

EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY PLANNING AT THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS OFFICE OF MALUKU PROVINCE: A DATA-BASED PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province from a data-based participatory planning perspective. High-quality planning is essential for ensuring that social welfare programs are effective, efficient, and responsive to real community needs, particularly in a geographically dispersed and socially diverse region such as Maluku. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis involving key planning actors within the institution. The findings indicate that planning practices have increasingly incorporated stakeholder participation and the use of social data to identify priority issues and design targeted interventions for vulnerable groups. Participatory mechanisms involving government units, community representatives, and traditional leaders contribute to greater contextual relevance and policy alignment. In addition, the utilization of integrated social data supports more evidence-based decision-making and program justification. However, the study also reveals several challenges, including limited depth of stakeholder involvement in decision-making, inconsistencies in data quality and integration, uneven analytical capacity among planners, and weak feedback follow-up mechanisms. These constraints limit the full realization of participatory and data-driven planning as a strategic tool for social development. The study concludes that strengthening institutional capacity, improving data governance, and enhancing inclusive participation are critical to improving planning quality and ensuring sustainable social welfare outcomes in Maluku Province.

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INTRODUCTION

Program and activity planning is a systematic process aimed at setting objectives, formulating strategic actions, and allocating resources in order to achieve predetermined outcomes within a specific time frame. In the context of government institutions, planning involves problem identification, needs analysis, priority setting, and the formulation of measurable and realistic action plans (Abidin et al., 2025). The primary purpose of this process is to ensure that every program and activity implemented aligns with the institutional vision, mission, and development policies, thereby delivering optimal benefits to the community (Davis et al., 2025). For programs and activities to achieve their intended objectives, the planning process must be conducted with a high level of quality, accuracy, and coherence (Hakim et al., 2025).

The quality of program and activity planning within government institutions plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of governance (Hakiman & Sheely, 2025). High-quality planning ensures that programs are designed with clear direction and are grounded in reliable data and the actual needs of the population (Majogoro et al., 2025). As a result, programs are not merely reactive or ad hoc responses to emerging issues, but are instead structured strategically to support both short-term priorities and long-term development goals. Sound planning also strengthens policy consistency and enhances the likelihood that development interventions will produce sustainable outcomes (Margayaningsih, 2024).

Furthermore, planning quality has a direct impact on the allocation of resources, including budgetary funds, human capital, and time (Nurahsan et al., 2025). Well-prepared plans enable government institutions to minimize inefficiencies, prevent overlapping activities, and reduce the risk of program failure (Prawira & Maulida, 2025). Through comprehensive analysis and inclusive stakeholder participation, planning processes can improve accountability and transparency in public administration. This approach also fosters greater public trust and encourages community involvement in development initiatives, reinforcing democratic governance principles (Purnamasari et al., 2025).

High-quality planning also serves as a foundation for effective monitoring and evaluation. Clearly defined objectives, indicators, and implementation strategies allow government agencies to track progress and assess whether programs are being executed according to plan (Rahmah et al., 2025). When deviations or shortcomings are identified, timely adjustments can be made to improve performance. This dynamic approach to planning supports the development of a responsive, adaptive, and results-oriented organizational culture, which is essential for continuously improving public service delivery (Rifai et al., 2025).

The Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province has a primary mandate to support the Governor in carrying out regional autonomy functions in the social sector (Sakir & Silawane, 2025). Its responsibilities include formulating social programs in alignment with the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan, developing technical policies in the social sector, providing licensing and public services in accordance with prevailing regulations, delivering technical guidance, supervising technical implementation units, managing functional positions, administering institutional operations, implementing gubernatorial policies related to social affairs, and performing other assigned duties in accordance with its institutional functions. These responsibilities place the Social Affairs Office in a strategic position within the provincial development framework (Sebunya & Gichuki, 2024).

To fulfill these responsibilities, the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province adopts a vision centered on the realization of social welfare inspired by social solidarity, developed by and for the people of Maluku in a sustainable manner (D. M. Selanno et al., 2025). This vision underscores the institution's commitment to improving community well-being through programs and activities targeting vulnerable groups, including the poor, neglected children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and disaster-affected populations (H. Selanno et al., 2025). However, the

effectiveness of program and activity planning remains constrained by several challenges, such as limited budget availability, inaccurate or incomplete data, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders (Silawane et al., 2024). These constraints highlight the importance of evaluating planning quality to ensure that programs are effective, targeted, and responsive to real social conditions (Situmeang et al., 2025).

Previous studies on development planning evaluation emphasize the importance of participatory planning as a means of achieving inclusive and responsive development. Despite its recognized value, community participation in planning processes often remains symbolic rather than substantive (Tan et al., 2025). This situation is commonly caused by limited realization of community proposals, lack of transparency, and resource constraints. In addition, weak public engagement is frequently linked to limited understanding, low awareness, and negative past experiences that have reduced public trust in planning forums. These challenges indicate the need for systematic participatory methods supported by strong institutional frameworks and oversight mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation that genuinely improves development outcomes (Wahyudianto et al., 2025).

In contrast to earlier approaches, a data-based participatory perspective represents a more integrative framework for evaluating program and activity planning. This approach combines active community involvement with the use of accurate and relevant data as the foundation for decision-making. It emphasizes that planning quality is determined not only by technical competence but also by the extent to which community voices are incorporated and supported by empirical evidence. By integrating citizen input with data-driven analysis, planning evaluation becomes a collaborative process rather than a top-down exercise, enabling more precise, inclusive, and sustainable policy recommendations.

Evaluating the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province through a data-based participatory perspective is therefore essential to assess how effectively planning processes incorporate community involvement and utilize valid data. Participatory planning in this context implies the active engagement of multiple stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, social organizations, community leaders, and local government units, from the initial stages of problem identification through to the formulation of action plans. Such involvement is critical to ensuring that social programs accurately reflect real needs and conditions on the ground.

However, participation alone is insufficient without strong data support. Evaluation efforts must examine how the Social Affairs Office utilizes socio-economic data, poverty data, disability statistics, and findings from social surveys and assessments in designing programs. Accurate and up-to-date data enable planners to establish appropriate priorities, avoid incorrect assumptions, and improve the effectiveness of social interventions. Consequently, evaluation should focus on data availability, validity, and integration within planning documents and decision-making processes.

In addition, evaluation should assess the extent to which community feedback mechanisms are utilized in planning formulation and revision. The Social Affairs Office needs to establish reporting systems and dialogue forums that allow citizens to provide constructive input and critique program plans. Within a data-based participatory framework, evaluation is not limited to measuring outcomes but also examines the quality of the planning process itself, including its openness, inclusiveness, and responsiveness to changing social conditions.

An effective evaluation process must generate actionable recommendations to improve planning quality in the future. These recommendations may include strengthening the capacity of planning personnel, enhancing social data information systems, and expanding community participation through civil society engagement. The Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province should position evaluation as a continuous learning mechanism rather than a mere administrative requirement. By doing so, data-based participatory planning can become a solid foundation for achieving equitable and sustainable social welfare development across the province.

Recent scholarly works represent the current *state of the art* in program and activity planning evaluation by emphasizing participatory governance, performance-based planning, and evidence-informed decision-making within

public sector institutions. Contemporary studies increasingly integrate concepts such as results-based management, collaborative planning, and data utilization to enhance policy effectiveness and accountability (Tan et al., 2025; Wahyudianto et al., 2025). However, most of these studies tend to examine participation and data use as separate dimensions, focusing either on procedural participation mechanisms or on technical data management systems. As a result, the interaction between participatory processes and data quality in shaping overall planning quality remains underexplored, particularly within sectoral agencies responsible for social welfare at the subnational level.

This condition reveals a clear *research gap* in the existing literature. There is limited empirical research that simultaneously evaluates the quality of program and activity planning through an integrated data-based participatory perspective, especially in provincial social affairs institutions operating in resource-constrained and socially diverse contexts such as Maluku Province. Previous studies have not sufficiently examined how community participation is substantively translated into planning documents through the systematic use of valid socio-economic data, nor how institutional capacities and coordination affect this integration. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by providing an evaluative framework that combines participatory engagement and data utilization to assess planning quality. By doing so, the research contributes to advancing the literature on local and sectoral governance, offering a more holistic understanding of how inclusive and data-driven planning can improve social welfare outcomes.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province from a data-based participatory planning perspective. This approach is appropriate as it allows the researcher to explore meanings, perceptions, and practices underlying planning processes, stakeholder participation, and data utilization in social program formulation. The research was conducted over a two-month period at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province, selected due to its strategic role in provincial-level social welfare planning and implementation.

Data in this study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct observations involving informants who are directly engaged in program and activity planning. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, namely: (1) holding strategic or technical positions related to planning and program implementation; (2) possessing knowledge and experience in the preparation of planning documents; and (3) being involved in decision-making or data utilization processes. Key informants included the Head of the Social Affairs Office, division heads, planning staff, and relevant functional officers. Secondary data were collected from planning documents, official reports, policy regulations, and institutional archives to support and enrich the primary data.

Data collection techniques consisted of interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to capture informants' perspectives, experiences, and assessments of participatory practices and data use in planning. Observations focused on planning activities and interactions among stakeholders, while documentation provided empirical evidence of planning quality, data integration, and policy alignment. Data analysis followed an interactive model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, carried out continuously throughout the research process.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability techniques. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents, as well as triangulation of informants across different organizational levels. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a consistent research procedure and detailed documentation of the research process, while confirmability was achieved by linking findings directly to empirical data and minimizing researcher

subjectivity. Through these measures, the study aims to produce reliable and robust findings regarding the quality of data-based participatory planning in the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study present empirical findings on the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province from a data-based participatory planning perspective. This section highlights how planning processes are implemented in practice, particularly in terms of stakeholder involvement, the use of social data, transparency, and institutional capacity. The findings are derived from in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and are intended to provide an objective overview of the strengths and limitations of current planning practices. These results serve as a foundation for further discussion on how participatory and data-driven approaches can enhance the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of social welfare programs at the provincial level.

Stakeholder Involvement in Participatory Program Planning

The findings of this study indicate that stakeholder involvement constitutes a central element in the program and activity planning process at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province. Planning is not carried out solely as an internal bureaucratic exercise, but rather as a process that seeks to accommodate the perspectives and interests of various actors who are directly or indirectly affected by social welfare policies. These stakeholders include internal government units, local community representatives, social organizations, traditional leaders, and groups representing vulnerable populations. Their involvement reflects an effort to align planning outcomes with real social conditions and community needs across different regions of Maluku.

At the institutional level, the Social Affairs Office engages with other regional government organizations to ensure coherence between social programs and broader provincial development priorities. Coordination meetings and technical forums are used to harmonize proposed programs with strategic planning documents and sectoral responsibilities. Through this mechanism, participatory planning also functions as a tool for inter-agency integration, reducing the risk of overlapping programs and strengthening policy consistency. This form of stakeholder engagement supports the idea that social welfare challenges are multidimensional and require collaborative solutions rather than isolated interventions.

Community participation emerges primarily through consultative mechanisms such as development planning forums and targeted discussions with community groups. These forums provide space for communities to articulate their concerns, particularly regarding poverty, social vulnerability, disability, and disaster-related risks. Although community members may not always be familiar with formal planning terminology, their lived experiences and practical knowledge contribute valuable insights into the identification of priority issues. The findings suggest that such participation helps planners capture local realities that may not be fully reflected in administrative data alone.

Traditional leaders and local social figures also play an important mediating role in participatory planning. In many areas of Maluku, social structures and customary authority remain influential in shaping community behavior and trust toward government programs. Their involvement enhances the legitimacy of the planning process and facilitates communication between government institutions and local communities. By engaging these actors, the Social Affairs Office is better able to ensure that proposed programs are socially acceptable and culturally sensitive, which is particularly important in a province characterized by geographic dispersion and social diversity.

Despite these positive aspects, the study also identifies limitations in the depth and consistency of stakeholder involvement. Participation is often concentrated at the consultation stage, while involvement in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation remains limited. In practice, not all community inputs are fully accommodated due to

budget constraints, regulatory frameworks, or alignment with higher-level policy priorities. As a result, some stakeholders perceive participation as advisory rather than decisive, which may affect long-term trust and engagement if not carefully managed.

Furthermore, the capacity of stakeholders to participate meaningfully varies across regions and social groups. Vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities or isolated communities, face structural barriers in accessing planning forums. Limited information, logistical challenges, and unequal power relations can reduce their ability to influence planning outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of not only inviting participation, but also strengthening facilitation mechanisms and support systems that enable inclusive and balanced stakeholder engagement.

Utilization of Social Data in Data-Based Planning

The results of this study show that the utilization of social data plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province. Data-based planning is understood as an approach that relies on empirical evidence to identify social problems, determine priorities, and design appropriate interventions. In this context, the Social Affairs Office has increasingly recognized the importance of using structured and verifiable data to support decision-making, particularly in addressing complex social welfare issues such as poverty, vulnerability, disability, and disaster impacts.

The planning process commonly draws on integrated social data systems, including poverty-related data, social vulnerability records, and administrative reports from districts and municipalities. These data sources are used to map target groups, assess the scale of social problems, and justify program proposals within formal planning documents. The findings indicate that planners rely on data not only to describe existing conditions but also to strengthen the legitimacy of proposed programs when coordinating with other government agencies and budget authorities. As a result, data functions as a strategic instrument that connects social needs with policy priorities.

In practice, the use of social data enables the Social Affairs Office to design programs that are more targeted and context-sensitive. For example, data on vulnerable households and social risk profiles help planners distinguish between areas requiring immediate assistance and those needing longer-term empowerment strategies. This approach reduces the likelihood of uniform or generalized interventions that may not fit local conditions. Instead, data-based planning supports differentiation in program design, allowing social assistance, capacity-building, and rehabilitation programs to be tailored to specific community contexts across the province.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies challenges related to data quality and integration. Data discrepancies between provincial and district levels, delays in data updates, and variations in data collection capacity across regions affect the reliability of planning inputs. In some cases, planners must rely on incomplete or outdated data, which can limit the accuracy of problem identification and priority setting. These challenges highlight the structural constraints faced by social planning institutions operating in geographically dispersed and administratively diverse regions such as Maluku.

Another important finding concerns the technical capacity of planners in analyzing and interpreting social data. While data availability has improved, the ability to transform raw data into meaningful policy insights remains uneven. Some planning staff demonstrate strong analytical skills, whereas others rely on descriptive use of data without deeper interpretation. This condition affects the extent to which data can be used proactively to anticipate social risks and design preventive interventions, rather than merely responding to existing problems.

Despite these limitations, the overall direction of planning at the Social Affairs Office reflects a growing commitment to data-based decision-making. Data is increasingly viewed not as a formal requirement, but as an essential foundation for improving program effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. The findings suggest that strengthening data governance, enhancing analytical capacity, and improving coordination across data-producing

institutions are key steps toward maximizing the benefits of data-based planning. By doing so, the Social Affairs Office can further enhance the quality of its planning processes and ensure that social welfare programs are better aligned with actual social conditions and community needs.

Transparency and Feedback Mechanisms in the Planning Process

The findings of this study indicate that transparency and feedback mechanisms are important components in improving the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province. Transparency in planning refers to the openness of processes, information, and decision-making stages that allow stakeholders, particularly the public, to understand how programs are formulated and prioritized. In the context of this study, transparency is reflected through formal planning forums, information dissemination, and institutional communication practices.

The planning process generally involves structured forums such as development planning meetings and internal coordination sessions, which serve as spaces for presenting program proposals and discussing priorities. Through these forums, stakeholders are informed about planned activities, budget limitations, and strategic directions. This practice helps reduce information asymmetry and strengthens institutional accountability. The findings suggest that when planning information is communicated clearly, stakeholders are more likely to accept planning outcomes, even when not all proposals can be accommodated.

In addition to formal forums, transparency is also supported through the availability of planning documents and administrative reports. These documents provide a reference for understanding the rationale behind program selection and resource allocation. However, access to such information is still largely institutional and administrative, rather than fully public-oriented. While transparency exists within government structures, broader public access to planning information remains limited, particularly for community groups with lower institutional engagement.

Feedback mechanisms constitute another important dimension of participatory planning. The study finds that channels for community input are available, mainly through consultation forums and coordination meetings involving local representatives and social organizations. These mechanisms allow stakeholders to convey concerns, propose improvements, and highlight implementation challenges. Feedback is especially valuable for identifying gaps between planned programs and actual community needs, providing practical insights that may not be captured through data alone.

Despite the existence of feedback channels, their effectiveness varies. Feedback is often collected during the planning stage but not always systematically documented or followed up. In some cases, community input influences program adjustments, while in others it remains advisory without clear institutional response. This inconsistency affects stakeholder perceptions of responsiveness and can reduce trust in the planning process. The findings indicate that feedback mechanisms tend to function more as consultation tools rather than as integral components of decision-making.

Institutional Capacity and Integration of Planning Documents

The results of this study show that institutional capacity plays a decisive role in determining the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province. Institutional capacity in this context refers to the ability of human resources, organizational structures, and coordination mechanisms to support data-based and participatory planning processes. The findings indicate that while the institutional framework for planning is already in place, variations in technical capacity among planners affect the depth and consistency of data utilization and stakeholder engagement.

From a human resource perspective, planning staff generally understand the procedural requirements of government planning, including the alignment of annual programs with strategic documents. However, not all planners

possess sufficient technical skills in analyzing social data, interpreting indicators, or transforming empirical findings into program priorities. This limitation affects the quality of problem identification and reduces the potential of data-based planning to produce highly targeted and effective social interventions. Capacity-building efforts, such as technical training and mentoring, are therefore essential to strengthen planners' analytical competencies.

Organizational coordination is another important aspect of institutional capacity. The study finds that internal coordination within the Social Affairs Office has been carried out through routine meetings and document reviews, enabling different units to synchronize their program proposals. Coordination with other government agencies also occurs to ensure policy coherence and avoid program overlap. Nevertheless, coordination is often administrative in nature and focused on compliance rather than substantive collaboration. As a result, opportunities for cross-sectoral innovation and integrated problem-solving remain underutilized.

The integration of planning documents emerges as a key indicator of planning quality. The findings show that programs and activities are generally aligned with higher-level planning documents, including regional medium-term development plans and annual government work plans. This alignment ensures policy consistency and institutional legitimacy. However, integration tends to emphasize formal conformity rather than strategic linkage. In some cases, planning documents are treated as administrative requirements rather than dynamic tools for guiding program design based on evolving social conditions.

Discussion

The discussion of this study highlights that participatory and data-based planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province has progressed beyond a purely administrative process and has increasingly incorporated social realities and stakeholder perspectives. The involvement of multiple actors—ranging from internal government units to community representatives and traditional leaders—demonstrates an effort to ground planning in local contexts characterized by geographic dispersion and social diversity. This finding reinforces the view that social welfare planning in Maluku requires collaborative approaches to capture complex and multidimensional social problems. However, the discussion also indicates that participation remains largely consultative, suggesting that while inclusiveness has improved, stronger mechanisms are still needed to ensure stakeholder inputs meaningfully influence decision-making and program prioritization.

From a data-based planning perspective, the findings suggest that social data has become an essential foundation for program formulation and justification. The use of integrated social data systems enables planners to identify vulnerable groups and align interventions with actual needs across districts and islands. This supports theoretical arguments that evidence-based planning enhances policy relevance and accountability. Nevertheless, challenges related to data quality, data integration, and uneven analytical capacity among planners limit the full potential of this approach. In the context of Maluku, where data collection faces logistical and institutional constraints, the discussion underscores the importance of strengthening data governance and analytical skills so that data can be used not only descriptively but also strategically to anticipate social risks.

The discussion further emphasizes that transparency, feedback mechanisms, and institutional capacity are closely interconnected in shaping planning quality. While formal forums and planning documents contribute to institutional transparency, limited public access and inconsistent follow-up on feedback reduce perceived responsiveness. At the same time, variations in human resource capacity and coordination practices affect how participatory inputs and data are translated into integrated planning documents. This suggests that improving planning quality requires a systemic approach that combines capacity building, stronger coordination, and more strategic use of planning instruments. In doing so, the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province can enhance the effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of social welfare programs, ensuring that participatory and data-driven principles are consistently reflected in planning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the quality of program and activity planning at the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province has shown a positive shift toward participatory and data-based approaches. Planning processes increasingly involve relevant stakeholders and make use of social data to identify priority issues and design context-sensitive interventions. These practices contribute to better alignment between social welfare programs and the real needs of communities across Maluku's diverse and geographically dispersed areas. However, the findings also reveal persistent challenges, particularly in the depth of stakeholder participation, the consistency of data utilization, transparency of feedback follow-up, and the varying institutional capacity of planners. As a result, participatory and data-driven planning has not yet been fully optimized as a strategic instrument for social development.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that the Social Affairs Office of Maluku Province strengthen institutional capacity through continuous training in social data analysis and participatory facilitation skills for planning staff. Greater emphasis should be placed on improving data quality, integration, and timely updates through stronger coordination with data-producing institutions at the district level. In addition, participatory mechanisms need to be enhanced by ensuring clearer feedback loops and broader public access to planning information, enabling stakeholders to engage not only in consultation but also in evaluation processes. By implementing these strategies, the planning process can become more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable, ultimately improving the effectiveness of social welfare programs in Maluku Province.

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