

Empowerment of Pokdarwis through Administrative and Tourism Management Training in Metiaut Village, Area Branca, Dili, Timor-Leste

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Abstract

Community-based tourism development requires strong institutional capacity, particularly in public administration. The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) in Metiaut Village, Area Branca, Dili, Timor-Leste has significant potential to develop local tourism, yet faces challenges due to limited administrative skills, such as record-keeping, reporting, and financial management. This community service program aimed to strengthen Pokdarwis' public administration capacity through the community-based training (CBT) method. The training was implemented through several stages: needs assessment, participatory planning, interactive workshops, hands-on practice, and evaluation. The results indicate a significant improvement in Pokdarwis' administrative skills, as reflected in their ability to prepare reports, manage a simple cash book, and document activities more systematically. This program contributes to strengthening Pokdarwis' organizational governance, enhancing professionalism, and encouraging more transparent, accountable, and sustainable management of local tourism destinations in Metiaut Village.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community based tourism has been recognized as a development model capable of harmonizing economic, social, and environmental aspects. This model encourages local communities to actively participate in all stages of tourism destination development—from planning, implementation, to evaluation. Studies have shown that the implementation of community-based tourism (CBT) not only increases local income and employment opportunities but also strengthens regional competitiveness [1]. In the context of sustainable development, destination management should ideally be carried out professionally, systematically, transparently, and accountably [2].

However, in many locations, including Metiaut Village, Area Branca, Dili, Timor-Leste, community-based tourism management has not yet fully adopted adequate public administration standards [3]. Institutionally, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), which serves as the driving force of local tourism development, still faces significant weaknesses in administrative aspects [4]. For example, financial recordkeeping is often unsystematic, activity reports are prepared informally without a fixed structure, and documentation archives are poorly organized. These conditions weaken organizational accountability, reduce credibility in the eyes of external stakeholders such as government, private sectors, and donors, and hinder potential strategic collaborations. Moreover, the lack of technical understanding of public administration widens the gap between community aspirations and actual institutional capacity in the field.

Area Branca possesses remarkable natural and cultural tourism potential. Its coastal beauty, unique local cultural experiences, and preservation of traditions serve as strong attractions for visitors. The enthusiasm of local communities to develop these potentials is high, reflecting their

commitment to making tourism a catalyst for local economic development. However, this great potential has not been accompanied by effective institutional management. Pokdarwis, as a potentially strong local institution, has not yet been able to fully carry out long-term tourism planning, impact evaluation, or documentation for learning purposes. Without improving administrative and managerial capacities, the risks of resource inefficiency, reputational decline, and unsustainable development remain high. In response to these challenges, the community service team designed a Public Administration Training Program for Pokdarwis Metiaut Village using a community-based training (CBT) approach [5]. This approach was chosen for its ability to tailor interventions to local needs, enhance community participation, and prioritize practical experience over theory. The training focused on key elements such as systematic financial recording (including income, expenditure, and basic auditing), preparation of formally structured activity reports, management of archives and documentation, and strategic, sustainable tourism program planning. Activities included workshops, field practices, and simulations of report preparation and administrative systems, enabling Pokdarwis members to directly apply new skills. Thus, the training not only transfers knowledge but also strengthens good administrative practices.

The main goal of this initiative is to bridge the gap between the ideal of community-based tourism management and the realities on the ground. First, it aims to enhance professionalism through technical competence, the use of administrative standards, and organizational discipline [6]. Second, it seeks to strengthen accountability and transparency so that all activities, finances, and documents can be clearly reported and justified to members and stakeholders [7]. Third, it aims to empower Pokdarwis institutionally to become a trusted partner for collaboration with governments, private sectors, donors, and other organizations [4]. Fourth, it supports the sustainability of local tourism destinations by creating tourism plans that are not incidental but long-term, culturally and environmentally preserving, and economically beneficial for local communities[8].

Therefore, this proposed training is not merely a response to administrative shortcomings but also part of a broader strategy for sustainable tourism development in Metiaut Village, Area Branca, Dili, Timor-Leste. Expected outcomes include the establishment of structured administrative and reporting systems, increased trust and legitimacy of Pokdarwis in the eyes of government and partners, improved financial transparency and documentation, and the implementation of tourism programs that are responsive, well-planned, and regularly evaluated. If successful, this model can be replicated in other tourism destinations in Timor-Leste or regions with similar social and economic characteristics.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The implementation method of this community service program was designed using a participatory and locally based approach (community-based training/CBT). This approach was chosen because it emphasizes active community involvement, experiential learning, and the empowerment of target groups to independently apply the knowledge and skills acquired. The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of Metiaut Village, Area Branca, was positioned not merely as a training recipient but also as an active participant contributing to the identification of problems, program planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

The training activities were carried out through four main stages: (1) needs identification and program planning, (2) training implementation, (3) field practice mentoring, and (4) evaluation and follow-up. The first stage, needs identification and program planning, was conducted through interviews, field observations, and focus group discussions (FGD) with Pokdarwis members in Metiaut Village, Area Branca. This process aimed to understand the institutional conditions, challenges in public administration, and to determine training material priorities according to participant needs. Based on the needs analysis, the most critical aspects to strengthen included financial management, activity recording, report preparation, document

archiving, and tourism program planning. This information served as the basis for developing the training modules and activity schedule.

The second stage, training implementation, was conducted face-to-face in the form of workshops and interactive sessions. The training materials were delivered through a combination of lectures, case studies, simulations, and group discussions. Participants were provided with practical examples of administrative documents, such as simple cash books, activity report formats, and digital filing systems applicable to Pokdarwis. The resource persons included academics in public administration from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Warmadewa University, tourism practitioners, and representatives from the Dili Tourism Office. During the sessions, participants were actively involved in preparing real administrative documents for Pokdarwis based on their ongoing tourism activities.

The third stage, field practice mentoring, aimed to ensure the sustainability of training outcomes. The implementation team assisted Pokdarwis Metiaut in applying the administrative systems they had learned, including the preparation of financial reports and tourism activity documentation. The mentoring lasted for 4–6 weeks after the main training program through field visits and online communication. During this stage, participants received direct feedback on the documents they prepared, enabling them to revise and adjust administrative practices according to established standards.

The fourth stage, evaluation and follow-up, was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the training and its impact on strengthening Pokdarwis's institutional capacity. Evaluation was carried out using two approaches: process evaluation and results evaluation. Process evaluation took place during the activities to assess participation, understanding, and participant responses to the training materials. Meanwhile, results evaluation was conducted after the completion of all activities through online questionnaires (Google Forms), in-depth interviews via Zoom meetings, and analysis of administrative documents produced by participants. The evaluation findings served as the foundation for designing follow-up programs, such as training on tourism destination management and digital marketing.

Overall, the implementation method was designed to generate tangible impacts on strengthening the public administrative capacity of Pokdarwis in Metiaut Village, Area Branca. Through a needs-based approach, active community participation, and continuous mentoring, it is expected that Pokdarwis Metiaut will be able to manage local tourism destinations more professionally, accountably, and sustainably.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Public Administration Training Program for Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) in Area Branca and Metiaut Village, Dili, Timor-Leste, was systematically designed through eight integrated stages. Each stage played a crucial role in strengthening the institutional capacity of Pokdarwis to manage tourism destinations in a professional, accountable, and sustainable manner. The approach adopted was community-based training (CBT), which emphasizes active community participation and hands-on learning through direct field practice [10].

A. Preparation and Initial Coordination

The first stage began with coordination between the community service team, Pokdarwis administrators, and local government officials in Area Branca and Metiaut Village to develop a detailed activity plan. During this stage, the team identified administrative needs and challenges faced by Pokdarwis. The results of the meeting were documented in a memorandum of understanding and a detailed work plan that included an implementation schedule, responsibilities of each party, and training tools such as modules, worksheets, assessment rubrics, and standardized administrative formats (cash books, official letters, activity reports, meeting minutes, and annual budgets). This activity aimed to ensure that the training would be conducted according to local needs and support the institutional capacity building of Pokdarwis in the aspect of public administration governance.

In addition to coordination activities, the community service team also carried out a field observation phase as part of the needs analysis. The observation involved conducting interviews with residents of Metiaut Village and local tourists in the Area Branca tourism site. These interviews aimed to gather community and visitor perceptions regarding tourism management, services provided by Pokdarwis, and challenges encountered in daily tourism activities. The information collected served as an essential foundation for designing the training materials, ensuring that the content developed was truly aligned with real conditions, local needs, and the tourism potential of Metiaut Village and Area Branca [9].



Figure 1. The community service team conducting interviews with residents of Metiaut Village and visitors to the Area Branca tourism site.

B. Needs Assessment and Baseline

Before the training began, a needs assessment and baseline determination were carried out through direct observation, a light document audit, and in-depth interviews with the core management members of Pokdarwis in Area Branca and Metiaut Village. In addition, a pre-test was conducted to measure the participants' initial understanding of public administration.

The pre-test results showed that the participants' overall level of understanding was still relatively low, with an average score of 49.2%. The weakest aspects were financial record-keeping (42%), archiving (45%), and report preparation (47%). Only a small portion of participants (around 18%) understood the importance of activity documentation as part of organizational accountability. These findings were then used as the foundation for designing the training materials, which focused on developing practical skills and implementing simple yet effective administrative systems.

C. Curriculum Design and Training Materials

Based on the assessment results, the community service team developed a curriculum consisting of four main modules: (1) Financial Administration; (2) Correspondence and Documentation; (3) Archiving and Document Management; and (4) Program Planning and Reporting. Each module included learning objectives, learning outcome indicators, and learning activities that actively involved participants from both villages.

In addition to designing the curriculum, the community service team conducted a discussion session with the Government of Timor-Leste, represented by the Department of Tourism. The discussion focused on aligning the training materials with national tourism development priorities and ensuring that the administrative capacity of Pokdarwis in Area Branca and Metiaut Village could support sustainable community-based tourism initiatives. Furthermore, the team was given the opportunity to meet with the Ambassador

of the Republic of Indonesia to Timor-Leste. During this meeting, the Ambassador expressed his full support for the program and highlighted the importance of cross-border collaboration in strengthening community empowerment, enhancing local tourism governance, and fostering closer bilateral relations between Indonesia and Timor-Leste.



Figure 2. The community service team in discussion with the Ambassador of Indonesia to Timor-Leste

D. Core Training (Interactive Face-to-Face Sessions)

The core training stage was conducted over three days using an interactive approach. Facilitators combined short lectures, discussions, simulations, role plays, and hands-on exercises with real documents. The materials covered included:

- 1) **Financial Administration:** practice in preparing cash books, transaction receipts, cash reconciliation, and simple financial reports.
- 2) **Correspondence and Documentation:** exercises in writing official letters, preparing meeting minutes, event reports, and attendance lists.
- 3) **Archiving:** introduction to filing systems, incoming–outgoing document logs, and simple document digitization.
- 4) **Program Planning:** development of Work Plans and Budget (RAB), activity calendars, success indicators, and monitoring & evaluation (Monev) systems.

Participant engagement was notably high, with a 96% attendance rate and active involvement during simulation sessions. Each participant was tasked with creating sample administrative documents relevant to their area of responsibility.

This community service activity can be seen in the image below, where the residents of Metiaut Village showed great enthusiasm in participating in the training sessions.



Figure 3. The residents of Metiaut Village enthusiastically participating in the training sessions

E. Applied Practice at the Secretariat (On-the-Job Mentoring)

After the training sessions were completed, the program continued with direct mentoring at the Pokdarwis secretariats in Area Branca and Metiaut Village for one month. The community service team facilitated the implementation of the new administrative

system, which included maintaining a running cashbook, organizing archives, and managing correspondence and activity reports.

During this stage, a Pokdarwis Administrative Team was formed in each village, consisting of a secretary, treasurer, and documentation staff. Each member was assigned specific job descriptions and provided with simple Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlining the workflow for correspondence, cash management, and activity reporting.

Observations showed that within two weeks of implementation, the level of archive organization improved by 78%, and all financial transactions began to be recorded using the standard cashbook format. This demonstrated a strong initial adoption of the new administrative system.

F. Monitoring, Feedback, and Refinement

Monitoring was conducted periodically using a compliance checklist and weekly feedback sessions. After four weeks, a post-test was administered to measure the participants' improvement compared to the initial pre-test results.

The post-test results showed a significant increase, with an average score of 85.7%, representing a 36.5-point improvement from the initial score. The highest improvements were seen in financial recording (rising from 42% to 88%) and activity reporting (rising from 47% to 83%). These findings indicate that the training effectively enhanced participants' technical skills and administrative understanding in a substantial manner.

In addition to the post-test, a participant satisfaction evaluation was also carried out. A total of 92% of participants stated that the training was highly beneficial, particularly because the materials could be directly applied in the secretariat. Meanwhile, 85% noted that the new administrative system helped accelerate the documentation process of activities.

G. Dissemination of Results and Handover

After the completion of all activities, a mini-workshop was held in Area Branca and Metiaut Village. During this forum, the Pokdarwis groups presented the outcomes of the training and the products they had developed, including:

- 1) An active cashbook with a transparent format.
- 2) Well-organized activity archive packages.
- 3) Standardized activity report samples.
- 4) An annual work calendar and 2025 budget plan (RAB).
- 5) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Pokdarwis Administration Team.

This dissemination event also served as a platform to strengthen partnerships and open opportunities for external support. At the end of the activity, the training documents, administrative templates, and an agreement to conduct quarterly evaluations were formally handed over.

H. Documentation and Publication

All stages of the program were documented through photos, videos, attendance lists, and administrative products created by participants. The community service team prepared a final report and a draft scientific article ready for publication in a community service journal. In addition, all training materials were compiled into an open-access package to enable replication in other regions of Timor-Leste.

The community-based training (CBT) approach proved effective in strengthening the institutional capacity of Pokdarwis in Area Branca and Metiaut Village. Through a combination of face-to-face training, hands-on practice, and continuous mentoring, participants significantly improved their public administration skills. Beyond individual competence, institutional impact was evident through the establishment of a more organized, transparent, and accountable administrative system [11], [13].

With quantitative results showing a 36.5% increase in understanding and tangible changes in administrative practice, this program is expected to serve as a model for community

empowerment in tourism based on institutional capacity that can be replicated in other areas of Timor-Leste [12], [14].

4. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Public Administration Training Program for the Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) in Area Branca and Metiaut Village, Dili, Timor-Leste demonstrated significant results in enhancing institutional capacity and community-based tourism governance. Designed through eight integrated stages, the program successfully improved participants' skills in financial administration, documentation, archiving, and reporting. The adopted community-based training (CBT) approach proved effective in fostering active community engagement and strengthening experiential, hands on learning. The improvement in participants' understanding was evident from the evaluation results, which showed an increase in the average score from 49.2% in the pre-test to 85.7% after the training. Beyond cognitive enhancement, the program also resulted in tangible administrative behavior changes, such as a 78% increase in record organization and the implementation of more transparent and standardized financial bookkeeping systems in both villages' Pokdarwis secretariats [15].

The program's success is not only reflected in individual competency improvement but also in the strengthened institutional structures that are more accountable and sustainable. The Pokdarwis in Area Branca and Metiaut Village now have administrative teams with clear task divisions, supported by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), annual work calendars, and consistent reporting systems. These changes indicate the emergence of a new organizational culture characterized by discipline, transparency, and professionalism within the Pokdarwis. Furthermore, the program's sustainability is reinforced by a follow-up plan involving quarterly evaluations and remote mentoring to ensure the continued implementation of the established administrative systems. With these achievements, the public administration training program serves as an effective and adaptive model for community based tourism empowerment, offering valuable lessons that can be replicated in other regions across Timor Leste [13], [15].

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