. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript. I Putu Yoga Bumi Pradana serves as the corresponding author and is responsible for communication with the journal.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing financial or personal interests that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

Ethical Statement

This study used qualitative data obtained from actors involved in village governance and policy processes. Participant identities were treated confidentially, sensitive personal information was not disclosed, and the data were used only for academic purposes. No formal ethics approval identifier is reported because no approval number is documented in the retained study record.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding

This research was funded by the 2025 Annual Budget of Nusa Cendana University, Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, B. (2015). The power of numbers in gender dynamics: Illustrations from community forestry groups. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2014.936007>
- Alfirdaus, L. K. (2019). Women's empowerment in village governance transformation in Indonesia: Between hope and criticism. *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9(1), 1–18.
- Andryanto, D. (2021). Women's participation in village development planning. *Journal of Public Administration Studies*, 6(2), 120–130.
- Antlov, H., Wetterberg, A., & Dharmawan, L. (2016). Village governance, community life, and the 2014 Village Law in Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 52(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2015.1129047>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802–1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>
- Bjarnegård, E., & Zetterberg, P. (2022). How autocrats weaponize women's rights. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(2), 60–75.
- Bochel, C., & Bochel, H. (2018). Making and implementing public policy: Key concepts and issues. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bussu, S., Bua, A., Dean, R., & Smith, G. (2022). Introduction: Embedding participatory governance. *Critical Policy Studies*, 16(2), 133–145.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Celis, K., Childs, S., Kantola, J., & Krook, M. L. (2008). Rethinking women's substantive representation. *Representation*, 44(2), 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344890802079573>
- Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking 'participation': Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*, 43(3), 269–283. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn010>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. SAGE.
- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Fung, A. (2015). Putting the public back into governance: The challenges of citizen participation and its future. *Public Administration Review*, 75(4), 513–522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12361>
- Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. (2012). Mapping the outcomes of citizen engagement. *World Development*, 40(12), 2399–2410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.014>
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125>
- Kabeer, N. (2020). Women's empowerment and economic development: A feminist critique of storytelling practices in randomista economics. *Feminist Economics*, 26(2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2020.1743338>
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214–222. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>
- Lochmiller, C. R. (2021). Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029–2044. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>
- Mackay, F., Kenny, M., & Chappell, L. (2010). New institutionalism through a gender lens: Towards a feminist institutionalism? *International Political Science Review*, 31(5), 573–588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110388788>
- Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should Blacks represent Blacks and women represent women? A contingent yes. *Journal of Politics*, 61(3), 628–657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647821>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook. SAGE.
- OECD. (2023). Government at a glance 2023. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d5c5d31-en>
- Pitkin, H. F. (1967). The concept of representation. University of California Press.
- Purwanti, A. (2019). The impact of Indonesian Law No. 6/2014 on women's participation in village governance. *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum*, 19(3), 672–690.
- Republic of Indonesia. (1945). The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945.
- Republic of Indonesia. (2014). Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages.
- Sahabat, A. I., Moka, I., & Hasan, R. (2024). Village women's leadership in encouraging gender-responsive planning and budgeting. *Negrei: Academic Journal of Law and Governance*, 4(2), 260–280.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Syukri, M. (2023). Gender policies of the new developmental state: The case of Indonesian new participatory village governance. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 42(1), 110–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034221149750>
- UN Women. (2024). Gender-responsive budgeting: Frequently asked questions. UN Women Asia and the Pacific.
- Waylen, G. (2014). Informal institutions, institutional change, and gender equality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 67(1), 212–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912913510360>
- Wijaya, A. F. (2020). Managing women's village activists' participation in village development planning. *Journal of Governance*, 5(1), 34–49.
- World Bank. (2021). Indonesia country gender assessment: Investing in opportunities for women. World Bank.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). Case study research: Design and methods. SAGE.