


## The Role of the Community in Developing the Tourism Potential of Taeno Waterfall, Rumahtiga Village, Taeno Hamlet

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### Abstract

*This study examines the role of the community in developing the tourism potential of Taeno Waterfall located in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno. The research aims to analyze community participation in tourism development, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and evaluate its contribution to local socio-economic development. The study employed a qualitative descriptive method through observation, interviews, and documentation involving local residents, community leaders, and related stakeholders. Data were analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings indicate that the community plays an important role in maintaining environmental sustainability, improving tourism facilities, promoting local tourism attractions, and supporting visitor services. Community involvement has contributed to increasing public awareness of tourism potential and creating opportunities for local economic improvement. However, several challenges remain, including limited infrastructure, inadequate government support, and the lack of integrated tourism management. The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on community-based tourism development in a local rural context, highlighting the importance of participatory approaches in sustainable tourism management. The study concludes that active community participation is a key factor in optimizing the tourism potential of Taeno Waterfall. Therefore, collaboration between the community, government, and other stakeholders is necessary to strengthen sustainable tourism development and support the advancement of social and political studies, particularly in the fields of community empowerment and local tourism governance.*

**Keywords:** Community Participation, Local Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Development, Waterfall Tourism

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors that significantly contributes to economic, social, and cultural development in many regions. In recent years, the development of local-based tourism has increasingly attracted attention because it is considered capable of encouraging inclusive and sustainable community development. In Indonesia, tourism development is no longer concentrated solely on large-scale destinations but has also expanded toward community-based tourism initiatives in rural and suburban areas. This approach is considered important because it provides broader opportunities for local communities to participate directly in managing and utilizing the tourism potential of

their regions (Sunaryo, 2013). One of the emerging natural tourism destinations in Ambon City is Taeno Waterfall, located in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno. The waterfall offers not only natural beauty but also social and economic opportunities that can potentially improve the welfare of the surrounding community if managed properly and sustainably.

The development of nature-based tourism cannot be separated from the involvement of local communities as the primary actors within the tourism ecosystem. Communities are not merely beneficiaries of tourism activities but also play an essential role in determining the sustainability of tourism management. In this context, community participation becomes highly important because the success of tourism development is strongly influenced by social support, environmental awareness, and the ability of local residents to utilize existing tourism resources effectively (Tosun, 2006). In Dusun Taeno, community participation can be observed through various activities such as maintaining environmental cleanliness, supporting the construction of simple tourism facilities, and promoting the tourist destination through social media and interpersonal communication. Nevertheless, the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism still faces several challenges, including limited infrastructure, inadequate institutional support, and the absence of integrated tourism management practices.

These issues are important to discuss because community-based tourism development is not only related to economic growth but also associated with broader social development within local communities. When local residents are actively involved in tourism management, a stronger sense of ownership toward the tourism destination emerges, encouraging environmental preservation and social responsibility (Putnam, 2000). Conversely, low levels of community participation often result in poorly managed tourism development and environmental degradation due to the lack of collective awareness and sustainable planning. Empirical conditions in the Taeno Waterfall area indicate that the destination possesses significant tourism potential that could become one of the leading natural attractions in Ambon City. However, its management remains relatively simple and has not yet generated optimal economic benefits for the local community.

Previous studies have extensively discussed community-based tourism as an alternative model for sustainable tourism development. Murphy (1985) argued that involving local communities in tourism development creates a balanced relationship between economic interests and environmental conservation. Similarly, Timothy (1999) emphasized that community participation is a fundamental element of sustainable tourism development because local communities possess direct knowledge regarding the social and cultural characteristics of their regions. These studies demonstrate that the success of tourism destinations is closely related to the capacity of communities to manage and preserve their local tourism resources.

Further studies conducted by Cole (2006) revealed that community-based tourism development can improve social capacity through stronger social networks, economic empowerment, and increased local skills. The study highlighted that communities involved in

tourism activities tend to develop stronger awareness regarding environmental sustainability. In addition, Scheyvens (1999) explained that community-based tourism provides opportunities for local residents to gain direct economic benefits through small businesses, tourism services, and other creative economic activities. Therefore, communities are not positioned merely as objects of tourism development but as active subjects who shape the development process itself.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have also examined the role of communities in tourism development. Ardika (2018) found that community involvement in village tourism management contributed to increasing local income while simultaneously strengthening cultural identity. Another study conducted by Hermawan (2017) on natural tourism in Yogyakarta demonstrated that successful tourism development depends on collaboration among communities, government institutions, and private sectors in terms of infrastructure provision and tourism promotion. Meanwhile, Rahim (2012) explained that nature-based tourism development requires strong institutional support to ensure sustainable and organized tourism management.

Research conducted by Nugroho and Negara (2015) further revealed that community participation in tourism development is often influenced by educational background, access to information, and available economic opportunities. The study showed that communities that receive direct economic benefits from tourism activities are generally more active in supporting tourism management initiatives. Likewise, Suansri (2003) emphasized the importance of community empowerment approaches in tourism development to strengthen the capacity of communities in decision-making and independent tourism management. Collectively, these studies underline the significant role of communities in ensuring the sustainability of tourism destinations.

Despite the growing number of studies discussing community-based tourism, most previous research has focused primarily on established tourism villages and destinations with relatively strong institutional structures. Research examining community participation in the development of emerging natural tourism destinations managed through local initiatives, such as Taeno Waterfall, remains relatively limited. In addition, earlier studies have tended to emphasize the economic impacts of tourism, while the social dynamics of local communities in maintaining sustainable tourism development at the grassroots level have not been explored comprehensively. This condition indicates the existence of a research space that still requires further attention, particularly regarding how local communities collectively build participation and maintain tourism development amid limited facilities and institutional support.

In this context, the present study attempts to examine Taeno Waterfall tourism development not merely as an economic activity but as a social process involving interactions among communities, the environment, and local resource management. The study focuses on how the people of Dusun Taeno develop collective participation in maintaining, managing, and promoting the tourism potential of the waterfall, including the various challenges

encountered throughout the process. Such an approach becomes important because it highlights that successful local tourism development is not always determined by large investments or strong governmental intervention, but also by the social strength and collective participation of local communities in utilizing their environmental resources.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to analyze the role of the community in the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism potential in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno, identify supporting and inhibiting factors affecting community participation, and understand the contribution of community involvement toward sustainable local tourism development. This research is expected to contribute to the development of social and political studies, particularly in the areas of community empowerment, participatory development, and local tourism governance.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach to understand deeply the role of the community in developing the tourism potential of Taeno Waterfall in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the focus of the study was not merely to measure tourism development quantitatively, but to explore social interactions, community participation, local experiences, and the meaning attached by the community to tourism activities within their environment. Qualitative research allows researchers to examine social realities naturally and comprehensively by understanding perspectives, behaviors, and social relationships that emerge within the community context (Creswell, 2014). Through this approach, the study was able to capture the dynamics of community involvement, including the motivations, challenges, and collective awareness that shape local tourism development efforts.

The research was conducted in Dusun Taeno, Negeri Rumahtiga, Ambon City, because the area possesses significant natural tourism potential through the existence of Taeno Waterfall, which has gradually attracted visitors from surrounding areas. Despite its tourism potential, the destination is still managed in a relatively simple and community-driven manner. This condition makes the location highly relevant for examining how local communities participate in tourism development amid limited infrastructure and institutional support. In addition, the selection of this location was based on the consideration that Taeno Waterfall represents a local tourism destination that continues to grow organically through community initiatives rather than through large-scale government intervention. Such conditions provide an important social setting for understanding community-based tourism development at the grassroots level.

The informants in this study consisted of 12 individuals selected purposively based on their direct involvement and understanding of tourism activities in the Taeno Waterfall area. The informants included community leaders, local residents living near the tourism site, youth representatives, small business actors, visitors, and village government representatives. Community leaders were selected because they possess knowledge regarding the social

history and collective activities of the local community. Local residents and business actors were chosen because they are directly affected by tourism activities economically and socially. Youth representatives were involved because young people actively participate in tourism promotion through social media and environmental maintenance activities. Meanwhile, local government representatives were included to provide information regarding policies and support related to tourism development in the area. The selection of these informants aimed to ensure that the study captured diverse perspectives related to community participation and tourism management.

Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out directly at the tourism site to understand the physical condition of the area, community activities, visitor interactions, and tourism facilities available around the waterfall. This method was important because it enabled the researcher to observe social realities and community behavior naturally within the research setting (Moleong, 2018). In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow informants to express their experiences, opinions, and expectations openly. The use of semi-structured interviews provided flexibility for the researcher to explore deeper information while maintaining focus on the research objectives. Documentation techniques were also used to collect supporting data such as photographs, local records, tourism-related information, and community activity archives that strengthened the research findings.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, triangulation techniques were applied throughout the research process. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants to identify consistency in the data collected. Method triangulation was also applied by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation to strengthen the accuracy of interpretations. In addition, the researcher continuously reviewed and rechecked the collected information during the analysis process to minimize subjective interpretation. Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Through these stages, the researcher systematically organized the collected information to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings related to community participation in the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Community Participation in the Development of Taeno Waterfall Tourism Potential**

Community participation has become one of the most important elements in the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno. The development of this tourism destination largely reflects collective community initiatives rather than formal and structured institutional management. Based on field findings, local residents are actively involved in maintaining the tourism area, protecting the surrounding environment, and supporting tourism activities through various forms of social cooperation.

Community involvement emerged gradually as local residents realized that the existence of Taeno Waterfall had the potential to provide economic opportunities and strengthen the social identity of the village. This condition illustrates that tourism development in local communities often grows from shared awareness and social attachment to the environment rather than from external intervention alone.

Field observations conducted at the Taeno Waterfall area showed that the tourism site is still characterized by a natural and relatively simple atmosphere. The access road leading to the waterfall is partly unpaved and surrounded by dense vegetation, creating a strong natural impression for visitors. Along the pathway toward the waterfall, several simple resting areas made from wood and local materials were built collectively by community members. The surrounding environment appeared relatively clean, although waste management facilities remained limited. During weekends, local residents could be seen assisting visitors by providing directions, helping organize parking areas, and maintaining the cleanliness of the tourism site. Some young people were also observed documenting the tourism area and uploading photographs and videos to social media platforms as part of informal promotional efforts. These observations indicate that local participation is manifested not only in physical labor but also in social and digital forms of contribution.

The involvement of the local community in tourism development is closely related to the sense of ownership that residents have toward the waterfall area. Several informants explained that the community views Taeno Waterfall not merely as a tourism attraction but also as part of their social and environmental heritage. One community leader, identified as informant A.L., explained during the interview that residents collectively maintain the tourism area because they believe the waterfall represents an important natural asset for future generations. According to the informant, community members voluntarily organize cleaning activities and repair damaged pathways whenever necessary, even without formal financial support from external institutions. Similar views were also expressed by informant M.S., a local youth representative, who stated that young people in the village increasingly recognize the importance of preserving the waterfall area because tourism activities have started attracting visitors from outside the village and creating positive attention toward Dusun Taeno.

Community participation was also visible through small-scale economic activities emerging around the tourism destination. Field observations found that several residents had begun selling snacks, beverages, and simple local products to visitors during weekends and holidays. Although these economic activities remain limited in scale, they demonstrate how tourism development gradually creates alternative sources of income for local households. Informant R.T., a local resident living near the tourism area, explained indirectly that tourism activities have helped some families earn additional income, especially during periods when visitor numbers increase. However, the informant also emphasized that economic benefits are still not distributed evenly because tourism facilities and visitor management remain underdeveloped. This situation reflects the early stage of community-based tourism

development in which local participation grows alongside the gradual emergence of economic opportunities.

The findings further indicate that social cooperation plays a central role in sustaining tourism development efforts in Taeno. Community participation is largely organized informally through mutual cooperation and collective responsibility among residents. Local initiatives such as cleaning activities, pathway repairs, and visitor assistance are commonly conducted through voluntary community action. This condition aligns with the concept of Community-Based Tourism proposed by Giampiccoli and Saayman (2021), which emphasizes that sustainable tourism development depends heavily on meaningful community participation and collective local engagement. In the context of Taeno Waterfall, participation does not emerge through formal tourism institutions alone but is shaped through everyday social relationships and local awareness regarding the importance of preserving natural resources.

At the same time, field findings also revealed several limitations affecting community participation in tourism development. Although residents demonstrate strong social commitment, they still face challenges related to limited infrastructure, financial constraints, and insufficient government support. Observations at the tourism site showed the absence of adequate public facilities such as organized parking spaces, sanitation facilities, proper waste disposal systems, and safety infrastructure. Some sections of the access pathway also become slippery during rainfall, creating safety concerns for visitors. Informant H.P., who frequently assists visitors near the waterfall area, explained that the community often struggles to improve tourism facilities because development activities rely primarily on voluntary contributions and self-help initiatives. Despite these limitations, residents continue to maintain the tourism area because they believe the waterfall possesses long-term potential for the village's future development.

The collective awareness demonstrated by the community reflects the existence of strong social capital within Dusun Taeno. Trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility among residents contribute significantly to sustaining tourism activities despite limited institutional resources. This finding supports the perspective of Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), who argue that social capital plays a crucial role in strengthening sustainable tourism development within local communities. In Taeno, tourism development is not solely driven by economic motivations but also by social values related to environmental preservation, community pride, and local identity. The active involvement of residents illustrates that local communities can become important actors in tourism development when social solidarity and collective awareness are maintained consistently.

### **Social and Economic Contributions of Tourism Development for the Local Community**

The development of Taeno Waterfall tourism has gradually generated various social and economic contributions for the local community in Dusun Taeno, Negeri Rumahtiga. Although the tourism destination is still developing on a relatively small scale, its presence has begun to influence the daily lives of local residents in meaningful ways. The economic

impact can be observed through the emergence of small informal businesses managed by community members around the tourism area. Several residents have started selling food, drinks, and simple local products to visitors, particularly during weekends and public holidays when tourist arrivals increase. These activities, although modest, have created additional income opportunities for households that previously relied mainly on fishing, farming, or irregular informal work. The development of tourism in this area therefore reflects how local natural resources can gradually become alternative economic assets for rural communities.

Field observations revealed that economic activities around the waterfall area remain relatively simple but continue to grow organically through community initiatives. Small stalls made from wood and temporary materials could be seen near the entrance pathway to the waterfall. Some residents sold bottled drinks, snacks, instant noodles, and locally prepared food for visitors who spent time around the site. During busy periods, several young people were also observed offering parking assistance and helping visitors carry personal belongings across difficult pathways. The atmosphere around the tourism area demonstrated how local residents attempt to adapt economically to the increasing presence of visitors despite limited infrastructure and facilities. These observations indicate that tourism development has started to create informal economic circulation within the local community, even though it has not yet developed into a fully organized tourism economy.

Several informants explained that tourism activities around Taeno Waterfall have helped residents obtain supplementary income, especially for families living close to the tourism area. Informant R.L., a local resident who occasionally sells food near the waterfall, explained indirectly that visitor arrivals provide additional earnings that help support household needs, particularly during weekends when the number of tourists increases. According to the informant, although the income generated from tourism is still inconsistent, it remains meaningful because economic opportunities in the village are relatively limited. Similar views were expressed by informant D.S., who noted that some local youth have become more motivated to engage in productive activities through tourism-related services rather than spending time unemployed. These findings illustrate that tourism development not only contributes economically but also creates social motivation among residents, particularly younger generations.

Beyond economic contributions, tourism development has also strengthened social interaction and cooperation among community members. The process of maintaining and managing the tourism area encourages residents to work collectively through mutual cooperation activities. Field observations showed that local residents often gather together to clean pathways, repair damaged wooden bridges, and maintain resting areas surrounding the waterfall. Such activities are generally conducted voluntarily without formal wages, reflecting strong communal values within the village. During observations, several community members were seen jointly removing fallen tree branches and clearing waste left by visitors after weekends. The collective atmosphere around these activities demonstrated that tourism development has become a social space that reinforces solidarity and cooperation

among residents.

This condition aligns with the concept of social capital in sustainable tourism development proposed by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), which explains that trust, social networks, and collective cooperation significantly influence the sustainability of tourism activities within local communities. In the case of Taeno Waterfall, social relationships among residents function as an important foundation for maintaining tourism activities despite limited financial and institutional support. Tourism development in this context does not solely depend on external investment but is strongly sustained by community solidarity and shared responsibility toward local environmental resources.

Tourism activities have also contributed to increasing environmental awareness among local residents. Several informants explained that before the waterfall became more widely visited, community attention toward environmental cleanliness was relatively limited. However, as visitor numbers gradually increased, residents became more aware of the importance of maintaining the cleanliness and natural beauty of the tourism area. Informant M.T., a youth representative involved in environmental activities around the waterfall, explained indirectly that local youth groups now regularly organize collective cleaning activities because they understand that environmental conditions directly affect visitor comfort and tourism sustainability. Observations further confirmed this condition, as trash collection points made from simple containers were found in several locations near the tourism site, although waste management facilities still remain inadequate overall.

At the social level, tourism development has also strengthened local identity and community pride. The increasing popularity of Taeno Waterfall among visitors from surrounding areas has encouraged residents to view their village as possessing valuable natural and cultural resources. Some informants expressed feelings of pride because outsiders have started recognizing Dusun Taeno as a tourism destination with attractive natural scenery. Informant A.K., a community elder, explained indirectly that tourism activities have made residents more confident in introducing their local environment and traditions to visitors. This condition demonstrates that tourism development can contribute not only to material benefits but also to symbolic and emotional aspects of community life, including social recognition and collective identity formation.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that the social and economic contributions of tourism development remain limited by several structural challenges. Observations at the tourism site revealed inadequate public facilities, limited transportation access, and the absence of organized tourism management systems. Economic benefits generated from tourism are still unevenly distributed because only residents living near the waterfall or directly involved in tourism activities tend to receive immediate advantages. Informant H.R. explained indirectly that some residents still perceive tourism development as unstable because visitor numbers fluctuate significantly depending on seasons and holidays. This situation illustrates that while tourism has created positive opportunities, its long-term sustainability still requires stronger institutional support and more organized development

planning.

### **Challenges and Limitations in Developing Taeno Waterfall Tourism**

Despite the growing interest in Taeno Waterfall as a local tourism destination, the development process continues to face various challenges and limitations that affect its sustainability and overall management. The findings of this study indicate that the tourism potential of Taeno Waterfall has not yet been supported by adequate infrastructure, institutional capacity, and integrated tourism planning. Although the local community demonstrates strong participation and social commitment toward maintaining the tourism area, the limitations they face often hinder broader tourism development efforts. These conditions illustrate that community participation alone is insufficient when structural support and sustainable management systems remain limited.

Field observations conducted at the tourism site revealed several physical and environmental limitations that directly affect visitor accessibility and comfort. The road leading toward the waterfall area remains partly damaged and difficult to access, particularly during rainy conditions. Some sections of the pathway are still composed of uneven soil and rocks, making the route slippery and potentially dangerous for visitors. Along the pathway, only a few simple wooden bridges and manually constructed resting areas are available, most of which were built through voluntary community initiatives. Observations also showed that public facilities such as toilets, waste disposal systems, parking areas, and information boards remain inadequate or unavailable in several parts of the tourism site. During weekends when visitor numbers increase, motorcycles and vehicles are often parked irregularly along narrow pathways due to the absence of a properly organized parking area. These conditions indicate that the physical infrastructure surrounding Taeno Waterfall is still underdeveloped and requires serious attention to support tourism sustainability.

Several informants explained that infrastructure limitations remain one of the primary obstacles in developing Taeno Waterfall tourism more effectively. Informant H.P., who frequently assists visitors near the tourism area, explained indirectly that local residents often attempt to repair damaged pathways and clean the tourism site using personal resources and collective labor because external support remains minimal. According to the informant, community initiatives alone are often insufficient to improve larger infrastructure needs such as road access, sanitation facilities, and visitor safety systems. Similar concerns were expressed by informant R.S., who noted that some visitors hesitate to return to the tourism site due to difficult accessibility and the lack of adequate public facilities. These findings suggest that while the tourism potential is considerable, infrastructure deficiencies continue to limit visitor satisfaction and tourism growth.

Another significant challenge identified in the study relates to the limited institutional and governmental support for tourism management. Field findings indicate that tourism activities around Taeno Waterfall are still managed informally by local residents without a clear organizational structure or long-term management strategy. Although community participation remains active, there is currently no formal tourism management institution

specifically responsible for coordinating tourism development activities in the area. Informant A.L., a community leader, explained indirectly that residents often rely on spontaneous collective action because there is no consistent financial or technical assistance available for tourism development. As a result, many tourism-related improvements depend heavily on voluntary labor and local initiative rather than structured development programs.

The absence of integrated tourism governance also creates challenges related to environmental management and tourism sustainability. Observations revealed that although the waterfall area remains relatively clean, waste management systems are still inadequate. During periods of high visitor activity, traces of litter such as plastic bottles and food packaging were occasionally found near resting areas and riverbanks. Local residents were observed collecting waste manually after visitors left the area, but the absence of permanent waste facilities makes environmental management difficult to maintain consistently. Informant M.T., a youth community member, explained indirectly that local residents are increasingly aware of environmental issues but often lack the resources and equipment needed to maintain the tourism area effectively. This condition demonstrates that environmental sustainability in Taeno Waterfall tourism still depends largely on informal community awareness rather than systematic environmental governance.

Financial limitations also emerged as an important challenge affecting tourism development efforts. Most local initiatives in the tourism area are conducted independently by community members using limited personal contributions. Informants explained that the lack of funding often delays improvement projects such as pathway repairs, facility construction, and tourism promotion activities. Informant D.K., a local resident involved in tourism-related activities, stated indirectly that residents are willing to contribute labor and time, but financial constraints make it difficult to implement larger-scale tourism improvements. As a result, tourism development in Taeno progresses gradually and remains vulnerable to stagnation when community resources become insufficient.

In addition to structural limitations, the study also found that tourism promotion remains relatively weak and unorganized. Although some young people actively promote the waterfall through social media platforms, broader promotional strategies are still limited. Observations indicated that there are no official tourism information centers, promotional signboards, or coordinated marketing efforts aimed at introducing Taeno Waterfall to wider audiences. Informant S.P. explained indirectly that visitor numbers often fluctuate significantly because tourism promotion depends mostly on personal social media uploads and recommendations from previous visitors. This situation limits the destination's ability to attract more consistent tourist arrivals and expand its economic potential.

These findings reflect broader issues discussed within sustainable tourism governance literature. According to Hall (2021), sustainable tourism development requires collaborative governance involving communities, government institutions, and external stakeholders in order to balance environmental sustainability, economic growth, and social participation. In the context of Taeno Waterfall, the absence of strong institutional collaboration creates

development gaps that cannot be fully addressed by community participation alone. Similarly, Giampiccoli and Saayman (2021) emphasize that community-based tourism initiatives require continuous institutional support, capacity building, and resource access to remain sustainable over time. The experience of Taeno demonstrates that while local participation serves as a strong social foundation, tourism sustainability also depends on supportive governance structures and long-term development planning.

### **Community Collective Awareness and Sustainable Tourism Governance**

The development of Taeno Waterfall tourism in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno, reflects not only economic and tourism activities but also the emergence of collective community awareness regarding environmental preservation and sustainable local governance. The findings of this study indicate that the sustainability of tourism activities in the area is strongly influenced by the shared awareness of local residents in protecting natural resources and maintaining social harmony within the community. This collective awareness gradually developed alongside the increasing number of visitors coming to the waterfall area. Local residents began to realize that the sustainability of the tourism destination depends not only on the beauty of the natural environment but also on the community's ability to preserve and manage it responsibly.

Field observations showed that the natural environment surrounding Taeno Waterfall remains relatively well-preserved despite the growing tourism activities in the area. The waterfall is surrounded by dense vegetation, large trees, and clear river streams that continue to maintain their natural condition. During the observation process, local residents were seen actively reminding visitors not to litter carelessly around the waterfall area. Some community members also voluntarily collected waste left behind by visitors, particularly during weekends and holidays when tourist activity increased significantly. In several areas near the waterfall pathway, simple warning signs made from wood and handwritten boards were found containing messages encouraging visitors to maintain cleanliness and protect the surrounding environment. Although these signs were informal and simple in appearance, they reflected the growing environmental awareness among residents regarding the importance of maintaining tourism sustainability.

The collective awareness demonstrated by the community emerged largely through social interaction and shared experiences rather than through formal environmental education programs. Informant A.L., a local community elder, explained indirectly that residents began to understand the importance of environmental protection after observing the increasing number of visitors coming to the waterfall area each year. According to the informant, local residents feared that environmental damage and uncontrolled waste could reduce the attractiveness of the tourism destination and negatively affect future generations. Similar views were expressed by informant M.T., a youth representative, who explained indirectly that young people in Dusun Taeno have become increasingly active in organizing environmental cleaning activities because they feel personally responsible for maintaining the village's natural resources. These findings indicate that community awareness toward tourism

sustainability is closely connected to emotional attachment and collective responsibility toward the local environment.

The role of social relationships within the community also became an important factor supporting sustainable tourism governance in Taeno. Field findings revealed that tourism management activities are often carried out collectively through mutual cooperation and informal agreements among residents. During observations, groups of residents were seen working together to repair damaged pathways, clean riverbanks, and maintain resting areas around the tourism site without formal instructions from authorities. Such activities are generally organized through community discussions and voluntary participation, reflecting the strong communal values that continue to shape social life in the village. Informant D.S. explained indirectly that most tourism-related activities are conducted because residents share a common understanding that maintaining the tourism area benefits the entire community socially and economically. This situation demonstrates that sustainable tourism governance in Taeno is built primarily through local social solidarity rather than formal bureaucratic mechanisms.

The findings of this study align with the perspective of sustainable tourism governance proposed by Hall (2021), which emphasizes that effective tourism sustainability requires collaborative relationships between communities, institutions, and environmental management practices. In the context of Taeno Waterfall, local communities function as the central actors in maintaining tourism sustainability despite the limited presence of formal tourism institutions. Governance practices in this case emerge informally through social norms, collective responsibility, and local awareness regarding environmental preservation. This condition also supports the argument of Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), who explain that social capital, including trust, cooperation, and shared values, plays an important role in strengthening sustainable tourism development within local communities.

Community collective awareness in Taeno is also reflected in the way residents regulate visitor behavior through informal social control. Observations showed that local residents often approach visitors politely when they observe behaviors that may damage the environment, such as throwing garbage carelessly or damaging plants around the waterfall area. Rather than relying on formal sanctions, residents tend to use persuasive communication and social reminders to maintain environmental order. Informant H.R. explained indirectly that the community prefers maintaining harmonious relationships with visitors while still encouraging responsible tourism behavior. This informal governance mechanism reflects how local cultural values continue to influence tourism management practices within the village.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that collective awareness alone is not always sufficient to ensure long-term tourism sustainability. The absence of formal regulations, organized environmental management systems, and adequate tourism infrastructure continues to create vulnerabilities within the tourism area. During observations, several areas near the riverbanks showed signs of minor environmental pressure due to increasing visitor

activities, including soil erosion along pathways and limited waste collection facilities. Informant S.K. explained indirectly that residents sometimes struggle to manage visitor behavior during peak tourism periods because the number of volunteers available remains limited. This condition illustrates that while collective awareness provides an important social foundation for sustainability, stronger institutional support and environmental management systems are still needed to strengthen tourism governance in the future.

Another important finding in this study is that tourism activities have gradually strengthened community identity and collective pride among local residents. The increasing recognition of Taeno Waterfall as a tourism destination has encouraged residents to value their local environment more positively. Informant R.L. explained indirectly that many residents now feel more motivated to maintain the cleanliness and beauty of the village because they recognize that the tourism destination reflects the image of their community to outsiders. This demonstrates that sustainable tourism governance is not solely related to environmental management but also connected to social identity and community dignity.

#### **Community-Based Tourism Development as a Local Development Strategy**

The development of Taeno Waterfall tourism in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno, illustrates how community-based tourism can function as an alternative strategy for local development within rural communities. The findings of this study demonstrate that tourism development in Taeno is not primarily driven by large-scale investment or formal commercial tourism projects, but rather by the collective initiatives, participation, and social cooperation of local residents. Community-based tourism in this context has gradually become a mechanism through which the community seeks to utilize local natural resources while simultaneously strengthening social cohesion and creating economic opportunities. The development process reflects a bottom-up pattern in which local residents actively shape tourism activities according to their social capacities, environmental conditions, and communal values.

Field observations revealed that tourism activities surrounding Taeno Waterfall are closely integrated with the daily social life of the local community. Unlike highly commercialized tourism destinations, the atmosphere around Taeno Waterfall remains strongly connected to local community interactions and environmental practices. Visitors entering the tourism area are often welcomed directly by residents who provide informal guidance regarding pathways, resting locations, and safety conditions near the waterfall. During observations, several community members were seen collectively maintaining small wooden shelters, cleaning pathways, and organizing simple visitor areas without formal managerial structures. The tourism environment appeared to function not only as a recreational space for visitors but also as a social space where community interaction, cooperation, and local identity are continuously reproduced through everyday activities.

The findings further indicate that community-based tourism development in Taeno has gradually encouraged local communities to become more actively involved in development processes within their village. Informant A.L., a community elder, explained

indirectly that before tourism activities began attracting visitors, many residents perceived the waterfall merely as an ordinary natural area used occasionally for local activities. However, as public interest toward the waterfall increased, the community began to recognize that local natural resources could become valuable assets capable of supporting village development. According to the informant, this realization encouraged residents to work together in maintaining the tourism area because they believed that tourism could contribute positively to the future of the community. This finding demonstrates that tourism development can influence how communities reinterpret and value their local environment as part of broader development opportunities.

Economic opportunities generated through tourism activities also contribute to strengthening the role of community-based tourism as a local development strategy. Observations found that local residents have gradually developed small-scale economic activities around the tourism site, including food stalls, parking services, and informal visitor assistance. Although these activities remain limited in scale, they illustrate how tourism can create alternative income sources within communities that previously relied mainly on traditional occupations such as fishing and farming. Informant R.T. explained indirectly that tourism activities have provided some households with additional financial support, particularly during weekends and holiday periods when visitor numbers increase. The informant further noted that tourism income, although not yet stable, has become important for helping residents meet daily household needs. This situation reflects how community-based tourism may contribute incrementally to local economic resilience through small but meaningful forms of income diversification.

At the same time, tourism development in Taeno has also strengthened social participation and collective responsibility among residents. Community involvement in tourism management is not limited to economic interests but is also closely connected to social values such as cooperation, mutual assistance, and environmental stewardship. During field observations, residents were frequently seen participating in collective cleaning activities, repairing damaged pathways, and assisting visitors voluntarily. These activities are generally conducted through informal coordination among community members rather than through official tourism organizations. Informant M.S., a local youth representative, explained indirectly that young people in the village increasingly view tourism development as a shared responsibility because the tourism destination represents the image and identity of the community. This growing awareness encourages broader participation among residents, particularly younger generations, in maintaining the sustainability of the tourism area.

The findings support the perspective of Giampiccoli and Saayman (2021), who argue that community-based tourism should not only focus on economic growth but also emphasize local empowerment, social inclusion, and community participation in development processes. In the context of Taeno Waterfall, tourism development reflects these principles because the community functions not merely as tourism labor but as active actors shaping local development according to their own capacities and collective interests. Tourism

activities have created spaces for social collaboration and community empowerment that extend beyond commercial tourism objectives.

Furthermore, the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism demonstrates that local development strategies rooted in community participation may strengthen social capital within rural communities. According to Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), social capital plays a significant role in sustainable tourism development because trust, social networks, and cooperation encourage collective action and local resilience. In Taeno, strong communal relationships enable residents to maintain tourism activities despite limited infrastructure and financial resources. Informant D.K. explained indirectly that residents continue working together because they believe the tourism destination belongs collectively to the community and therefore must be protected together. This collective sense of ownership becomes an important social resource supporting tourism sustainability.

However, the findings also indicate that community-based tourism development in Taeno still faces several structural limitations. Observations revealed that tourism activities continue to rely heavily on voluntary community labor without consistent institutional support, formal management systems, or adequate infrastructure. Limited road access, insufficient sanitation facilities, and weak tourism promotion continue to constrain the broader development potential of the destination. Informant H.P. explained indirectly that while the community possesses strong motivation to develop the tourism area, residents often struggle to implement larger improvements due to financial and technical limitations. This condition demonstrates that community participation alone cannot fully sustain tourism development without stronger collaboration with governmental institutions and external stakeholders.

Despite these limitations, the experience of Taeno Waterfall illustrates that community-based tourism possesses important potential as a local development strategy within emerging rural tourism destinations. Tourism activities have gradually encouraged economic diversification, strengthened social solidarity, increased environmental awareness, and reinforced community identity among local residents. More importantly, tourism development in Taeno demonstrates that local communities can become active agents of development when they are given space to manage and preserve their own natural resources collectively. The sustainability of tourism development in this context depends not only on infrastructure and economic investment but also on the ability of communities to maintain cooperation, social responsibility, and collective awareness in managing local development processes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the development of Taeno Waterfall tourism in Negeri Rumahtiga, Dusun Taeno, is strongly shaped by the active participation and collective awareness of the local community in managing and preserving their natural resources.

Community involvement has become the main foundation supporting tourism sustainability through environmental maintenance, informal tourism management, social cooperation, and small-scale economic activities that gradually contribute to local welfare. The findings further indicate that tourism development in Taeno reflects a community-based development pattern in which local residents function not merely as beneficiaries but as central actors in shaping local tourism governance according to their social capacities and communal values. However, the sustainability of tourism development continues to face challenges related to limited infrastructure, weak institutional support, inadequate environmental management systems, and restricted financial resources. Despite these limitations, the strong social solidarity, collective responsibility, and environmental awareness demonstrated by the community show that local participation possesses significant potential to strengthen sustainable tourism development at the grassroots level. Therefore, the study emphasizes the importance of collaborative support between communities, government institutions, and other stakeholders in order to transform local tourism initiatives into more organized, inclusive, and sustainable development strategies that contribute not only to economic growth but also to community empowerment and local social resilience.

#### **ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE**

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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