

Participatory Mapping of Village Potential to Support Local Development Planning in Puuhialu Village, North Konawe Regency, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This community service program identified, classified, documented, and mapped the development potential of Puuhialu Village, North Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, between 1 May and 1 June 2026. We combined a participatory approach with descriptive analysis, treating the village government and residents as partners who checked and corrected our findings rather than as mere respondents. Data from field observation, in-depth interviews, photographs, and site locations were organized into a potential matrix and a spatial distribution map. The village's assets span seven domains: agriculture, plantations, livestock, micro and small enterprises, natural resources and tourism, socio-cultural life, and youth. Three stood out as strategic priorities: agriculture, nature-based tourism in the Tenggara area, and young people, chiefly because each can strengthen the others. The program leaves the village with its first organized body of information for setting development priorities and planning empowerment activities.

INTRODUCTION

Rural development tends to work best when it starts from what a village already has, and Indonesian law recognizes this. Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages gives village governments the authority to plan their own development and to manage local potential on their own terms (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). Government Regulation No. 16 of 2026, which implements the Village Law and incorporates the amendments introduced by Law No. 3 of 2024, has since given that authority a firmer operational footing (Republic of Indonesia, 2026). Legal authority, however, only goes so far. A village that wants to set sensible priorities, spend its budget efficiently, and share the benefits of development fairly first needs accurate information about itself: the character of its land, the resources at hand, how far those resources are already being used, and what is holding them back.

In the literature on community empowerment, village potential covers far more than natural resources. It includes farmland, plantations, livestock, water, small businesses, tourist attractions, local wisdom, community institutions, a productive workforce, and the infrastructure that supports them (Endah, 2020). This variety gives villages room to build an economy around their own strengths. It does not, however, turn into welfare by itself. Potential has to be identified, inventoried, and managed with some care before it can make a real difference to household income and economic self-reliance (Hidayatullah & Suminar, 2021).

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) offers a useful lens for this task. Instead of starting from what a community lacks, ABCD begins with what it already owns, whether skills, relationships, land, or institutions, and asks how these can be put to better use. Evidence from rural Ghana suggests that this orientation can help reduce poverty, especially when government policy is aligned with local needs (Chen et al., 2024). In a broad review of empowerment programs, Dushkova and Ivlieva (2024) likewise found that programs last longer when they build local capacity, encourage genuine participation and a sense of ownership, and draw on local knowledge in both planning and implementation. The lesson is that rural development depends not only on the resources a village possesses but also on whether its people and government are able to manage them well.

Experience in Indonesia points in the same direction. Studies and community service projects in a number of villages have shown that mapping local potential helps village governments pinpoint their leading resources, decide where to focus the local economy, strengthen village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and design community-based tourism (Srirejeki et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2022; Sukri et al., 2023). A systematic mapping exercise tells a village what it has, where it is, what condition it is in, how much of it is being used, and where the openings for growth lie. Programs built on that kind of information are far more likely to fit local conditions.

Seen this way, mapping is more than a stocktaking exercise; it is a planning tool. When residents take part, what they know about places, histories, and everyday practices can be combined with data on physical conditions, producing information that is both richer and more widely trusted. Participation also makes priority-setting more transparent, because people can see how decisions about shared resources are reached. A mapping process that is systematic, accurate, and participatory is therefore worth building wherever villages are trying to make better use of what they have.

Puuhialu Village lies in Oheo District, North Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, about 122 kilometers from Universitas Halu Oleo in Kendari. Most households make their living from farming, chiefly wet rice and garden crops. The village sits in hilly country close to the Tenggera natural area, home to several attractions: the Tenggera Karst, the Oheo Blue Lake, and the Puuwatu Mopute rock formation. These sites already draw visitors, and a handful of young villagers have begun guiding them informally, although this work is still small in scale and loosely organized. Puuhialu, in short, combines productive farmland, striking landscapes, and a pool of working-age residents. Developed together and with some forethought, these assets could broaden the village economy, create new jobs and businesses, and raise household incomes.

Early conversations with the village government, however, revealed a basic obstacle: Puuhialu had no structured record of its own resources. What was known about them was scattered among village officials and residents and relied heavily on individual memory and experience. There was no single database bringing together the type, location, condition, level of use, and development prospects of each resource, and no thematic map showing how these resources relate to roads, settlements, and farmland. The same situation is common across rural areas of developing countries, where official geospatial data seldom capture local access routes or the places that matter most to communities. Participatory mapping, in which residents help to identify, collect, and verify spatial information, has proved a practical way of filling such gaps (De Roulet et al., 2024). Without this kind of information, the Puuhialu government would struggle to set priorities objectively, design well-targeted programs, or explain to residents the basis on which its decisions are made.

This community service program was designed in response to that gap. Its aim was to identify, inventory, classify, and map the village's resources together with the community, and then to propose initial development strategies suited to local conditions. The work followed a basic principle of community empowerment: local people understand their surroundings, their history, and their potential better than any outside team (Mustoip et al., 2022). Residents were therefore involved at every stage, from naming potential assets and collecting and checking data to shaping the final recommendations. They took part as partners who helped decide what the program should cover, not simply as sources of information. Our hope was that this would yield a picture of the village that reflects real conditions, local knowledge, and residents' own aspirations, and that the village could later draw on when setting priorities and planning its development.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The program ran for one month, from 1 May to 1 June 2026, in Puuhialu Village, Oheo District, North Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. It was self-funded by the team, with a total budget of IDR 10,000,000. The Puuhialu Village Government and local residents served as the main partners. The team consisted of four lecturers from the Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Halu Oleo, whose expertise spans infrastructure and environmental engineering, structural engineering, and water resources and coastal engineering, together with three undergraduate students who assisted with field surveys, documentation, data collection, and data processing.

We combined a participatory approach with descriptive analysis. Under the participatory approach, the village government and residents worked alongside us throughout: they helped decide which objects and resources to examine, joined the field surveys, and verified the results before the final outputs were prepared. Descriptive analysis was then used to identify, classify, and interpret the data by type of potential, location, current condition, level of use, constraints, opportunities, and management needs (Dwiwijaya et al., 2024). Because location, local attractions, and community capacity are central to community-based rural tourism in Indonesia (Priatmoko et al., 2025), we paid particular attention to recording the coordinates of each site and to identifying the groups involved in using and managing it.

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, based on their knowledge of, and involvement in, the village's social and economic life and the management of its resources. They included village officials, community leaders, local entrepreneurs, representatives of community groups, young people, and older residents familiar with how the area has changed over time. Drawing on such a varied group allowed us to see the village from several angles and made the resulting map and recommendations more representative of local conditions.

To keep the data consistent and comparable, the same inventory form was used for every object surveyed. The form recorded the object's name, category, location, current condition, level of use, managers or beneficiaries, constraints, opportunities, support needed, photographs, and validation notes. A uniform instrument made classification, analysis, and mapping considerably easier and gave us a sound basis for setting priorities later on. The work was carried out in five consecutive stages, described below.

1. Preparation and Coordination (1–7 May 2026)

We drew up a work plan and the inventory instrument, then met with the Puuhialu Village Government to agree on the schedule and procedures, prepare an initial list of informants, and identify the sites to be surveyed. We also held a briefing for residents to explain the program's aims, scope, and stages, and to invite them to take part.

2. Identification and Data Collection (8–14 May 2026)

Field surveys, direct observation, and interviews with knowledgeable informants were used to identify potential in agriculture, plantations, livestock, micro and small enterprises, tourism, socio-cultural life, and human resources, with particular attention to young people. For each object, we noted its characteristics, how it is currently used, and its present condition, which together formed the basis of the village resource inventory.

3. Documentation and Data Processing (15–21 May 2026)

Each object was photographed and its location and condition recorded. The data were then classified by sector, tabulated, and compiled into a potential inventory matrix. This matrix made it easier to analyze the characteristics of each resource, see how resources are distributed across the village, and prepare the map and recommendations in the following stage.

4. Mapping and Analysis (22–28 May 2026)

Location data were combined with the inventory to produce a spatial distribution map of the village's potential. We then examined the constraints, opportunities, and development needs of each sector. Priorities were set against eight criteria: resource availability, level of use, economic value, market opportunity, community participation, sustainability, institutional support, and investment needs. On this basis, the sectors were ranked according to their resources, their prospects, and the needs of the community.

5. Validation, Evaluation, and Reporting (29 May–1 June 2026)

The inventory, map, and analysis were presented to the village government and community representatives in a participatory forum. Participants commented on, clarified, and corrected details such as object names, locations, conditions, and development prospects. We revised the data in light of this feedback before finalizing the recommendations, and compiled the results into a report that the village government can use when setting development priorities based on local potential.

The program was evaluated descriptively using both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitative indicators covered the number of objects inventoried, the completeness of the inventory matrix, the number of sectors identified, the availability of photographs and location data, the completion of the distribution map, and the level of participation by the village government and residents in verification and validation. Qualitative indicators captured the partners' views on how clearly the information was presented, how closely the map matched conditions on the ground, and how useful the results would be for village planning. In this way, the evaluation looked beyond technical outputs to ask whether the partners were genuinely involved and whether the results would be of practical value to them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coordination and Initial Identification of Village Potential

The program opened with a series of coordination meetings between the team and the Puuhialu Village Government at the village office. These meetings gave us a first picture of the area: its population, how people earn a living, and which resources village officials considered most promising. Officials described current conditions, the community's main economic activities, and the sectors they saw as most important for the village's future. Together, we agreed on which sites to survey first and which informants had the most relevant knowledge and experience.

Involving the village government from the outset proved important. Agreeing jointly on survey sites and informants helped us understand needs and priorities as local people saw them, and it gave everyone a common understanding of what the program was for and what it could realistically deliver. Because village officials had taken part in these early discussions, residents were also more forthcoming once the survey began. The coordination stage was therefore more than an administrative formality. It laid the groundwork for cooperation between the university, the village government, and the community, and it made the participatory approach workable in practice.



Figure 1. Coordination between the Community Service Team and the Puuhialu Village Government

Field Observation and Interviews

After the coordination meetings, the team carried out direct observation in Puuhialu and its surroundings, visiting farmland, gardens, settlements, and natural attractions. Alongside observing physical conditions, we talked with farmers, local entrepreneurs, young people, and community leaders, both in structured interviews and in informal conversations at people's homes and places of work. These conversations revealed much that observation alone could not, including how resources are used, what residents regard as opportunities, and what stands in their way.

One finding stood out: daily life in Puuhialu is organized around farming. Most residents are in their fields from early morning until midday or early afternoon, so activity in the settlements peaks before work and again from late afternoon into the evening. This rhythm matters for planning. Any new venture, whether a small business, a tourism service, or another productive activity, will need to fit around the farming day if it is to succeed. The aim should be to add new sources of income without disrupting the agricultural work on which most households still depend. Observation and interviews therefore gave us not only an inventory of resources but also a sense of the social and economic conditions that any recommendation has to respect.



Figure 2. Field Observation and Identification of Village Potential

Identified Village Potential

We grouped the village's potential into seven sectors according to the type of resource involved. This classification gives an orderly view of the current condition of each sector, the opportunities it offers, and the constraints it faces, and it became the starting point for identifying leading sectors and development directions. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Table 1. Identified Potential of Puuhialu Village

No	Sector	Current Condition	Development Opportunity	Main Constraint
1	Agriculture	Rice farming is the main livelihood; most residents work in the fields from morning to early afternoon.	Higher productivity, processed farm products, stronger marketing.	Heavy reliance on farming leaves little time for other income activities.
2	Plantations	Garden crops are a secondary source of income.	Processing and marketing of plantation crops.	Leading commodities, output, and marketing channels are not yet documented.

No	Sector	Current Condition	Development Opportunity	Main Constraint
3	Livestock	Not yet a major economic sector.	Can be developed once a commodity with market demand is identified.	No data on livestock types, ownership, or contribution to income.
4	Micro and small enterprises	Business activity is still limited.	Small businesses based on farm products and visitor services.	Little information on business types, capital, and markets.
5	Natural resources and tourism	Rice fields, hills, and the nearby Tenggera Karst, Oheo Blue Lake, and Puuwatu Mopute.	Nature tourism with guiding, transport, food, and local products.	Access, facilities, tourist information, and management are still weak.
6	Socio-cultural life	Daily routines follow the farming schedule.	Involving residents in tourism and small businesses outside farming hours.	Limited free time for additional activities.
7	Youth	Some young people lack steady work; a few occasionally guide visitors to Tenggera.	Tour guiding, digital promotion, small businesses, tourism services.	No organized guiding service yet.

As Table 1 shows, the seven sectors differ considerably in character and in how far they have been developed. Agriculture dominates the local economy and remains the main livelihood, yet most farm produce is still sold raw, leaving the added value that processing could bring largely untapped. Tourism already attracts visitors, but limited facilities, informal services, and weak community-based management mean that residents capture only a small share of the economic benefits. For livestock and for micro and small enterprises, basic data on business types, production capacity, the number of operators, and management practices are largely missing. This gap is a significant finding in its own right. It exposes a weakness in the village's record-keeping and signals that more thorough data collection is needed before the village government designs programs for these two sectors.

The uneven development of these sectors also highlights the value of economic diversification for rural resilience. Pramono and Juliana (2025), studying tourism villages in Indonesia after the pandemic, found that communities with several income sources, such as farming, homestays, and handicrafts, coped better with falling visitor numbers than those relying mainly on tourism. For Puuhialu, this suggests that tourism should be developed as a complement to agriculture rather than as a replacement for it. The data gaps in the small enterprise sector point to a wider problem in rural economic management. Harinurdin et al. (2025) note that limited human resource capacity often prevents BUMDes from managing and using information effectively. Strengthening Puuhialu's economy will therefore require better data, stronger institutions and human resources, higher-value farm products, and community-based tourism management, pursued together rather than one at a time.

Distribution Map of Village Potential

Using location data from the field survey, we produced a map of the village's tourism and agricultural potential (Figure 3). The map shows the Tenggera Karst, Oheo Blue Lake, Puuwatu Mopute, the irrigation channels, and the surrounding rice fields, as well as hamlet boundaries, rivers, and main roads. Viewed together, these elements reveal how resources relate to one another and to the wider landscape. The map is thus not only a way of displaying the village's potential but also a tool for analyzing distribution patterns, accessibility, and opportunities in agriculture and tourism.



Figure 3. Distribution Map of the Potential of Puuhialu Village

The map brought to light spatial relationships that a list or table could not show. Most notably, the three natural attractions, namely the Tenggera Karst, Oheo Blue Lake, and Puuwatu Mopute, lie relatively close together and can be reached reasonably well by village roads. This opens the possibility of an integrated tourism area, with a single route linking all three sites. Such a route could make it easier for visitors to move between sites, encourage longer stays, and create more opportunities for residents to earn income from guiding, local food, and other services. This is consistent with Priatmoko et al. (2025), who identify poor access, inadequate facilities, and limited information as major obstacles to community-based rural tourism in Indonesia. The map also shows how closely the irrigation network is tied to the rice fields. Because these channels feed the farmland directly, keeping them in good repair should be a priority in village planning if agricultural productivity is to be sustained. Taken as a whole, the map points to two practical entry points for development: linking the tourist sites and strengthening the infrastructure that supports farming.

Data Processing and Priority Setting

Survey and observation data were tabulated and analyzed in a series of internal team discussions, supported by aerial imagery of land use in the village (Figure 4). The imagery helped us interpret the spatial character of the area and see how potential sites relate to one another. Each sector was then assessed against the eight criteria set out in the methods section. The purpose was not merely to find the sectors with the greatest appeal or economic promise, but to judge whether developing them was realistic given the village's actual circumstances. Human resource capacity, funding, and local institutional support weighed heavily in this assessment, since these factors largely determine whether development efforts succeed. The outcome was a set of priorities that is achievable and matched to the capacity and needs of the Puuhialu community.



Figure 4. Data Processing and Aerial View of Village Land Use

The assessment identified three strategic priorities: agriculture, nature-based tourism in the Tenggera area, and youth empowerment. These three are closely connected and can strengthen one another. Tourism can create work for young people as guides, local transport providers, and digital promoters of the destination. More visitors, in turn, widen the market for farm produce, local dishes, and processed goods, raising value added and income for farming households. Tourism development should therefore aim not simply at attracting more visitors but at building links between sectors so that the benefits reach more of the village.

Other studies support this reading. Utami et al. (2023) show that local entrepreneurial capacity is a key factor in sustaining tourism villages, while Jaya et al. (2022) found that young people organized through community groups and institutions can help create jobs and strengthen local economic resilience through tourism. The links among agriculture, tourism, and youth in Puuhialu also echo Hidayatullah and Suminar (2021) and Sari et al. (2022), who both stress the importance of integrating tourism with local enterprise and resource use. Development strategy in Puuhialu should accordingly focus on the synergy between farm productivity, community-based management of natural attractions, and the entrepreneurial capacity of young people. Pursued together, these efforts can diversify income, expand employment, add value to local products, and make the village economy more self-reliant over time.



Figure 5. Exploration of Tourism Potential and Community Activities in Puuhialu

Recommended Development Programs

Drawing on the mapping and analysis, the team and the Puuhialu Village Government jointly drew up seven initial programs, listed in Table 2. The programs were chosen with the village's resources, residents' needs, development opportunities, and the government's capacity to implement them in mind. Most require only modest funding and can be carried out in stages using local resources and institutions, which makes them a realistic first step toward putting the village's potential to work.

Table 2. Recommended Development Programs

Recommended Program	Function	Sectors Supported
Simple tourist information point	Information on Tenggara and nearby sites, access routes, and guide contacts	Tourism, Youth
Signposts to tourist sites	Helping visitors find their way to each location	Tourism
Simple rest stop	A place for visitors to stop before or after their trip	Tourism, Small Business
Local product display	Selling local food and processed farm products	Agriculture, Small Business
Youth guiding service	A roster of young people available to guide visitors	Youth, Tourism

Recommended Program	Function	Sectors Supported
Farm product processing	Turning harvests into higher-value products	Agriculture, Small Business
Digital tourism promotion	Photos, digital maps, tourist information, and social media	Tourism, Youth

Program Outputs and Impact

The program produced several concrete outputs: an inventory of village resources; a matrix recording the type, condition, location, constraints, opportunities, and management recommendations for each object; photographic documentation; a spatial distribution map; and a set of development priorities. Together, these give the village a more systematic and integrated base of information for identifying needs and setting priorities. The program's contribution, however, goes beyond documents. Village officials and residents took an active part in identifying, verifying, and correcting the data, so the information now reflects conditions as they themselves understand them. This involvement is likely to strengthen the community's sense of ownership over the results, one of the factors that most influences whether empowerment programs endure (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

Whether these benefits last will depend on what happens next. The village government and residents will need to update the data regularly as resources and economic activities change. The geographic coordinates of each site should also be refined so that the spatial information becomes more precise and more useful for area-based planning. Finally, the village government will need to coordinate follow-up programs while keeping residents involved as partners. If these steps are taken, the inventory and map can become more than a project report; they can serve as a working tool for decision-making, community participation, and local economic development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This program identified, inventoried, classified, and mapped the resources of Puuhialu Village through a participatory process involving both the village government and residents. The village's potential falls into seven sectors, which we organized into an inventory matrix and presented on a spatial distribution map. Assessment of resource characteristics, current use, opportunities, and local capacity pointed to three strategic priorities: agriculture, nature-based tourism in the Tenggera area, and youth empowerment. These sectors are functionally linked and can be developed together by adding value to farm products, building community-based tourism services, and giving young people a larger role in productive economic activity. The program has provided the village with its first structured body of information on which to base development priorities, empowerment programs, and the use of local resources, grounded in the area's characteristics, its institutional capacity, and the needs of its people.

Building on these results, we offer the following recommendations to the village government and other stakeholders:

1. Update the village potential database regularly. The Puuhialu Village Government should maintain and periodically update its resource database so that it keeps pace with changes in resource conditions, levels of use, economic activity, and the opportunities and constraints facing each sector. Current data will allow policies and plans to rest on evidence that can be accounted for.
2. Refine spatial data and mapping. The village government and relevant partners should complete and verify the coordinates of every identified site. More precise spatial data will produce a more detailed map, which in turn supports analysis of accessibility, the links between sites, and more effective area development strategies.
3. Make priority-setting transparent and participatory. Development priorities should be set using criteria that are transparent, objective, and open to verification by all stakeholders. Involving different community groups helps ensure that decisions reflect shared needs, gives everyone a fair chance to benefit from local resources, and reduces the risk that a small group dominates decision-making (Sidik, 2025).
4. Start with priority programs that match local capacity. Follow-up programs should first target sectors with supporting resources, active local players, identified markets, and clear social and economic benefits. The village can begin with low-cost initiatives it can manage itself, such as signposts to tourist sites, a simple tourist information point, and an organized youth guiding group. These steps would improve visitor services, open new business opportunities, and draw more residents into the local economy.
5. Sustain partnerships between the university, the village government, and the community. Universitas Halu Oleo should continue to support Puuhialu through digital mapping, capacity building for micro and small enterprises, strengthening of community groups and their skills, and technical studies suited to local needs. Such collaboration would support the transfer of knowledge and technology and strengthen the village's ability to adapt to social and economic change, in line with Pramono and Juliana's (2025) emphasis on partnerships and local capacity in building resilient tourism villages.

Putting these recommendations into practice will require commitment from the village government, active involvement from residents, and continued support from the university and other partners. With that support, the potential map can become a genuine foundation for development programs that are measurable, inclusive, and focused on improving the welfare of the people of Puuhialu.

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