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Village Road Development Planning Based on Community Aspirations: A Literature Review in the Context of Malunda District

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ABSTRACT

Village road construction is a basic need that supports community activities, particularly by facilitating access to education, health care, economic activities, and public services. Road development planning therefore needs to take the needs and aspirations of the community into account so that the projects implemented address local problems. This article aims to analyse how community aspirations are considered in road development planning and to identify the aspects that need attention so that development planning is better aligned with community needs. The study employs a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through a review of journal articles and books relevant to development planning, community participation, development planning deliberations (Musrenbang), and rural infrastructure development. The findings indicate that community aspirations can be conveyed through hamlet-level deliberations, village development planning deliberations, and other forms of public engagement. However, the expression of aspirations is not always followed by community involvement in setting development priorities. Factors influencing this process include community representativeness, information transparency, the government's capacity to manage proposals, budget constraints, and the quality of communication between the government and the community. Road development planning should therefore be conducted openly and in a participatory manner, with attention to community needs, so that development decisions are well targeted.

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INTRODUCTION

Village roads determine whether rural residents can reach schools, health facilities, markets and public services, so deciding which roads are built or repaired is as much a governance question as a technical one. Recent evidence confirms that rural roads change lives, but unevenly. In India, new feeder roads mainly helped workers move out of agriculture, with limited short-run gains in agricultural income or assets (Asher & Novosad, 2020). Improved road access also led farmers to diversify into higher-return crops by integrating village labour markets (Shamdasani, 2021), and children in newly connected villages stayed in school longer and performed better (Adukia et al., 2020). The benefits of a road therefore depend on where it is built and whose needs it serves, which makes local knowledge indispensable to planning. A poorly placed or poorly maintained road can leave whole hamlets cut off during the rainy season.

Indonesia has placed substantial resources in the hands of villages to act on that knowledge. Since the Village Law of 2014, Village Fund transfers have been linked to changes in rural employment and village enterprises (Arifin et al., 2020) and to higher female labour force participation (Rammohan & Tohari, 2023). Village Fund Allocation (Alokasi Dana Desa)

is meant to strengthen village autonomy, yet its use is constrained by officials' limited financial literacy, weak digital infrastructure, low public awareness and the low participation of groups such as youth (Ardiputra et al., 2025), which the authors propose to address through capacity building, digital governance and stronger community participation. Much of this spending goes to physical infrastructure, including village roads.

The Village Law also institutionalised participatory planning through hamlet deliberations and the village Musrenbang, but whether these forums give residents real influence is contested. A comparative study of eighteen villages in nine provinces found extreme variation in village governance, including in the effectiveness of village meetings as accountability mechanisms, shaped by local economic and sociocultural conditions (Aspinall et al., 2025). Berenschot and Aspinall (2025) describe village deliberation as participation without accountability, while Syukri (2024) argues that participatory village governance has focused narrowly on the village economy and infrastructure and has overlooked the poor and marginalised. Gender relations and other sensitive issues have also received little attention under this framework (Syukri, 2023). An index-based analysis of rural Indonesia likewise shows that transparency and civil society engagement do not always translate into better infrastructure outcomes (Hakim et al., 2025).

International research helps explain these patterns. Participatory institutions can serve distinct and even opposite functions in interest intermediation, depending on the political project behind them (Mayka & Abbott, 2023). The outcomes of participatory budgeting depend on how each phase of the process is designed and on the roles of political and managerial actors (Bartocci et al., 2023), and informing citizens about how a participatory budget works improves their political trust (Ardanaz et al., 2023). In Indonesia, public perceptions shape how participatory policies are implemented in national development (Herman, Aslinda, et al., 2025), and reforms in rural institutions have left a persistent gap between transformative aspirations and implementation realities (Muttaqin et al., 2026b).

Few studies, however, synthesise how community aspirations about village roads move, or fail to move, from proposal to priority to decision. Studies of rural roads mostly measure economic impact after construction, while studies of participatory planning seldom focus on a specific type of infrastructure. This gap is especially visible in remote districts outside Java. Because village roads are costly and compete with other needs for limited funds, the way aspirations about them are handled offers a direct test of whether participatory planning works.

The topic was prompted by damaged roads leading to three villages in Malunda District, Majene Regency, West Sulawesi, where residents have already voiced their aspirations for repair. These conditions serve only as the motivating context, not as an object of field research, so the article does not explain why the roads remain unrepaired. Instead, it pursues two objectives through a literature review: to analyse how community aspirations are considered in road development planning, and to identify the aspects that need attention so that road planning better reflects community needs. The findings are intended to inform village governments, regional planners and communities in settings similar to Malunda.

METHOD

This study employs a literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach. A literature review allows findings dispersed across settings and disciplines to be synthesised into an overview of a field (Snyder, 2019), and it can stand as an independent study when its purpose, scope and procedures are reported transparently (Kraus et al., 2022). The review was designed as a domain-based review that organises prior studies around a defined problem (Paul & Criado, 2020) and followed the guidance of Xiao and Watson (2019) on rigour in planning research. Sources were limited to journal articles published between 2019 and 2026, retrieved mainly from Scopus-indexed journals, in line with recent reviews in public

administration and planning that draw on Scopus records (Herman, Wance, et al., 2025; Bartocci et al., 2023). Search terms included village development planning, rural roads, community aspirations, community participation, participatory budgeting, village fund, and Musrenbang. Articles were retained when they addressed how communities convey aspirations, how they are involved in planning, how aspirations are weighed in setting priorities, or which factors support or hinder participation.

The retained articles were analysed with reflexive thematic analysis, in which codes are developed from the material and organised into themes through repeated reading and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Six themes guided the synthesis: the importance of road planning, the conveyance of aspirations, community involvement in priority setting, the link between aspirations and government decisions, supporting and inhibiting factors, and transparency and evaluation. Findings within each theme were compared to identify similarities, differences, and lessons for village road planning, and the results are presented descriptively. The condition of the roads in Malunda District, Majene Regency, serves only as the context that motivated the topic. The study used no interviews or field observations in Malunda, and its conclusions are limited to what the reviewed literature supports.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The review shows that community aspirations about village roads are routinely collected through hamlet deliberations and the village Musrenbang, but that their influence weakens where priorities are set and decisions are explained. The findings are organised into seven themes, each discussed against the wider literature.

The Importance of Village Road Development Planning

Planning sets the activities to be carried out, the needs to be met and the objectives to be achieved. In village development, it must also reflect local conditions and the needs of residents. Roads are a clear case, because their value depends on how well they match local economic structures. New feeder roads in India mainly enabled workers to leave agriculture (Asher & Novosad, 2020), improved access encouraged farmers to shift to higher-return crops (Shamdasani, 2021), and better connectivity kept children in school longer (Adukia et al., 2020). A road should therefore be planned as support for the social and economic life of a community, not only as physical construction.

In Indonesia, village transfers have created the fiscal room for such planning. Village Fund spending has been associated with changes in rural employment and village enterprises (Arifin et al., 2020) and with higher female labour force participation (Rammohan & Tohari, 2023). Yet a study of Village Fund Allocation, conducted by researchers based in Majene, found that limited financial literacy among officials, inadequate digital infrastructure, and low public awareness still constrain how these funds are managed (Ardiputra et al., 2025). Capacity matters at the level of individual staff as well. Operational work tools have been shown to shape employee productivity in public organisations (Taliang et al., 2023), which suggests that village officials responsible for roads need adequate tools and skills to assess damage and prepare plans. Planning must therefore cover the whole sequence, from identifying road conditions and community needs to submitting proposals and selecting priorities.

Conveying Community Aspirations in Development Planning

Community aspirations are the opinions, expectations, and needs that residents communicate to government for consideration in policies and programmes. In Indonesian villages, they are conveyed mainly through hamlet deliberations and the village Musrenbang, where residents can raise damaged roads alongside other needs. The design resembles participatory budgeting, which a systematic review describes as a journey of distinct phases whose outcomes depend on how each phase is organised and on the roles of political and

managerial actors (Bartocci et al., 2023). Participatory budgeting has also been linked to more sustainable forms of governance when it is embedded in the regular work of public organisations (Sinervo et al., 2024).

However, conveying aspirations is not equally easy for everyone. Low participation by groups such as youth remains a challenge in village budgeting (Ardiputra et al., 2025), and participatory village governance has often neglected the poor and marginalised (Syukri, 2024). Gender relations and other sensitive issues have likewise received little attention under the Village Law's participatory framework (Syukri, 2023). The people who collect aspirations also matter. In a study of volunteers who acted as government representatives in a socio-economic registration census, agreeableness and conscientiousness improved performance directly, and carefulness improved it as well (Idris et al., 2023). Facilitators who gather road proposals at hamlet level play a similar representative role, so their selection and conduct affect whose voices are recorded.

The comparative evidence also shows that forums alone do not guarantee inclusion. Aspinall et al. (2025) found a wide spectrum of participation across eighteen villages, with more open and contested governance in some places and closed, elite-dominated governance in others. Oversight and engagement can also take place outside formal forums, as shown in a study of collaborative environmental governance in a border district (Purna et al., 2026). Village governments should therefore combine formal deliberations with informal channels that reach residents who rarely attend meetings.

Community Involvement in Setting Development Priorities

Involvement is measured not only by attendance but also by whether residents can discuss proposals and influence decisions. Because not all proposals can be funded at once, priority setting is the stage at which aspirations are most easily lost. Berenschot and Aspinall (2025) characterise village deliberation in Indonesia as participation without accountability, meaning that residents take part in meetings but have limited means to hold decision-makers to account for the results. Mayka and Abbott (2023) add that participatory institutions can either open channels for citizens' interests or serve as instruments that reinforce existing political projects, depending on how they were created.

The gap between formal and substantive participation also appears in rural enterprise institutions. Muttaqin et al. (2026b) show that New Public Management reforms in rural business institutions have repeatedly fallen short of their transformative aims, reproducing existing power relations. In the same institutions, weak accounting systems have undermined accountability to village residents (Muttaqin et al., 2026a). Road planning faces the same risk when priorities are decided by a small circle and the criteria are not disclosed.

Priority setting for roads should therefore rest on explicit criteria: the level of damage, the number of users, the road's role in daily activities, its effect on economic activity, and its role in connecting residents to schools, health facilities and markets. These criteria reflect the evidence that road benefits depend on location and condition (Asher & Novosad, 2020; Shamdasani, 2021). Herman, Aslinda, et al. (2025) show that public perceptions shape how participatory policies are implemented, so priorities that residents recognise as fair are more likely to be supported.

The Relationship between Community Aspirations and Government Decisions

Aspirations require follow-up. Government collects proposals, assesses them and decides which can be carried out within its authority and budget. When a proposal is not funded, residents need to know why, for example because of budget limits, more urgent needs or technical preparation. Ardanaz et al. (2023) found that providing citizens with detailed information about a participatory budget initiative improved their assessment of government performance and their political trust. Digital government tools can support this communication; their role in building public trust has been documented in an Indonesian

district (Ahmad et al., 2026).

The relationship between aspirations and decisions is also shaped by broader state-society relations. Fox et al. (2023) argue that shifts in power towards citizens are most likely when reformers inside the state and organised citizens outside it reinforce one another. At village level, collaborative arrangements between government and community have been studied in village economic development (Halim et al., 2026). For roads, such collaboration means that government explains how proposals are processed, while residents monitor whether decisions match what was agreed.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Community Participation

The reviewed studies point to five groups of factors that shape participation in village road planning:

1. Community awareness and understanding. Low public awareness of how village funds are managed limits residents' ability to engage (Ardiputra et al., 2025), while public perceptions shape how participatory policies are carried out (Herman, Aslinda, et al., 2025).
2. Information openness. Information about schedules, procedures, and decisions increases trust (Ardanaz et al., 2023), and administrative information disclosure is a core element of village governance (Eritrina et al., 2026).
3. Community representation. Participation varies widely across villages (Aspinall et al., 2025), and poor, marginalised, and younger residents are often underrepresented (Syukri, 2024; Ardiputra et al., 2025).
4. Budget capacity and government resources. Village transfers have expanded resources (Arifin et al., 2020), but officials' financial literacy and working tools limit how well they are used (Ardiputra et al., 2025; Taliang et al., 2023).
5. Communication and accountability. Without accountability mechanisms, deliberation does not translate into influence (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2026a).

These factors show that successful participation does not depend only on residents' willingness to attend. Government must also provide the space, information, and opportunities that make broader participation possible.

Transparency and Evaluation in Road Development Planning

Transparency allows residents to know the stages of planning, the proposals discussed, and the reasons a road is prioritised. Hakim et al. (2025) caution that transparency and civil society engagement do not automatically produce better infrastructure outcomes, and they call for deliberative, participatory and data-driven village governance. Transparency must therefore be paired with clear decision criteria and reliable data on road conditions.

Evaluation is equally necessary. It should assess whether a road delivers the expected benefits and feed into the next planning cycle. Because the effects of roads vary by location and over time (Asher & Novosad, 2020; Adukia et al., 2020), systematic evaluation helps identify which investments work. Residents, as daily users, can contribute to such evaluation. Research on planning and environmental policy similarly finds that community participation and multidisciplinary collaboration are essential to sustainable outcomes (Herman, Wance, et al., 2025). Transparency and evaluation are therefore mutually reinforcing: the first helps residents understand decisions, and the second helps government judge their results.

Relevance of the Review to the Context of Malunda District

Malunda District, Majene Regency, is the context that motivated this review. The damaged roads leading to three villages, and residents' aspirations for their repair, raise the question of how community needs are weighed in planning. Because this article did not interview officials or residents, it draws no conclusions about how planning actually works in Malunda. The regional relevance is nonetheless clear: the constraints on village fund management identified by researchers in Majene, including officials' financial literacy, digital

infrastructure and public awareness (Ardiputra et al., 2025), are the same constraints that shape road planning.

The reviewed studies suggest four priorities. First, government should identify road conditions and community needs before drafting plans. Second, residents should be able to convey aspirations through forums and informal channels accessible to diverse groups. Third, proposals should be discussed openly against explicit priority criteria. Fourth, government should inform residents about the follow-up to their proposals and evaluate completed roads with community input. Road planning based on community aspirations therefore requires more than collecting proposals: aspirations must be conveyed openly, deliberated together, weighed in priority setting and followed up clearly.

CONCLUSION

This literature review concludes that community aspirations are an essential basis for village road development planning, because residents hold direct knowledge of road conditions and of the infrastructure they rely on every day. Previous studies show that aspirations are routinely conveyed through hamlet deliberations and the village Musrenbang, yet these forums do not guarantee that all needs are represented or that they shape final decisions. The main obstacles identified are limited representation, dominance of village elites, insufficient information, weak understanding of planning procedures, budget constraints and poor communication between government and residents. International evidence adds that road quality and location determine whether roads deliver benefits, so priority setting must rely on local knowledge. Road planning that responds to community needs should therefore weigh the level of damage, the number of users, the benefits for residents and the role of each road in reaching education, health care, economic activity and public services. Government should run the planning process openly, explain the follow-up to every proposal and evaluate completed projects with community input. Holding deliberations and compiling programmes is not enough; aspirations must genuinely influence decisions. Participatory, transparent and responsive planning is thus the key to well-targeted rural road development, including in contexts such as Malunda District.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

E: conceptualization, literature review, data collection, formal analysis, and writing–original draft preparation. MIN: methodology, theoretical framework development, validation, and writing–review and editing. HH: supervision, interpretation of findings, critical review, and writing–review and editing. AA: literature review, data curation, validation, and writing–review and editing. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

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