



## EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MUSRENBANG AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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| ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                         |
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| <p>This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang) as an instrument of participatory democracy in the regional development planning process. Through a descriptive qualitative approach with analysis of various literature sources such as books, journal articles, and official documents, this study seeks to describe the extent to which Musrenbang is able to encourage community participation, strengthen transparency, and create inclusive development governance that is responsive to local needs. The results show that the implementation of Musrenbang in various regions still faces challenges such as the dominance of local elites, low participation of vulnerable groups, weak transparency, and the absence of a true deliberative space, so that Musrenbang often runs procedurally without active community involvement. Nevertheless, there are significant opportunities to strengthen the role of Musrenbang through human resource capacity building, strengthening institutional commitment, and utilizing digital technology to expand public access and accountability. This study confirms that the success of Musrenbang greatly depends on the ability of the government and the community to create an open, equal, and inclusive space for dialogue, so that this forum not only functions as a formal planning mechanism, but also as a means of social and political learning that strengthens public awareness in development. Thus, Musrenbang has the strategic potential to become a key pillar in realizing democratic, transparent, and sustainable regional development governance.</p> | <p><b>Keywords:</b><br/>Musrenbang; Community Participation; Participatory Democracy; Development Planning; Regional Governance.</p> |



## INTRODUCTION

The main venue for direct community participation in the regional development planning process is the Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang). Musrenbang aims to produce programs that are focused and truly impact community welfare by coordinating community needs and aspirations with regional development policies. Musrenbang is an important tool in the framework of participatory democracy that enables the community to become both the subject and object of development, as well as having a role in development decision making (Putri & Hambali, 2025).

The level of active community participation and the openness and transparency of the deliberation process are very important for the effectiveness of Musrenbang as a tool for participatory democracy. However, studies conducted in various regions show challenges in the implementation of Musrenbang, including the dominance of local elites, limited access to information, and the lack of representation of marginalized groups such as women and youth. These conditions indicate that an in-depth assessment of Musrenbang's ability to apply the principles of deliberative democracy is still needed so that community aspirations can be accommodated fairly and their influence on regional development can be maximized (Murdianto *et al.*, 2025).

The main basis for regional policy making should be participatory development planning, in accordance with government regulations. In ensuring that development outcomes are more responsive to local needs, Musrenbang provides a strategic forum for the community to convey their thoughts and recommendations. To assess the extent to which the Regional Development Planning Forum (Musrenbang) functions as a participatory democratic tool that can improve the quality of regional planning and governance in the era of regional autonomy, it is very important to evaluate the effectiveness of this forum (Pratama *et al.*, 2024).

## METHOD

This research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe in depth the effectiveness of Musrenbang implementation in increasing community participation and making it an instrument of participatory democracy in regional development planning. The qualitative approach was chosen because it gives researchers the freedom to capture the meaning related to the Musrenbang process, while identifying obstacles and opportunities in its implementation.

Data were collected from books, journal articles, and relevant official documents selected based on criteria of relevance, credibility, and year of publication. Using this method, the study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Musrenbang as a participatory democracy forum and recommend improvements to strengthen the quality of regional development planning (Kamaruddin *et al.*, 2024).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang) is one of the main instruments for realizing participatory democracy at the regional level. Within the framework of participatory democracy theory, community participation is not merely a form of formal involvement, but rather a means of ensuring that the community has a direct role in public decision making (Arfananda *et al.*, 2025). This process requires the active participation of citizens from the problem identification stage to the evaluation of development results. Thus, Musrenbang should ideally function as a bottom-up planning forum that accommodates community aspirations to be translated into development policies that are responsive to local needs.

However, various studies show that the implementation of Musrenbang in various regions in Indonesia still faces serious challenges in applying the principles of participatory and deliberative democracy. In the context of Habermas deliberative planning theory, the decision making process should be based on open dialogue and rational argumentation, where all parties have the same opportunity to express their opinions and reach a mutual consensus (Waruwu & Halawa, 2024). Unfortunately, Musrenbang in the field often proceeds in a procedural and formal manner, without any real space for deliberation.

Research by Putri and Hambali (2025) in Tamansari Village shows that even though the implementation of Musrenbang follows administrative mechanisms, community participation is still symbolic. The strong patron-client culture, low human resource capacity, and the dominance of local elites mean that community involvement has not yet reached the deliberative level idealized in participatory democracy theory.

The Musrenbang forum often serves only as a means of legitimizing decisions that have already been made, rather than a space for equal discussion between the community and the government.

Similar findings were reported by Purnomo *et al.* (2025) in their study in Jayapura Regency, Papua. In the context of special autonomy, the community is quite active in the planning stage, but participation declines dramatically in the implementation and evaluation stages. Referring to the theory of community participation in development (Faruk *et al.*, 2025), this condition shows that the position of the community is still at the consultative and partnership level, not yet reaching the level of delegation or citizen control. Thus, Musrenbang has not been fully able to create community independence in determining the direction of regional development.

Furthermore, Mukhlis *et al.* (2025) highlight the issues of village elite dominance, weak financial transparency, and minimal public oversight in the implementation of Musrenbang. This phenomenon shows that hierarchical bureaucracy and weak institutional structures cause Musrenbang forums to lose their deliberative function. In fact, as emphasized in participatory planning theory, the success of development is not only measured by physical results, but also by the extent to which the community can participate actively, planned, and consistently in the process. The bottom-up approach promoted by this theory emphasizes the importance of the community as the subject of development that has a real influence on policy (Faruk *et al.*, 2025).

In addition, from the perspective of collaborative governance theory, the effectiveness of Musrenbang greatly depends on the extent to which interactions between stakeholders such as the government, civil society, and the private sector are conducted on an equal footing and based on mutual trust and consensus (Dewi, 2019). Unfortunately, in many cases, relationships between actors are still hierarchical. The government tends to dominate the forum, while the community is in a more passive position. As a result, Musrenbang more often becomes a forum for formal coordination rather than a meaningful collaboration.

The issue of inclusivity was also an important concern in the Musrenbang discussions. Research by Neno *et al.* (2025) in Niukbaun Village, Kupang District, showed that women's participation in Musrenbang was still very limited. Of the 54 participants, only 8 women actively expressed their opinions. This low level of women's involvement was due to patriarchal cultural factors, low self confidence, and a lack of

technical training. Mirnawati *et al.* (2023) found similar results in Central Lampung Regency, where women and youth still face social and cultural barriers to participation. These findings reinforce the argument that Musrenbang does not yet fully reflect the principles of social justice and empowerment as outlined in the theory of community participation in development (Faruk *et al.*, 2025).

In addition to social aspects, challenges in implementing Musrenbang are also evident in terms of institutional and digital innovation. Digitalization through the e-Musrenbang system is actually designed to expand public access, improve efficiency, and strengthen transparency. However, according to Damayanti *et al.* (2021), its implementation has not been optimal due to low digital literacy among the public, limited internet infrastructure, and weak integration between levels of government. In fact, the application of digital systems has great potential to strengthen the principles of transparency and accountability as emphasized in collaborative governance theory (Dewi, 2019).

From an institutional perspective, research by Handayani *et al.* (2025) confirms that the success of community participation in Musrenbang is highly dependent on organizational commitment and good governance. High participation without strong institutional support will not have a significant impact on development. Institutional commitment has proven to be an important factor in improving transparency and accountability, especially in the management of village funds and follow up on the results of Musrenbang.

When linked to Habermas theory of deliberative democracy, Musrenbang should be an arena where the community can argue rationally, express their views freely, and reach consensus without pressure. However, the reality on the ground shows that the deliberative process is not yet ideal. Bureaucratic dominance, unequal access to information, and low levels of political education among the public are the main obstacles to realizing Musrenbang as a substantive forum for democracy (Waruwu & Halawa, 2024).

In general, various studies describe a gap between the idealism of participatory democracy and the reality of Musrenbang implementation in the field. This forum still faces challenges in terms of participation, inclusiveness, and governance. To strengthen its function, several strategic steps need to be taken, such as increasing human resource capacity through participatory planning training, public information transparency, and expanding access for vulnerable groups such as women, youth,

and people with disabilities. In addition, the use of digital technology also needs to be optimized to expand the space for participation and strengthen accountability.

With improvements in these various aspects, Musrenbang has great potential to develop into a deliberative forum that provides a space for collaboration and places the community as an equal partner of the government in formulating the direction of regional development. Through a more inclusive and transparent participatory democratic approach, Musrenbang can become an important instrument in building fair, responsive, and sustainable development governance.

## CONCLUSION

The Development Planning Consultation (Musrenbang) is an important means for the community to participate directly in the regional development process. However, its implementation still faces various obstacles such as the dominance of local elites, low involvement of vulnerable groups, and limited transparency. These conditions indicate that Musrenbang does not yet fully reflect the principles of deliberative democracy, which emphasize equality and substantive participation. Nevertheless, Musrenbang still has great potential to become a true forum for participatory democracy if it is accompanied by increased community capacity, institutional strengthening, and the optimization of digital technology to support transparency and expand public access.

This study enriches our understanding of the importance of building more inclusive and collaborative development governance through Musrenbang. By strengthening the aspects of participation, accountability, and social justice, Musrenbang can be transformed into a development mechanism that is not only procedural but also substantive in realizing community welfare. The implications of these findings open up opportunities for further research to explore innovative strategies for strengthening participatory democracy at the local level, particularly through digital approaches and community political education.

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