

## Transforming Ecotourism in Lampageu Village: an Asset-Based Approach for Sustainable Development

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Ecotourism, Asset-Based Community Development, Masterplan, Community Participation, Sustainable Development

*Received :* 16, November

*Revised :* 16, December

*Accepted:* 18, January

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a masterplan for ecotourism in Desa Lampageu using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The research explores how local assets—both natural and cultural—can be mobilized for sustainable development. A qualitative descriptive methodology was employed, involving Focus Group Discussions (FGD), field observations, and interviews with community members, local leaders, and stakeholders. Data collection spanned three months and focused on identifying assets, creating a digital tourism map, and drafting a comprehensive masterplan integrated with the village budget. Results indicate that the ABCD approach fosters community participation and ownership, leading to practical outcomes such as new facilities and enhanced tourism visibility. This model offers replicable strategies for other villages aiming to achieve sustainable ecotourism.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Lampageu is a fishing village with a charming tourism potential located at the westernmost tip of Peukan Bada District, Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Indonesia. In the Village that well-know as Ujong Pancu (more popular name of the village) lies two natural beaches, which are Lhok Keutapang Beach and Lhok Mata Ie Beach. These two beaches is often called the 'end of the world' because located at the westernmost tip of Sumatra Island. Ujong Pancu is often visited by anglers and sunset lovers. Most people enjoying fishing at this location because of the diversity and easy to obtain. The lack of knowledge about tourism business in the village hinder their great potential, even though the tourism sector has enormous potential. Tourism has been proven to significantly boost economic growth in rural communities, increasing the tourism output value up to ten times compared to agricultural output (Yang, et al., 2021).

One of the most prominent factor is these areas still native and bring the back to nature experience. Initially, this natural tourism activity mostly carried out by "nature lovers" who wanted these destination area to remain intact and sustainable, while maintained culture and welfare of the people. This encourages entrepreneurs and the government to develop tourism based on nature conservation that called ecotourism. Ecotourism is a form of tourist travel to natural areas carried out with the aim of conserving the environment and preserving the lives and welfare of local residents (The Ecotourism Society, 1990). Ecotourism concept developed rapidly in Indonesia, however, to be able to develop the ecotourism concept requires public understanding of the green tourism concept. Ecotourism is a natural tourism concept which prioritizes conservation aspects of the natural environment and community culture without neglected its ecological sustainability management (Black, 1999). These tourism development is not for business purpose only, but more inclined to nature conservation which is included in special interest tourism towards natural objects and attractions. This is a challenge in developing ecotourism in Indonesia, and Aceh in particular.

Developing these tourism requires planning, utilization and control of ecotourism activities. In order to escalate ecotourism development in Aceh, social transformation process is needed in community, so that public understanding about conservation and utilization of natural potential increased. This will change powerless society into an empowered, independent and ultimately civil society especially in rural areas, where special intervention is needed. Therefore, comprehensive planning is needed to produce a master plan for ecotourism village development that elaborated by village programs and activities. The Master Plan and Village Budget will be implemented with the ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) concept, including the preparation of a village development plan by means of optimizing the empowerment of village potential, both in terms of natural resources and the environment, human resources, and also the socio-economics of its people (McKnight, 2017).

Ecotourism villages is manifestation of a sustainable tourism activities in rural areas which develop rural areas into tourist villages based on the natural environment preservation that supported by agrarian communities and creative industries by utilizing natural potential, agriculture, plantations, and animal husbandry became one of the tourist attractions. The village master plan preparation process based on ABCD concept prioritizes resident participation. Through this participatory process, the community could learn from each other to improve knowledge and skills and also to share positive values. Experience proved that villages which have good planning are the villages that can grow mutual trust among their citizens produce openness, mutual respect, equality, justice, honesty and other positive values. So that the residents feel a sense of ownership of development activities in their village, finally rise community participation in maintaining their village.

Despite possess very beautiful natural tourism potential, Lampageu Village has not been able to fully optimize it to generate income. The lack of infrastructure and public facilities also makes tourists reluctant to visit this location. This paper presents a unique contribution through community service activities in Lampageu Village, where the ABCD approach applied to develop an integrated ecotourism master plan and budget. The result of this paper shown a significant transformation, therefore this paper could fills the literature gap on the ABCD approach and also provides practical guidance for community-based ecotourism development. This study is expected to be an important reference in the context of sustainable village development in Indonesia and worldwide.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS**

This research exert a descriptive qualitative approach with a study case design to explore the transformation of ecotourism in Lampageu Village through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. Lampageu Village chosen as the location for community service activities because it has community-based tourism potential which has not been optimally managed, so it is very relevant in the context of implementing an asset-based approach. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the process, community participation and impact of the ecotourism development program carried out.

The village ecotourism master plan construction began with the primary data collection stage using the ABCD approach through Focus Group Discussions (FGD), interviews and field observations. FGD involved village officials and local community leaders, to identify the potential in the village and conduct initial mapping. Interviews were conducted with groups of housewives, local businessmen and tourists to complement existing data. Furthermore, observations were carried out by conducting transects with the community to verify the FGD and interview results, regarding local assets, such as beaches, cultural sites and supporting facilities. Initial mapping modification could be done adjust to existing condition. In the next stage, secondary data collection is implemented from official village documents, previous reports and related literature to support the analysis results. The local community was actively involved in every stage of planning, including the preparation of the ecotourism

master plan and the draft village budget. This participatory approach aims to increase community ownership of the program and ensure long-term sustainability. Tourism development is more likely to succeed when local communities are actively involved, as their perceptions and attitudes play a crucial role in guiding decision-makers toward achieving sustainable rural tourism (Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012). This methodology designed not only for documenting transformation that occur, but also provide a practical model that can be replicated in other villages with similar potential. This evidence-based approach is expected to strengthen the relevance of research findings to the broader context of sustainable development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews with village officials, local residents, and tourists provided preliminary information on the various potentials of Lampageu Village. These include religious tourism to the graves of prominent scholars, hiking trips to Lhok Mata Ie Beach and Lhok Keutapang, visits to Tuan Island, and cultural experiences such as salted fish processing, fishing net pulling, women's Qur'anic recitation gatherings, and more. Subsequently, a transect was conducted with local residents to documenting these potentials and identify specific points of interest for inclusion in the digital map. After gathering all the necessary data, the project team developed a detailed tourism map for Lampageu Village. The finalized map was produced in both digital and print formats, ensuring it is ready for distribution and broader utilization (figure 1).



**Figure 1. Lampageu Village Ecotourism Digital Map**

The results of the ABCD approach obtained the main potential in Lampageu Village are Lhok Mata Ie Beach and Lhok Keutapang which are vastly natural. These location cannot be accessed by motorized vehicles, only accessible on foot. The community itself wants both beaches to maintain their indigenous, so that tourist activities that possible to be developed are tracking, hiking and camping. While, Ujung Pancu Beach, that could be reach by motorized vehicles, could develop tourism activities such as culinary, fishing, swimming, horse riding, and other attractions related to beach. Another potential is religious tourism, where

at the tip of Ujung Pancu Beach lies the tomb of an Acehnesse cleric from the 16th century which is regularly visited by pilgrims both local and international. In addition to the potential, a map of the area is also prepared showing the main tourist locations, trekking routes, and public facilities.

The next process is the preparation of the Lampageu Village ecotourism master plan carried out through several stages involving a participatory approach based on ABCD. The first stage is to analyse data and findings by identifying potential and problems, as well as SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is a method that objectively and accurately analyse and assess current condition of a unit. Through this method we could identify favourable factors that worth to elevate, avoid unfavourable factors, and also clarify future development direction. The second stage is to prepare a master plan starting from the formation of a vision and mission for ecotourism development. Then the preparation of maps and spatial planning, that shows location of tourist attractions, trekking routes, conservation areas and main facilities. Furthermore, the budget and funding sources preparation. Finally, the initial implementation of the master plan, which includes the construction of public toilets, installation of digital-based tourist maps, digital marketing through creating website, social media and content creation. These process result summarized in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1. Ecotourism Master Plan Output Process**

Stage	Major Activities	Result
Asset identification	FGD, Field Survei	List of local assets and requirement
Map Creation	Digital interactive map creation	Tourism maps with QR Code
Master Plan Forming	SWOT analysis, Spatial planning, budgeting	Ecotourism Master Plan Draft
Initial Implementation	Toilet construction and digital marketing	New Infrastructure, website and social media account

Lampageu village masterplan highlighted the sustainable development in tourism which integrate environmental conservation, community empowerment, and Islamic value. Lampageu village that located within Peukan Bada, District of Aceh Besar has enourmous potential in natural “raw” beauty, local culture, and history, including tourim spots such as Lhok Mata-ie and Lhok Keutapang Beach, tombs of religious scholar and other potential.

Strategic approach in this master plan involves active role from community participation through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) concept, tourism management training, and the development of supporting infrastructure. The primary objectives include promoting ecotourism, preserving the environment, diversifying tourism products, and fostering collaboration with various stakeholders, including the private sector and government. The designated programs include tourism management training, annual cultural festivals, environmental conservations effort, infrastructure enhancement, digital marketing and periodic monitoring. SWOT analysis employed to identified strengths (natural beauty, local culture), weakness (insufficient infrastructure

and promotion), opportunity (the increase of halal/syaria tourism), and threats (competition with another destinations and accessibility challenges).

This master plan serves as a strategic guide to transform Lampageu Village into a sustainable ecotourism destination, aiming to enhance community welfare, preserve the environment, and uphold cultural values. Through master plan we indicate the need for 18 public restroom units to be distributed across 18 locations. As an initial step, one public restroom has been constructed at a site determined through a village council meeting. Subsequently, the construction of additional public restrooms will proceed in locations agreed upon by the community, supported by funding from Syiah Kuala University (USK).

Another key initial implementation is the installation of a digital tourism map. To assist visitors in exploring the attractions within Lampageu Village, a digital map has been developed and placed at the village's entrance ticket booth. This map is accessible via a QR code linked to the website "ujungpancu.com". Complementing this initiative, digital marketing efforts have been launched, including the creation of the website "ujungpancu.com" and social media accounts on Instagram and TikTok under the handle "@exploreujungpancu". Content development for both the website and social media platforms has also been prioritized. To ensure sustainable management of these digital marketing efforts, a workshop was conducted for Lampageu Village tourism managers. This training focused on content creation and managing the website and social media platforms. By equipping the local community with these skills, the initiative aims to empower them to independently sustain the digital promotion of their tourism activities beyond the scope of this outreach program.

This activity shows the success of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in creating a community-based ecotourism master plan which based on planning and implementation in sustainable and economy-based tourism management. Identification of assets through FGD, interviews and field observations proves the community has in-depth knowledge of the potential and challenges in their village. This finding supports previous literature that emphasizes the importance of community participation in community-based ecotourism development (Suansri, 2003). Digital map compiled based on an agreement with the community highlighted ecotourism management can be drive using digital-based technology. These results are in line with the findings of Sánchez-Cañizares et al. (2024), which show that digitalization is a key element in increasing the attractiveness of ecotourism in a global context. The compiled digital map is also unique, it displays the local culinary spot, and also main tourist attractions.

The master plan compilation involving the community provides a strong sense of ownership for the community towards the program that has been created. This strategy supports the theory of sustainable development, where collaboration between the community and stakeholders is key to success (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). In the Lampageu village, this success is seen in the community involvement to participate from the beginning. This master plan can be a reference for the local government of Lampageu village in creating programs and also investors that want to invest in tourism development in

Lampageu village. However, the main challenge faced is the funding problem to actualize all the plans in the master plan. This challenge is inline with previous literature which revealed that external funding support is often needed to maximize the potential of community-based ecotourism (Samal & Dash, 2024).

Impact of this activity could be several pivotal transformations. Originally, we are lacking several essential elements such as master plan, designated restroom location at tourism spots, and social media platform but now, a comprehensive master plan has been developed, restroom points already constructed, and social media channel established to enhance village tourism promotions. With these innovations, local community has become more optimistic about managing their tourism initiatives effectively and has found it easier to communicate their tourism programs to external audiences. The tourism attractions at Lampageu Village have become more widely recognized, leading to an increase in the number of visitors. Following this activity, Lampageu Village has gone viral, with Ujung Pancu, “octopus noodles”, and Lhok Mata Ie gaining popularity, supported by numerous content creators sharing their experiences on social media. Overall, this activity provides an essential contribution to the development of community-based tourism with ABCD approach and the utilization of digital technology to support ecotourism programs. This model can be applied to other villages and create a greater impact.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study reflect that the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is an effective method for transforming local potential into a sustainable ecotourism model. In Lampageu Village, asset identification carry out through active community participation allows the development of an ecotourism master plan integrated with the village budget plan. The master plan initial implementation resulted significant and positive changes, including improved infrastructure, active community participation in tourism management, and increased visibility of Lampageu Village through digital platforms. The study also prove that local community involvement in the planning and implementation process boost sense of program ownership, which is key factor to long-term sustainability. With these results, the ABCD approach is not only relevant to Lampageu Village, but can also be replicated in other villages with resemblant conditions.

Nevertheless, the study also revealed several challenges, such as budget and technical constraints in constructing infrastructure. This highlights the importance of external support from local governments and other partners to accelerate the implementation of ecotourism plans. To ensure sustainability and wider impact, it is necessary to strengthen it using local regulations, such as enacting the “qanun”, standard operating procedures (SOP), good governance, and village consistency in developing tourism. In addition, it is required to collaborate with external parties such as government institutions, industry and universities for further development, whether in terms of funds, promotion, mentoring or assistance.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Syiah Kuala University, for their generous financial support in funding the development of the masterplan for the ecotourism project in Lampageu Village. This research and the resulting masterplan would not have been possible without their unwavering commitment to advancing sustainable development initiatives. We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to the community of Desa Lampageu, particularly the local leaders, residents, and youth groups, for their enthusiastic participation and invaluable insights throughout the project. Their active involvement has greatly enriched this studies and ensured its relevance and applicability to local needs.

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