

Community Participation in the Preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (Rkpd) in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency (Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation Model)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the level of community participation in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, based on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting such participation. The study employed a descriptive approach by integrating qualitative and quantitative data. **Method:** Data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and a recapitulation of respondents' responses. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. **Results:** The results indicated that community participation was not situated at the level of non-participation. This was demonstrated by the predominance of strongly disagree responses for the manipulation indicator at 94.44% and the therapy indicator at 92.59%. For the informing indicator, 94.44% of respondents strongly disagreed that information was limited and communicated only in a one-way manner, although the interviews revealed that access to planning documents still needed to be expanded. The consultation and placation indicators each received 98.15% strongly agree responses, indicating that the community had been provided with opportunities to submit proposals and participate through community representatives. The partnership indicator received 92.59% strongly agree responses, delegated power received 96.23%, and citizen control received 92.59%, reflecting the development of dialogue, partnership, priority setting, and community involvement in monitoring and managing local development programs. **Novelty:** Nevertheless, final decisions remained subject to governmental authority, regional priorities, and budgetary capacity. Supporting factors included the Development Planning Forum, government openness, village government support, the involvement of community leaders, and a deliberative culture. Inhibiting factors included limited public understanding, unequal access to information, inadequate feedback on proposals, geographical constraints, communication limitations, and the passivity of some community members. It was concluded that community participation tended to be positioned at the partnership level and was progressing toward delegated power, although it had not yet substantively achieved full citizen control.

INTRODUCTION

Regional development is an integral component of national development aimed at improving public welfare through effective, efficient, and equitable governance [1]. Within the context of decentralization, regional governments are authorized to formulate development plans that correspond to local potential, needs, and community aspirations [2]. One of the principal instruments in this planning process is the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD), which sets out the direction of annual regional development policies, programs, and activities as an operational elaboration of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD).

Community participation in regional development planning is a fundamental pillar of democratic, transparent, and responsive governance. Public involvement in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) constitutes an important indicator of participatory democracy and reflects the regional government's commitment to accommodating and following up citizens' aspirations. As an annual planning document, the RKPD plays a strategic role in determining development priorities and ensuring that planned programs are aligned with community needs.

In practice, however, participatory planning continues to encounter various obstacles, including in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency. These constraints include low levels of public participation in planning forums, unequal representation among community groups, declining participation quality due to procedural formalism, weak feedback mechanisms for community proposals, and disparities in the capacity of government officials and citizens to understand development-planning processes.

Hajar, writing in the *Journal of Management Information Systems Economics*, explains that forums intended to facilitate substantive participation often become merely formal mechanisms for legitimizing government agendas, without providing meaningful opportunities for citizens to influence policy decisions [3]. This study offers a new contribution by comprehensively analyzing the level of community participation in the implementation of the Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang) in Nyuatan District as an input for preparing the West Kutai Regency RKPD, using Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation as its theoretical framework. Unlike previous studies that examined only one stage of the process, this research covers two important stages of participatory planning: the Public Consultation Forum and the district-level Musrenbang.

According to Soetrisno, community participation is essential to successful development because local residents possess the most direct knowledge of their environmental needs and potential [4]. In regional governance, Law Number 25 of 2004 concerning the National Development Planning System requires national and regional development planning to be conducted participatively by involving all stakeholders [5], [6]. This requirement is reinforced by Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 86 of 2017, which stipulates that the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) must be prepared through the Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang), beginning at the village or urban-village level and continuing through the district and regency or municipal levels [7]. The forum serves as an official mechanism through which citizens can convey their aspirations and proposals for regional development. Nevertheless, the level of community participation in RKPD preparation is frequently not yet optimal.

In West Kutai Regency, Musrenbang activities are routinely conducted each year as part of the regional development-planning cycle. Preliminary observations, however, indicate that community involvement remains relatively limited, particularly during the stages of problem identification and program-priority determination. The dominance of local elites and the limited follow-up of community proposals are recurring concerns.

These conditions raise the question of the extent to which community participation is genuinely accommodated in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD), particularly in Nyuatan District. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the level and forms of community participation in district-level Musrenbang activities as input for preparing the West Kutai Regency RKPD, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting participation, and formulate recommendations for improving the effectiveness of participatory planning mechanisms at the regional level.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan Province, which covers an area of approximately 1,740.70 km². Nyuatan District has developed over time in line with population growth. It consists of ten villages, with its administrative center located in Dempar Village. The substantive scope of this research focuses on the process of involving the community in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) at the district level; the forms and mechanisms of public participation in planning forums, particularly the district-level Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang); and the degree of community involvement and influence in determining development-program and activity priorities. The methodology follows the research design principles outlined by Creswell [8].

Types and Sources of Data

This study used qualitative data as its principal form of evidence. Moleong defines qualitative data as words, actions, or documents obtained through observation, interviews, and document review rather than in the form of statistical figures [9]. The qualitative data in this study are descriptive and provide an in-depth account of community participation in RKPD preparation, including forms of involvement, process dynamics, and the factors influencing participation.

According to Sugiyono, primary data are obtained directly from original sources through observation, interviews, or surveys conducted by the researcher [10]. In this study, primary data served as the main source of empirical information for portraying the phenomenon of community participation comprehensively and contemporaneously, thereby enabling the findings to reflect field realities in a scientifically accountable manner.

Nazir defines secondary data as data obtained through indirect sources, including records, reports, archives, and official publications relevant to the research problem [11]. Secondary data therefore functioned as supporting evidence that strengthened the findings, clarified the policy context, and broadened the analytical perspective on community participation in the preparation of the RKPD in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency.

Data Collection Techniques

Moleong explains that data collection techniques are the procedures used by researchers to obtain empirical evidence for answering research questions [9]. Arikunto similarly states that data collection techniques comprise the methods available to researchers for collecting data [12]. On this basis, data collection techniques may be understood as systematic procedures employed to obtain valid and reliable evidence for addressing the research questions.

Within Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation framework, the researcher employed several qualitative data collection techniques. In-depth interviews were conducted with district officials, village heads, community leaders, and Musrenbang participants to explore their views and experiences concerning public participation in RKPD preparation. Observation was carried out by directly examining Development Planning Forum activities at the village and district levels, including patterns of interaction among the actors involved. Documentation involved collecting official records, including Musrenbang minutes, official reports, attendance lists, and RKPD documents, to support and corroborate the interview and observational data.

Informants

In this qualitative study of community participation in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, informants were selected through purposive sampling. This technique involved selecting individuals considered to possess relevant knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in regional development planning. Conceptually, the informants were divided into three principal categories: key informants, primary informants, and supporting informants.

Key informants included the Head of the West Kutai Regency Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency; the Secretary of the agency; and the Head of the Regional Development Planning, Control, and Evaluation Division.

Primary informants were actors directly involved in Musrenbang processes at the district and village levels and who possessed practical experience of community participation. They included the District Head, District Secretary, Nyuatan District Treasurer, village heads, Village Consultative Body chairs, village Musrenbang committee members, and community leaders who actively attended district-level Musrenbang forums.

Supporting informants were individuals who were not directly involved in preparing the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) but possessed important perspectives as users or beneficiaries of development-planning outputs. These informants included community members who had participated in Musrenbang, customary leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, representatives of local civil-society organizations or communities, academics, and observers of regional development.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches, with Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation serving as the principal analytical framework for assessing the level of community participation in the RKPD preparation process in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency. The model conceptualizes participation as a redistribution of power from government to citizens in decision-making processes. It is therefore particularly relevant for examining the quality of public participation in Musrenbang and RKPD preparation, both of which constitute arenas of public decision-making.

Qualitative data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three principal stages [13]. First, data reduction was conducted by selecting, categorizing, and coding evidence obtained from interviews, Musrenbang observations, and documentation. Second, data display was used to present the relationships among forms of community participation, Musrenbang processes, and the extent to which community proposals were accommodated in RKPD preparation. Third, conclusions were drawn and verified by interpreting the identified patterns and testing their validity through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. This verification process ensured that conclusions regarding the level of participation in Nyuatan District accurately reflected empirical conditions.

The quantitative component used percentage analysis supported by a four-point Likert scale. The scale measured respondents' assessments of each indicator of community participation in RKPD preparation in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency. It consisted of four response alternatives: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

Table 1. Likert Scale.

No.	Response Alternative	Abbreviation	Score
1	Strongly Disagree	SD	1
2	Disagree	D	2
3	Agree	A	3
4	Strongly Agree	SA	4

Source: Researcher's Data Processing, 2026

The percentage was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = (F / N) \times 100\%$$

Explanation:

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of respondents' answers in each category

N = Total number of respondents or total responses

100% = Constant value

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

At the data-display stage, the researcher organized the reduced data into narrative descriptions, tables, and matrices of findings. The presentation was structured according to the indicators of Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation to identify the position of community participation in RKPD preparation. The displayed data covered forms of community involvement in deliberative forums, the process of conveying aspirations, mechanisms for determining development priorities, and follow-up actions on community proposals. This presentation facilitated an understanding of participation patterns and the relationship between the field findings and the theoretical framework.

Table 2. Research Findings.

No.	Arnstein Participation Level	Indicator	Analytical Meaning
1	Manipulation	Citizens are invited merely to satisfy formal requirements without receiving clear explanations. Deliberative outcomes have already been determined before the forum is held.	Participation is pseudo-participatory.
2	Therapy	The forum mainly consists of guidance delivered by the government. Citizens are not given opportunities to express opinions or criticism.	Participation does not yet provide meaningful influence.
3	Informing	Planning information is communicated unidirectionally by the government. Citizens do not obtain full access to RKPD documents.	Citizens receive information but do not necessarily influence decisions.
4	Consultation	Citizens are asked to provide input during Musrenbang. Their views are recorded but are not guaranteed to be accommodated.	Aspirations are collected, but government remains dominant in decision-making.
5	Placation	Community representatives are involved in the RKPD preparation team. Their role remains limited to offering advice rather than making decisions.	Citizens have begun to be involved, but their influence remains limited.
6	Partnership	Citizens and government deliberate and formulate decisions jointly. The government provides space for negotiation and equality in Musrenbang.	A partnership exists in development planning.

7	Delegated Power	Citizens are authorized to determine development-activity priorities. The government acts as a facilitator in decision-making.	Community participation is relatively strong.
8	Citizen Control	Citizens independently design and manage local development programs. The government provides only administrative and financial support.	Participation is positioned at the highest level.

Source: Researcher's Data Processing, 2026

Table 3. Supporting Research Data.

No.	Indicator	SD	D	A	SA
1	<i>Manipulation</i>	51	2	1	0
2	<i>Therapy</i>	50	3	1	0
3	<i>Informing</i>	51	2	1	0
4	<i>Consultation</i>	0	0	1	53
5	<i>Placation</i>	0	0	1	53
6	<i>Partnership</i>	0	1	3	50
7	<i>Delegated Power</i>	0	0	3	51
8	<i>Citizen Control</i>	1	1	2	50

Source: Researcher's Data Processing, 2026

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Research Results.

No.	Indicator	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1	<i>Manipulation</i>	94.44%	3.70%	1.85%	0.00%
2	<i>Therapy</i>	92.59%	5.56%	1.85%	0.00%
3	<i>Informing</i>	94.44%	3.70%	1.85%	0.00%
4	<i>Consultation</i>	0.00%	0.00%	1.85%	98.15%
5	<i>Placation</i>	0.00%	0.00%	1.85%	98.15%
6	<i>Partnership</i>	0.00%	1.85%	3.77%	92.59%
7	<i>Delegated Power</i>	0.00%	0.00%	3.77%	96.23%
8	<i>Citizen Control</i>	1.85%	1.85%	3.70%	92.59%

Source: Research Findings, 2026

Discussion

The findings indicate that community participation in RKPd preparation in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, varied across the levels of Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. In general, participation was not concentrated at the non-participation levels of manipulation and therapy. Instead, it was more strongly situated at the tokenism level and had begun to move toward citizen power, particularly through partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. This pattern suggests that citizens were not merely treated as recipients of information but were increasingly involved in

deliberation, the submission of proposals, priority setting, and the management of local development programs.

At the manipulation level, the results comprised 51 strongly disagree responses, 2 disagree responses, 1 agree response, and no strongly agree responses. The predominance of disagreement indicates that most respondents rejected the proposition that citizens were invited merely to satisfy formal requirements without receiving clear explanations or that deliberative outcomes had been predetermined. Community participation in RKPD preparation in Nyuatan District therefore cannot be characterized primarily as pseudo-participation. This finding is consistent with Saleh, Sam, and Nilwana, who reported a low level of manipulation in RKPD preparation in Sidenreng Rappang Regency because most respondents rejected the existence of manipulative participatory practices [14].

At the therapy level, there were 50 strongly disagree responses, 3 disagree responses, 1 agree response, and no strongly agree responses. This finding indicates that most respondents did not perceive deliberative activities merely as government-led guidance forums that denied citizens opportunities to express opinions or criticism. Accordingly, participation was not predominantly situated at the therapy level. This result is also consistent with Saleh, Sam, and Nilwana, who found that therapy was relatively less prominent than other levels of participation in RKPD preparation [14]. In other words, citizens had begun to move beyond pseudo-participation toward more open forms of involvement.

At the informing level, the results comprised 51 strongly disagree responses, 2 disagree responses, 1 agree response, and no strongly agree responses. The predominance of strongly disagree responses indicates that respondents generally rejected the proposition that planning information was communicated only in a one-way manner or that citizens lacked access to RKPD documents. Nevertheless, the interview findings indicated that access to planning documents still required improvement. These results suggest that participation had moved beyond non-participation, although the quality and breadth of information access remained an issue. This finding is consistent with Kurniawan, who explained that e-Musrenbang can improve access to information and public participation in development planning, while challenges remain in transparency, accessibility, and communication effectiveness [15].

At the consultation level, no respondents selected strongly disagree or disagree; 1 respondent selected agree and 53 selected strongly agree. These results demonstrate that consultation was highly prominent. Citizens acknowledged that they were invited to provide input during Musrenbang and that their views were recorded by the government. This finding closely corresponds with Saleh, Sam, and Nilwana, who identified consultation as one of the most dominant levels of participation in RKPD preparation [14].

At the placation level, there were no strongly disagree or disagree responses; 1 respondent selected agree and 53 selected strongly agree. Most respondents therefore

considered that community representatives had been involved in the RKPD preparation process. This finding is consistent with Setiawan, Suwaryo, and Rahmatunnisa, who found that community participation in village development planning may take the form of physical attendance, ideas, and proposals, but does not necessarily guarantee full public influence over development decisions [16]. Thus, placation in Nyuatan District demonstrates community involvement, although it must be strengthened to ensure that participation does not remain merely symbolic.

At the partnership level, there were no strongly disagree responses, 1 disagree response, 3 agree responses, and 50 strongly agree responses. These results indicate a strong partnership in the RKPD preparation process in Nyuatan District. The finding is consistent with Ahmad (2024), who documented active community involvement in the Sekeloa Urban Village Musrenbang and collaboration between citizens and government in development planning. It is also supported by Setiawan, Suwaryo, and Rahmatunnisa, who emphasized that stronger public participation in development planning increases the likelihood that development will be implemented in accordance with community needs [16].

At the delegated power level, the results comprised no strongly disagree or disagree responses, 3 agree responses, and 51 strongly agree responses. This indicates that community participation was relatively strong. Citizens were considered to have been granted authority to determine development-activity priorities, while the government acted as a facilitator in the decision-making process. This finding is consistent with Setiawan, Suwaryo, and Rahmatunnisa, who emphasized the importance of delegating authority to communities in determining and monitoring village development plans [16].

At the citizen control level, the results comprised 1 strongly disagree response, 1 disagree response, 2 agree responses, and 50 strongly agree responses. Most respondents therefore perceived that citizens played a substantial role in designing and managing local development programs. In Arnstein's framework, citizen control represents the highest level of participation because citizens exercise control over the planning, implementation, and supervision of development programs [17]. The result is consistent with Arnstein's proposition that the highest form of participation exists when citizens possess genuine authority to determine programs.

The discussion demonstrates that community participation in RKPD preparation in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, has tended to shift from symbolic toward substantive participation. Manipulation and therapy were not dominant, indicating that citizens did not function solely as objects of procedural formalism. Informing, consultation, and placation show that citizens received information, provided input, and were involved in planning processes, although their influence remained limited at these levels. Partnership, delegated power, and citizen control indicate a stronger tendency toward substantive participation because citizens increasingly engaged in equal dialogue with government, determined priorities, and contributed to the management of local development programs.

The findings show that community participation in RKPD preparation in Nyuatan District has progressed toward a relatively strong level. Nevertheless, the district government must continue to improve the transparency of RKPD documents, clarify priority-setting mechanisms, provide feedback on community proposals, and ensure equal opportunities for all community groups to participate in Musrenbang. These measures are necessary so that participation does not stop at attendance, consultation, or representation, but develops into substantive participation that exerts a genuine influence on regional development decisions.

The researcher encountered several constraints. First, informants had limited availability because district officials, village officials, community leaders, and community representatives had competing responsibilities, requiring interview schedules to be adjusted accordingly. Second, not all citizens possessed an in-depth understanding of RKPD preparation and Musrenbang mechanisms, making it necessary to provide preliminary explanations before conducting interviews. Third, access to official documents—such as Musrenbang reports, attendance lists, priority-proposal lists, meeting minutes, and RKPD documents—was limited. Additional constraints included differences in informants' perceptions of the degree of community involvement, difficulties in tracing whether community proposals were actually incorporated into the RKPD, and geographical and time limitations in reaching informants in several locations. Some informants were also cautious in offering critical responses because the research concerned government processes. The researcher therefore applied triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentation to maintain data validity and provide a more objective account of community participation.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the findings regarding community participation in the preparation of the Regional Government Work Plan (RKPD) in Nyuatan District, West Kutai Regency, using Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, community participation was generally positioned at a high level. This was demonstrated by the predominance of strongly agree responses for consultation (98.15%), placation (98.15%), partnership (92.59%), delegated power (96.23%), and citizen control (92.59%). By contrast, manipulation, therapy, and informing were dominated by strongly disagree responses of 94.44%, 92.59%, and 94.44%, respectively. These findings indicate that citizens were not involved merely as a formality but were provided opportunities to convey aspirations, determine priorities, establish partnerships, and participate in development oversight. Interview findings nevertheless showed that citizens' authority in final decision-making remained constrained by planning regulations, governmental authority, and budgetary capacity. Empirically, participation therefore tended to be located at the partnership level and was progressing toward delegated power, although citizen control had not yet been substantively achieved. **Implication:** Supporting factors included the tiered implementation of Musrenbang, government openness to public aspirations, the

involvement of community representatives, support from village and district governments, forums for discussion and negotiation, and the recording of community proposals in planning documents. Inhibiting factors included unequal public understanding of RKPD preparation mechanisms, limited access to planning information and documents, low planning and digital literacy among some citizens, limited forum time, the dominance of particular officials or community leaders, inadequate feedback on proposals, and constraints relating to regional budgets and governmental authority. **Limitation:** The researcher applied triangulation through interviews, observations, and documentation to maintain data validity and provide a more objective representation of community participation. **Future Research:** Future studies should expand the geographical scope by comparing community participation in RKPD preparation across several districts in West Kutai Regency. Subsequent research should also examine the relationship between community participation and the extent to which proposals are accommodated in RKPD documents. Such research would not only measure the level of participation but also assess the extent to which participation influences development decisions and program implementation at the regional level.

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