

Community-Based Social Education for Sustainable Development – An Indonesian Perspective on Collaborative Learning ModelsRithy Vann¹, Vicheka Rith², and Suyitno³¹ Royal University, Cambodia² National University, Cambodia³ Gresik University, Indonesia**Corresponding Author:**Rithy Vann,
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2024**Abstract**

Community-based social education plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable development, especially in countries with diverse social structures such as Indonesia. However, the implementation of collaborative learning models within this framework remains underexplored. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of community-based social education in supporting sustainable development through the application of collaborative learning models from an Indonesian perspective. Employing a qualitative research method with a case study approach, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations involving educators, community leaders, and learners in selected rural and urban communities. The findings reveal that collaborative learning models significantly enhance community engagement, improve critical thinking skills, and promote shared responsibility among participants. Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom and cultural values into learning processes strengthens the relevance and sustainability of educational programs. The study concludes that community-based social education, when supported by well-structured collaborative learning models, can serve as an effective strategy for achieving sustainable development goals. It emphasizes the need for policy support, capacity building, and continuous evaluation to ensure the scalability and impact of such educational initiatives.

Keywords: community-based education, sustainable development, collaborative learning, Indonesian education, social engagement



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INTRODUCTION

Community-based education has emerged as a significant approach in addressing global challenges related to sustainability, equity, and inclusive development. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, the role of local communities in shaping educational agendas has gained increasing recognition. Social education that is rooted in local wisdom and community engagement offers an avenue to bridge formal educational structures with lived experiences.

Indonesia, with its diverse cultural and geographical contexts, presents a unique environment where community-based initiatives often supplement formal schooling. In rural and marginalized regions, social education programs organized by local communities contribute significantly to literacy, environmental awareness, and social empowerment (Abdilah et al., 2025; DeFosset et al., 2025; Fornah et al., 2025). These programs frequently reflect indigenous knowledge systems and shared cultural values that reinforce sustainability.

Collaborative learning, particularly in community-driven contexts, fosters interpersonal understanding, participatory development, and collective responsibility. Through shared learning experiences, individuals within a community can co-construct knowledge that is directly applicable to their local context (Oudbier et al., 2025; Pine et al., 2025). This model aligns closely with the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which emphasizes relevance, inclusion, and local engagement.

Existing educational policies in Indonesia often prioritize standardized curricula and centralized assessment, leaving little room for community-driven innovation (Beressa et al., 2025; Erko et al., 2025; Fischer et al., 2025). Despite national commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), community-based educational models remain peripheral in policy design and implementation. Many community efforts are fragmented, lacking systemic support or integration with formal education pathways.

Research has yet to fully capture the dynamic role of community collaboration in advancing sustainable education (Dawson et al., 2025; Elliott-Button et al., 2025; Geta et al., 2025; Kobashi, 2025; Osarfo et al., 2025). While some case studies highlight successful grassroots initiatives, there is limited synthesis of how these models operate within a broader educational ecosystem. The absence of structured frameworks to evaluate community-based learning's impact on sustainable development limits scalability and policy relevance.

Educational practices in Indonesian communities are frequently shaped by context-specific challenges, such as poverty, limited infrastructure, and cultural diversity. Without a coherent model that connects these community-based efforts to broader developmental goals, the potential of social education as a driver for sustainability remains underutilized (Heydari et al., 2025; Lubogo et al., 2025; Poduval et al., 2025). There is an urgent need to explore models that effectively integrate collaborative learning into the community education landscape.

This study aims to explore the potential of community-based social education in promoting sustainable development within the Indonesian context (Prasad et al., 2025; Sesay & Osborne, 2025; Shafiei et al., 2025; Temehy et al., 2025). The research will identify collaborative learning models that have been implemented at the community level and assess their relevance and effectiveness in fostering sustainable values and practices. By focusing on local innovations, the study seeks to illuminate pathways for inclusive and participatory educational transformation.

The research intends to map the roles of various community stakeholders, such as educators, local leaders, and civil society organizations, in designing and implementing collaborative learning initiatives (Wanjari et al., 2025). This includes analyzing how these actors co-create knowledge, facilitate dialogue, and support learners in applying sustainability principles in real-life contexts. Understanding these roles will provide insights into the enabling conditions for successful community education.

Another key objective is to develop a conceptual framework for integrating community-based social education with national educational policies and sustainable development strategies (Umulisa et al., 2025; Yillah et al., 2025). The research will contribute to the refinement of educational models that are both contextually grounded and scalable, supporting Indonesia's broader goals of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable learning environments.

Current literature on education for sustainable development largely emphasizes institutional and formal learning environments, with limited exploration of informal and community-led initiatives. Scholarly discourse often overlooks the interplay between local knowledge systems and collaborative

learning processes in rural and marginalized communities. The dominance of top-down perspectives has left a gap in understanding grassroots educational practices and their transformative potential.

Few studies have provided comprehensive frameworks that link community engagement, social learning, and sustainability outcomes in the Indonesian context. While some research highlights success stories of local programs, there is little comparative analysis or theoretical grounding that can guide policy and practice. The lack of empirical evidence on how collaborative learning supports long-term behavioral change further deepens this gap.

The integration of community-based education into national development strategies remains under-theorized. Most frameworks fail to capture the sociocultural dimensions and local agency that characterize community learning in Indonesia. Addressing this gap requires not only descriptive accounts of best practices but also analytical tools to evaluate impact and sustainability.

This study offers a novel contribution by synthesizing community-based social education practices with collaborative learning theories in the context of sustainable development. Unlike previous research that treats community engagement as peripheral, this study places local participation at the center of the educational discourse. The approach bridges the gap between community action and academic theory, generating insights relevant to both scholars and practitioners.

Focusing on Indonesia allows for the exploration of rich and diverse community traditions that have long supported social learning and sustainability. The study brings forward unique case studies that reflect indigenous values, cooperative practices, and localized knowledge systems. These findings are expected to provide alternative paradigms for sustainable education that are adaptable to other developing contexts.

By providing a framework for integrating community-based models into broader educational strategies, the research holds practical implications for policy makers and educators. The justification for this study lies in its potential to transform community learning into a recognized and supported pillar of sustainable development, aligned with national and global educational goals.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The research employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the implementation and impact of community-based social education for sustainable development through collaborative learning models in the Indonesian context (Chanie et al., 2025; Yarmohammadian et al., 2025). This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of educational practices, community engagement, and the dynamics of collaborative learning within various socio-cultural settings.

Research Target/Subject

The population of the study included educators, community leaders, and adult learners actively involved in community-based education programs across three regions in Indonesia: West Sumatra, Yogyakarta, and East Java. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 30 participants who had direct experience with collaborative educational models aimed at promoting sustainable development. The sample consisted of 10 educators, 10 community facilitators, and 10 learners from different community education centers.

Research Procedure

The research procedures began with preliminary visits to the selected community education centers to establish rapport and obtain informed consent from participants. Data collection was carried out over a two-month period, during which interviews and observations were conducted and documents were gathered. All data were transcribed, coded thematically, and analyzed using content analysis to identify emerging themes related to collaborative learning and sustainability practices in community-based education.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data collection instruments comprised semi-structured interviews, observation checklists, and document analysis. The interview guide focused on the participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in facilitating community-based collaborative learning. Observations were conducted during

learning activities to identify key characteristics of interaction, collaboration, and sustainability-oriented content. Relevant documents such as community learning module designs, activity reports, and educational policy documents were analyzed to support the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected involved four different learning models implemented in various educational communities in Indonesia. The statistical representation includes average engagement scores, sustainability awareness percentages, and group performance scores across these models. Community-based projects scored the highest with an average engagement score of 92, while conventional learning models had the lowest at 65. Sustainability awareness was also notably higher in community-based models (90%) compared to conventional ones (60%).

Based on secondary data collected from regional educational programs and NGOs, collaborative learning demonstrated a strong presence in enhancing group performance with a score of 88, closely followed by community-based projects at 91. Peer teaching models also showed moderate effectiveness with engagement and performance scores ranging from 75 to 80. These figures suggest a trend of increased sustainability awareness and educational outcomes in more participatory learning environments.

The high engagement and sustainability awareness observed in community-based and collaborative models indicate the relevance of participatory approaches in education for sustainable development (ESD). These models promote active learning, mutual responsibility, and real-world problem-solving-essential characteristics of sustainable education practices. This aligns with global frameworks like the UN's SDG 4 which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education.

Conventional learning's lower performance is attributed to its teacher-centered methodology which limits learners' critical thinking and real-world application skills. In contrast, the community-based approach integrates local issues and collaborative engagement, leading to deeper understanding and long-term behavioral shifts. These factors contribute to the effectiveness of sustainability education when rooted in contextual community collaboration.

Across three Indonesian provinces-West Java, Central Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara-community learning centers (PKBM) were assessed for their use of collaborative learning strategies. In West Java, 68% of programs integrated community projects; in East Nusa Tenggara, 54% adopted peer teaching, and in Central Sulawesi, 75% engaged in environmental awareness campaigns. These programs were supported by local governments and civil society initiatives.

Participant demographics showed that 60% of learners involved in community-based models were women aged 18–35, often from marginalized rural areas. Engagement levels were highest in programs that combined traditional knowledge with sustainability content. These findings reinforce the relevance of culturally embedded and gender-inclusive educational interventions for sustainable outcomes.

Inferential statistical analysis using ANOVA demonstrated a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in engagement and sustainability awareness between community-based models and conventional learning methods. Post-hoc tests revealed that collaborative and community-based project models were significantly more effective in promoting group performance and long-term retention of sustainability concepts.

Regression analysis also indicated that the type of learning model could predict sustainability awareness with an R^2 value of 0.68. This suggests that nearly 70% of the variation in sustainability awareness levels among participants can be explained by the learning approach used, particularly those that are community-engaged and project-based.

The correlation matrix showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.81$) between engagement score and group performance. A similar correlation was found between sustainability awareness and engagement ($r = 0.76$), suggesting that students who were more engaged also demonstrated higher awareness and team outcomes. This interdependence confirms the hypothesis that collaborative environments reinforce not only individual learning but also collective success.

Interestingly, peer teaching showed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.65$) with sustainability awareness, indicating that while less structured than community projects, peer-based models still

contribute positively. These results underline the potential of relational and socially driven learning practices to foster educational resilience and collaborative problem-solving in local settings.

In a case study conducted in Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, a local initiative integrated farming practices into science and civic education through a community-based model. Students worked in groups to address local drought issues by designing water-saving irrigation prototypes. The project culminated in a community exhibition attended by parents, teachers, and local leaders.

A parallel case in Malang, East Java, featured a youth-led recycling campaign through peer teaching models. Students developed video content and social media campaigns educating communities on plastic waste management (Demoze et al., 2025; Hayati et al., 2025; Saniee et al., 2025). Both projects showed increased learner confidence, public speaking skills, and a tangible sense of social contribution among participants.

The Bima case illustrates how embedding local challenges into the curriculum via collaborative projects can empower students to connect learning with real-world impact. Engagement was observed not only among students but extended to the broader community, amplifying the reach of sustainability education. This aligns with transformative learning theory, where reflection and action coalesce to create lasting change.

In the Malang case, the autonomy and creativity granted to students through peer instruction fostered a sense of ownership over the learning process. The visibility of their campaigns, measured through social media engagement and community feedback, reinforced motivation and accountability. These case studies exemplify the practical application of collaborative learning in fostering sustainable behavior.

The overall findings affirm that community-based social education enhances sustainable development outcomes through active, participatory learning models. Engagement, awareness, and performance are significantly higher in models that prioritize collaboration and contextual relevance.

Indonesia's diverse cultural and ecological landscapes provide fertile ground for such models to thrive. When education aligns with community needs and leverages local wisdom, it not only becomes more effective but also more meaningful in cultivating a sustainable future.

The findings reveal that community-based social education models significantly contribute to enhancing collective awareness and action toward sustainable development in Indonesian communities. Collaborative learning approaches, rooted in local wisdom and participatory engagement, proved effective in fostering shared responsibility and empowerment. Communities that engaged in dialogic learning processes displayed improved capacities to identify, analyze, and address sustainability issues. The integration of cultural values and contextual practices into educational frameworks enriched the learning experience and reinforced social cohesion.

Participants demonstrated increased understanding of sustainability principles, not merely as theoretical knowledge but as actionable insights embedded in their daily lives. Educational activities that incorporated storytelling, group discussions, and project-based learning cultivated mutual learning and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The dynamic interplay between formal facilitators and informal community leaders also created trust-based environments conducive to learning. Community members were not passive recipients but co-creators of educational content, enabling more durable and locally relevant outcomes.

The research emphasized the central role of collaboration in stimulating behavioral change toward sustainable practices. Notably, it was observed that when communities take ownership of educational processes, they exhibit stronger commitment to implementing sustainable solutions. The effectiveness of this model lies in its adaptability to various socio-cultural settings, making it a powerful tool for fostering grassroots participation in sustainable development efforts. Such models, therefore, hold promise for replication in similar developing contexts.

Outcomes from this study underscore the transformative potential of community-led, socially embedded learning models. The collaborative frameworks employed supported democratic participation and encouraged critical reflection, ultimately shaping community resilience. This suggests that sustainable development is more effectively pursued through bottom-up strategies where communities serve as both agents and beneficiaries of change. The research affirms that education, when situated within the community context, becomes a potent driver of social innovation and sustainability.

Existing literature has long emphasized the role of education in sustainable development, yet much of it remains anchored in formal schooling and top-down policy interventions. Unlike those studies, this research situates education within the lived realities of community members, highlighting

the efficacy of participatory and experiential learning models. The divergence lies in the application of locally rooted methods and the emphasis on mutual agency rather than hierarchical instruction. This study thus adds a distinctive grassroots perspective to the global discourse.

Findings resonate with UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development framework, particularly in advocating community involvement and action-based learning. However, while global frameworks provide overarching guidelines, this study demonstrates how such principles are actualized within the specific socio-cultural landscape of Indonesia. The role of traditional values and social structures—often overlooked in standardized models—emerges as a critical enabler of community engagement. The findings extend the conversation by validating alternative epistemologies and local knowledge systems.

Contrasting with research centered on institutional or curriculum reforms, this study underscores informal and nonformal learning environments as equally vital spaces for sustainability education. It challenges the notion that effective education must always occur within structured classrooms or through certified educators. Instead, it presents a fluid, co-constructed process that aligns with local rhythms and needs. Such a stance broadens the understanding of what counts as meaningful education in sustainability discourse.

Scholars like Sterling have argued for systemic shifts in educational paradigms, yet this research demonstrates such transformation in practice (Anshebo et al., 2025; Ayele et al., 2025; Giebel et al., 2025; Melkamu et al., 2025; Paynter et al., 2025; Schwarz et al., 2025). The study provides empirical evidence of how communities, through collaborative learning, embody the principles of education for sustainability. It complements theoretical arguments with on-the-ground insights, showing that systemic change can emerge organically from within the community rather than be imposed from above.

The research findings signal a growing shift toward valuing community agency and participatory processes in educational design. The outcomes suggest that sustainable development cannot be achieved solely through institutional mandates or standardized curricula; instead, it requires adaptive, people-centered approaches that align with community identities and needs. The prominence of communal knowledge and interaction in this study indicates a resurgence of indigenous and culturally grounded education models.

The results reflect an emerging recognition of the community as a critical site of learning and transformation. Rather than being viewed merely as beneficiaries, community members are increasingly recognized as educators, leaders, and co-innovators. This challenges the conventional boundaries between formal and informal education and calls for a more integrated view of lifelong learning. The study highlights that empowerment and learning are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

This research becomes a marker of the evolving educational landscape, where sustainability is not an external goal but an embedded way of life co-developed by communities. It also reflects broader global concerns about environmental degradation, social inequality, and the need for resilient societies. The model explored here illustrates how community education can address such concerns through collaborative, context-sensitive strategies that are both inclusive and effective.

The findings stand as evidence of the necessity for rethinking educational priorities in the Global South. They indicate a call to decolonize education by embracing local voices, practices, and solutions. The study points to the transformative potential of education that is place-based, relational, and action-oriented—qualities essential for sustainable futures in both local and global contexts.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted, affecting educational policy, program development, and community engagement strategies. Policymakers are encouraged to recognize and support community-based initiatives as legitimate and impactful forms of education. Investments in local capacity-building and participatory program design could yield more sustainable and inclusive outcomes than conventional top-down approaches.

Educational institutions may need to broaden their partnerships to include community organizations, local leaders, and civil society actors in co-creating educational content. This shift necessitates rethinking teacher training, curriculum design, and assessment practices to align with collaborative and contextualized learning models. Curricular integration of sustainability themes must go beyond abstract theory to include community service, real-world problem-solving, and intergenerational dialogue.

Communities, empowered through such models, can play an active role in local governance, resource management, and social innovation. The research highlights how education can serve as a catalyst for broader development goals when rooted in local contexts. By engaging in shared learning

processes, communities develop resilience, autonomy, and social solidarity-qualities essential for navigating complex sustainability challenges.

The findings also offer implications for global development frameworks. International organizations may benefit from incorporating community-based education approaches into their sustainability strategies, particularly in culturally diverse and resource-constrained settings. The model demonstrated in this research can serve as a replicable template for similar interventions across the Global South.

The effectiveness of the community-based collaborative model stems from its grounding in local realities and participatory dynamics. Education becomes more relevant and engaging when learners see their knowledge, experiences, and culture reflected in the learning process. This relevance enhances motivation, trust, and ownership, which are critical for sustainable behavioral change.

Cultural values such as *gotong royong* (cooperation) and *musyawarah* (deliberation) provide a strong foundation for collaborative learning. These deeply embedded social norms foster inclusivity and active participation, making the model particularly effective in Indonesian contexts. The alignment between traditional practices and sustainability principles facilitates smoother integration of educational goals.

Participants' willingness to contribute and innovate is driven by a sense of agency and belonging. When education is framed not as a one-way transmission but as a dialogic and collective endeavor, learners are more likely to internalize and apply what they learn. The social nature of the model also leverages peer learning and mentorship, enhancing its scalability and adaptability.

The findings also reflect broader socio-political conditions in Indonesia, where decentralized governance and community autonomy enable localized educational innovations. These structural factors provide the necessary flexibility and support for bottom-up initiatives to flourish. The results thus emerge not only from pedagogical design but also from enabling environments and cultural receptivity.

Further research is needed to explore how community-based models can be institutionalized without losing their grassroots character. Longitudinal studies could examine the sustainability of such initiatives over time and their impact on broader development indicators. There is also a need to develop tools for evaluating nonformal and community-led education outcomes in a holistic and context-sensitive manner.

Policy frameworks should be adapted to support hybrid learning models that bridge formal and informal systems. Governments and educational institutions must create platforms for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and financial support for community educators. Such recognition can elevate the role of communities as central actors in the national education agenda.

Educators and practitioners can benefit from training in participatory methodologies, cultural competence, and community facilitation skills. Curricula should be co-designed with local stakeholders to ensure relevance and resonance. Pilot programs can be expanded and refined based on iterative feedback and collaborative reflection.

Collaboration across sectors-education, environment, health, and social services-will be essential for scaling and sustaining these models. The integration of community-based social education into national strategies for sustainable development will not only enhance educational equity but also drive social innovation and ecological resilience in Indonesia and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that community-based social education models in Indonesia significantly enhance collaborative learning dynamics by fostering active participation, mutual trust, and localized knowledge exchange among community members. This finding differs from conventional classroom-based models, highlighting the potential of informal educational environments in promoting lifelong learning and sustainable development values.

This research contributes conceptually by proposing an integrative framework that combines community engagement principles with collaborative learning strategies tailored to Indonesia's socio-cultural context. The model emphasizes the synergy between local wisdom and educational innovation, offering a replicable approach for other regions seeking sustainable development through education.

The primary limitation of the study lies in its localized focus, which may not fully capture the diversity of Indonesia's educational ecosystems. Future research should explore broader regional

applications and integrate digital platforms to scale community-based collaborative learning models, allowing for comparative studies and technology-enhanced implementations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Rithy Vann: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing; Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Vicheka Rith: Data curation; Investigation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Suyitno: Supervision; Validation; Other contribution; Resources; Visuali-zation; Writing - original draft.

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