

## Local Community Role in Sustainable Tourism in Saribu Gonjong Village West Sumatra

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### ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism can create a positive relationship between tourism and the local environment through three main dimensions: physical environment, socio-cultural sustainability, and economic sustainability. The local community plays an important role in supporting sustainable tourism. Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village (SARUGO), located in West Sumatra, is known for the Minangkabau community life, traditional *Rumah Gadang* houses, and distinctive cultural dances. This cultural potential needs to be preserved sustainably. However, the community's role in supporting sustainable tourism is still not optimal, so a more focused Sustainable Tourism concept is needed.

The research used a descriptive qualitative method with primary and secondary data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Saribu Gonjong Village was established in 2019 and is managed collaboratively by the local community, *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group), and village leaders who actively preserve culture and develop tourism potential. The village also opens economic opportunities through homestays, crafts, and agro-tourism, although promotion and facilities need improvement.

Capacity building, especially for the younger generation, is conducted through art and cultural training. With enhanced training and wider community involvement, Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village has the potential to become a leading, sustainable destination that improves the community's welfare.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Village; Cultural Preservation; Community Empowerment; Local Economic Development

### INTRODUCTION

West Sumatra is one of the provinces in Indonesia that possesses diverse tourism potentials, including natural attractions, man-made tourism, agro-tourism, historical, and cultural tourism. A culture can endure for centuries if supported by a strong social structure and if it holds intrinsic value within the community (Djunaid & Lumiwu, 2023). The region's variety of attractions is a key advantage that can be optimized to increase national revenue through the tourism sector (Berutu, 2024).

In 2019, domestic tourist visits to West Sumatra reached a high of 19,412,170. However, this number declined significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As conditions gradually recovered, the number of visitors rose again, reaching 11,657,662 in 2023, although it has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels (Biro Data dan Sistem Informasi, 2025). These statistics highlight the need for strategic development to restore and enhance tourism growth in the region.

Achieving the goals of tourism development requires strong collaboration among all stakeholders, including central and local governments, the tourism industry, educational institutions, local organizations, and especially local communities. Harmonious cooperation and clearly defined responsibilities are essential to creating high-quality tourism. In this context, the role of local communities is crucial, as they are the custodians of the culture, environment, and experiences that attract tourists.

Today, tourism trends are shifting towards the concept of sustainable tourism, which aims to preserve both the environment and cultural heritage that make a destination unique. According to the World Tourism Organization and United Nations Environment Programme (2005), sustainable tourism consists of three key dimensions: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability. One example of a tourism destination in West Sumatra that embodies this approach is the Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village (SARUGO), located in Nagari Koto Tinggi, Gunung Omeh District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency. This village is known for its traditional Minangkabau lifestyle, lush green landscapes, iconic *Rumah Gadang* (traditional houses), and the warm hospitality of its residents. It offers a variety of attractions, including cultural performances, traditional cuisine, and both natural and man-made tourist experiences.

Despite its potential, Saribu Gonjong is still considered a developing tourism village and has yet to rank among the top three destinations in West Sumatra. Some visitors have suggested that better planning and management are needed. Therefore, local community involvement is essential for further development, particularly through the implementation of sustainable tourism practices. Rather than focusing solely on increasing tourist numbers, the goal should be to ensure long-term benefits for the community and the preservation of local culture. Based on this background, this study seeks to explore the extent of local community involvement in supporting Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village as a sustainable tourism destination.

## METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The qualitative method is grounded in interpretive philosophy and is used to examine natural conditions, where the researcher serves as the key instrument in data collection and analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from first-hand sources, including interviews with Saribu Gonjong tourism village managers, local community members who are key stakeholders, and direct field observations. Secondary data were collected indirectly from literature, documents, previous research results, and official websites. The data collection methods used include interviews, observations, and documentation.

The data analysis technique in this study follows the Miles and Huberman model in Wijaya (2018), which involves four stages: (1) Data collection, which starts with a literature review to verify and validate the existence and relevance of the research problem. This is followed by interviews and field observations to collect empirical data directly from relevant sources, ensuring that the research reflects real-life conditions and provides a comprehensive understanding. (2) Data reduction, which is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into meaningful information. This stage involves discarding irrelevant data and retaining only those that are essential to the research objectives. (3) Data display,

where the researcher organizes and presents the data in visual or narrative form, such as charts, tables, or written descriptions. In this study, a validation table involving two experts; one in content and one in media; was also used to support data credibility. Additionally, information was categorized based on thematic relevance. (4) Conclusion Drawing, where after sufficient and relevant data have been gathered and analysed, conclusions are drawn to answer the research questions and reflect on the findings.

### **Validity and Reliability Test**

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies triangulation of data and sources. This involves cross-checking data obtained from multiple sources and methods to ensure accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the findings.

## **RESULT**

### **Local Community**

#### **Perspectives of the Local Community in Preserving Culture and Tradition**

The local community is a group composed of individuals who are born and reside in a specific area, sharing common sociocultural backgrounds, customs, traditions, and moral values that define and represent the identity of that region. According to the International Labour Organization ILO, local communities possess distinctive identities, histories, territories, and cultural heritages, living under traditional legal and customary systems passed down through generations (Dhir et al., 2020). In essence, culture and tradition are closely intertwined with tourism, as both aspects mutually benefit, in which culture helps attract tourists while tourism contributes to local income, employment opportunities, and wider cultural recognition (Permana & Dewi, 2024). This indicates that the local community is more than a social unit; it is a collective deeply connected to its environment, culture, and historical legacy.

In the context of tourism, Gopal (2023) emphasize that local communities play a vital role in creating sustainable and inclusive tourism. Each city or region in Indonesia has its own strategy, and the richness of natural and cultural diversity presents significant opportunities to increase tourist visits (Berutu & Dhanka, 2024). According to Sofiani and Yulia (2023), an analysis of tourism village potential based on the criteria of tourism village development shows that of the seven key aspects, only the readiness of human resources and supporting facilities still need improvement; while the other five aspects, tourist attractions, community motivation, infrastructure, institutional capacity, and land availability; are generally sufficient for tourism village development.

Local community members in Saribu Gonjong expressed their views on preserving culture and tradition, noting that the tourism village has experienced rapid growth in recent years. Tourists from within and outside the region have increasingly visited, especially during traditional and cultural events. According to locals, the number of visitors rises significantly during cultural celebrations, which serve as unique attractions. Cultural preservation efforts are carried out in various ways, notably through maintaining the authenticity of traditional Minangkabau architecture, particularly the *Rumah Gadang*. The community is committed to preserving the original form of these traditional houses, performing regular maintenance to keep them sturdy and authentic. This high level of awareness among residents regarding cultural values is supported by active involvement from local stakeholders, including the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) and local leaders (*lorong*), who consistently provide

education and raise awareness to ensure that cultural traditions are passed down to future generations.

The tourism village management and *Pokdarwis* also affirm that the main attraction of Saribu Gonjong lies in its cultural richness. Local culture is not only presented passively but is integrated with recreational activities and interactive experiences where tourists are invited to participate in cultural practices and engage in the daily life of the local community. The establishment of the tourism village originated from the awareness of a local leader (*jong*) regarding the unique and well-preserved traditional architecture in the area. This realization led to consultations and socialization efforts with local representatives, eventually resulting in the official establishment of Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village in 2019. The name "*Saribu Gonjong*" (A Thousand *Gonjong*) reflects the abundance of traditional houses with *gonjong*-shaped roofs (resembling buffalo horns), which are characteristic of Minangkabau architecture. Despite facing challenges such as technological advancement and changing lifestyles, the local community and village managers strive to minimize modernization in architectural changes. Continuous education and awareness campaigns are held to preserve cultural values. These preservation efforts are expected to not only strengthen cultural identity but also contribute to sustainable tourism development.

Visitors have also acknowledged that the local community plays a critical role as stakeholders in preserving the culture and tradition of the tourism village. This is evident in the warm hospitality extended by residents from arrival to departure. Beyond their friendliness and openness, the locals also show their dedication to cultural preservation, particularly by maintaining the traditional architecture of their houses in its original form, ensuring the authenticity of cultural traditions. Based on the researcher's observations, it is clear that the local community of the tourism village actively works to safeguard their culture and traditions, most visibly through the preservation of the original architectural form of *Rumah Gadang*.

**Figure 1. Local Community Houses in SARUGO Tourism Village**



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

Starting from the entrance of the tourism village and throughout the entire area, the local community not only preserves traditional houses but also safeguards and maintains cultural symbols and values believed to hold significant meaning. Furthermore, all cultural events that



have been held in the village are introduced to visitors as an effort to promote and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the area.

**Figure 2. Cultural Event Poster at the Entrance of SARUGO Tourism Village**



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

The local community's perspective on preserving culture and tradition can be summarized as a strong commitment to maintaining their unique identity, history, customs, and cultural values that have been passed down through generations and preserved as a regional hallmark. In the Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village, cultural preservation is carried out through the maintenance of traditional Minangkabau houses (*Rumah Gadang*) without altering their original form, the safeguarding of cultural symbols, and the organization of cultural events introduced to visitors. The local community, the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*), and the village leaders (*lorong*) play significant roles in educating residents and preserving local wisdom. Officially established in 2019, the village was founded based on the awareness of its cultural and architectural potential, and named "*Saribu Gonjong*" due to the abundance of traditional houses with the distinctive *gonjong* (buffalo horn-shaped) roofs. Despite facing the challenges of modernization, the community remains committed to preserving its culture. Visitors also appreciate the hospitality of the locals and the authenticity of the preserved culture, which together serve as key attractions in the development of sustainable tourism.

## **Sustainable Tourism**

### **Natural and Environmental Resource Management**

According to Wibowo and Belia (2023), sustainable tourism development is a widely recognized concept in tourism development. Sustainable tourism considers the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts from the present to the future. Djunaid and Lumiwu (2024) state that green tourism tends to focus on environmental conservation, natural resource management, and the development of sustainable policies. Furthermore, a study by Sgroi (2020) revealed that sustainable tourism can serve as an effective tool for managing natural resources, ensuring benefits not only for the current population but also for future generations. If sustainable, it can also become a prerequisite for regional competitiveness and economic recovery in the near future.

Based on interviews with local communities, it was reported that awareness of the importance of preserving and maintaining local culture has been increasing. The community not only

values their cultural heritage such as arts, customs, and traditions passed down through generations but also actively participates in various cultural preservation activities. This participation is evident in the enthusiasm of residents during cultural events, support for local art communities, and efforts to preserve the local language. Additionally, the community shows a high concern for environmental cleanliness. They have come to understand that a clean environment reflects the quality of life, leading to a decline in littering behaviours. The growing sense of ownership towards their living environment encourages residents to take greater responsibility for maintaining cleanliness and environmental beauty. This attitude reflects a positive shift in the community's mind-set toward a more orderly, healthy, and culturally rich lifestyle.

Furthermore, sources from the local tourism awareness group (*Pokdarwis*) stated that the existence of the tourism village brings several positive impacts to the community. One of the most prominent impacts is the increased awareness of environmental conservation, demonstrated by the habit of not littering. Moreover, a growing sense of ownership towards the tourism village encourages active community participation in preserving and developing the village's potential. The spirit of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) is strengthened and continuously preserved. The community also shows great enthusiasm in relearning traditional customs that had started to fade, which positively contributes to the preservation of local culture. Stakeholders such as the local community and *Pokdarwis* actively engage in guiding the younger generation to ensure the village and its cultural heritage remain sustainable in the future. One form of this guidance includes teaching traditional dance and skills in making local handicrafts.

Based on observations conducted by the researcher in the tourism village, it is evident that the community has a high awareness of the importance of environmental cleanliness. This is reflected in the availability of waste disposal facilities both at the village entrance and at various points within the village. The clean and well-maintained environment is a clear indication of the community's care in maintaining cleanliness. Moreover, local cultural values are still practiced in daily life and integrated into the management of the tourism destination. These efforts demonstrate the community's commitment to preserving culture while simultaneously maintaining the sustainability of the tourism village as an environmentally friendly destination with high cultural value.

**Figure 3. Environmental Conditions at the Entrance of SARUGO Tourism Village**



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

**Figure 4. Appeal for the Implementation of Sapta Pesona at SARUGO Tourism Village**

Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

Based on interviews with local residents and direct observations in the tourism village, it is evident that the community has a strong awareness of managing natural resources and the environment. They not only maintain cleanliness by providing waste disposal facilities and avoiding littering, but also show concern for preserving local culture. Residents actively participate in cultural activities, uphold mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and strive to preserve traditions that are becoming less known. The presence of the tourism village has strengthened the community's sense of ownership of their area, encouraging involvement in developing local potential and reinforcing cultural values. The tourism awareness group (*Pokdarwis*), together with the community, also plays a role in providing training to the younger generation in traditional dance and crafts as a concrete effort to sustain the village's environment and culture.

### **Economic Impact on the Community**

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (2021), sustainable tourism is a development concept aimed at preserving and maintaining tourism destinations over a long period. This includes protecting the environment, social, cultural, and economic aspects from an early stage so that both local residents and tourists can continue to visit and enjoy the area in the future. Related to the socio-cultural aspect, tourism development must also consider the preservation of local culture and existing social order (Rosanto & Carennia, 2022). Dewantara and Susanto (2020) state that, based on previous explanations, tourism villages have the potential to generate economic benefits for both the government and surrounding communities.

According to local residents, the existence of Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village has created new economic opportunities, one of which is providing homestays for tourists. However, the



economic impact is still not optimal because the number of visitors is limited and peaks only at certain times, causing homestay utilization to be less than fully maximized. Other opinions from the tourism village managers and *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group) highlight that besides homestays, the community also has potential to develop micro-enterprises such as traditional handicrafts. Products like *niru* (traditional woven crafts) can be sold to tourists, although marketing is currently limited and generally conducted through pre-orders. A major obstacle is the absence of a dedicated gallery in the village to permanently showcase and market these crafts.

Daily community activities also become a tourist attraction, especially in the form of agro-tourism. Visitors are invited to experience farming life in the village first-hand, providing an authentic and educational experience. Initially, agro-tourism focused on orange cultivation, which is symbolized in the Sarugo village logo. However, due to unresolved issues with the orange plants, the focus has shifted to cultivating young plants that are easier to develop.

To support tourist visits, *Pokdarwis* has designed tour packages. However, the implementation of these packages has not been optimal due to inconsistent activities and unstable visitor numbers. Further efforts are needed to strengthen promotion, improve service quality, and tailor tourism programs to visitors' interests and needs so that economic benefits for the local community can be more evenly distributed and sustainable.

Based on the author's observations, the existence of Sarugo Tourism Village has positively impacted the local economy. The community actively participates in various tourism activities, such as providing homestays for overnight guests who are warmly welcomed and served from arrival to departure. Additionally, locals are directly involved as participants in various tourism activities, including offering traditional local cuisine, participating in cultural events, and supporting agro-tourism offered by the village. Although still limited, residents have also begun to develop handmade craft products as an effort to support the creative economic potential within the tourism village environment.

**Figure 5. Local Community Handicraft Products**



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)



**Figure 6. Local Community's Agro-tourism Land**

Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

The existence of Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village has opened up economic opportunities for the local community, particularly through providing homestays and micro-enterprises such as traditional handicrafts. However, the economic impact felt is still limited due to an unstable number of visitors and a lack of supporting facilities, such as a gallery to market local products. Agro-tourism activities are also a main attraction, featuring an educational tourism concept based on farming that was initially focused on oranges but has since shifted to young plants due to cultivation challenges. Although tourism packages have been prepared by *Pokdarwis*, their implementation has not been optimal. Therefore, improvements in promotion, service quality, and program adjustments are needed so that economic benefits can be felt more widely and sustainably by the community.

### **Education and Human Resources in Management**

The rapidly growing tourism industry fosters understanding and intercultural awareness through interactions between tourists and the local communities where the tourist destinations are located (Sugiyarto & Amaruli, 2018). According to the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (2021), there are four key pillars developed to promote sustainable tourism: sustainable management (tourism business), long-term sustainable economy (socio-economic), cultural sustainability (which must always be developed and preserved), and environmental sustainability.

Based on the opinion of the Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village management, they actively receive support from various stakeholders through training programs aimed at increasing the community's capacity in managing the village's tourism potential. These activities cover various aspects, including business development, tourism services, and cultural preservation.

One consistent form of community empowerment is the engagement of the younger generation in arts and traditional cultural preservation. This is realized through regular training at an art studio held every Saturday night. Participants come from various educational levels, ranging from elementary school children to high school students. Through these activities, the youth are encouraged to learn about, love, and preserve local culture from an early age.

Regarding the training provided, the tourism village management hopes future sessions will focus more on key aspects of recreation and tourist attractions that serve as the village's main draws. This focus is expected to directly improve the quality of service and visitor experience, while also strengthening Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village's competitiveness as a premier destination. Based on the author's observations, training and human resource development at this tourism destination is already visible through the community's awareness in welcoming and guiding tourists. Visitors are well received and given clear information about the village and available activities. However, human resource development efforts still need to be expanded to reach all levels of the local community. Currently, tourism services and visitor information are dominated by only a few residents, while many others are not yet fully involved. Therefore, more intensive and comprehensive training is necessary to collectively enhance community capacity in supporting service quality and the sustainability of the tourism village.

**Figure 7. Local Community Welcomes Tourists**



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

Management of Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village actively receives support from various parties through training programs aimed at increasing community capacity in managing tourism potential, including business development, tourism services, and cultural preservation. One consistent form of empowerment is the engagement of the younger generation through arts activities and regular training at the art studio every Saturday night, involving participants from elementary to high school levels. This activity aims to foster love for local culture from an early age. Although human resource development efforts are visible in the community's ability to welcome and provide information to tourists, training still needs to be expanded to reach the entire population, as currently it is only carried out by a small portion of residents.

Therefore, broader and more focused training on recreation and tourist attractions is necessary to improve service quality, enhance visitor experience, and establish Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village as a leading destination.

## DISCUSSION

Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village is a community with a distinctive Minangkabau cultural identity passed down through generations. Cultural preservation is carried out through maintenance of the traditional *Rumah Gadang* houses, preservation of cultural symbols, and organizing cultural events involving tourists. The community, *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group), and village leaders actively maintain local wisdom and provide cultural education. Despite modernization challenges, the village continues to uphold traditional values, which remain the main attraction for sustainable tourism.

The community shows a high awareness of environmental and cultural preservation. Residents maintain cleanliness, actively participate in mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and engage in activities to preserve local customs and culture. The tourism village strengthens the sense of belonging to the environment and encourages community involvement in developing local potential. *Pokdarwis* also contributes by mentoring the younger generation through training in traditional dance and handicrafts to ensure cultural and environmental sustainability.

Economically, the tourism village opens new business opportunities, particularly in homestay provision and handicrafts. However, the economic impact remains limited due to unstable visitor numbers and inadequate supporting facilities such as a dedicated gallery for local products. Agro-tourism activities remain a key attraction, although the focus of cultivation shifted due to challenges with orange farming. Although tourism packages have been designed, implementation is not yet optimal. Therefore, promotion and service quality need improvement to ensure that the economic benefits are more widely and sustainably felt by the community.

Village managers actively participate in training to improve tourism management capacity, including business and cultural preservation aspects. One consistently implemented program is youth empowerment through regular art training held every Saturday night. While community capability to welcome tourists is improving, training is still uneven and attended by only a small segment of residents. Hence, broader training focused on recreation and tourism attractions is needed to enhance service quality and position Saribu Gonjong Tourism Village as a premier destination.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

### Strengthening Cultural Preservation

#### Diversification of Cultural Events

Schedule and diversify cultural activities regularly to avoid focusing only on certain occasions, maintaining stable tourist visits throughout the year.

### **Digitization of Cultural Heritage**

Document local culture, traditional houses, and cultural activities digitally (videos, photos, articles) accessible online to expand promotion and education, especially for younger generations.

### **Local Economic Development**

#### **Establishment of an MSME & Local Handicraft Gallery**

It is recommended to build a permanent gallery or souvenir center to display and sell handicrafts and local products, increasing visibility and economic value.

### **Optimization of Tourism Packages**

The packages prepared by *Pokdarwis* should be evaluated and adjusted according to tourist trends and interests. Integration of cultural tourism, culinary experiences, and agro-tourism is necessary to increase appeal.

### **Enhancement of Digital Promotion**

There is a need to maximize promotion through social media and collaborations with influencers, travel bloggers, or tourism platforms to reach a broader audience.

### **Human Resource (HR) Capacity Building**

#### **Ongoing Training for Residents**

It is recommended to continue and expand training on tourism services, basic foreign language communication, and professional homestay management to involve more community members.

### **Youth Empowerment**

Besides art training, it is needed to include entrepreneurship and digital marketing training to enable youth to become active participants in the local tourism industry.

### **Environmental Management and Infrastructure**

#### **Strengthening Cleanliness Facilities and Environmental Education**

It is important to increase the number of trash bins, educational signage, and organize regular mutual cooperation activities involving tourists to raise environmental awareness.

### **Maintenance of Tourism Infrastructure**

There is an importance to ensure roads, public toilets, and other facilities to be well-maintained and cleaned to support visitor comfort.

### **Collaboration and Assistance**

#### **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships**

Building partnerships with universities, NGOs, and relevant government agencies for technical assistance programs, tourism development research, and community training is important to develop the village.

### **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is imminent to conduct periodic evaluations of the tourism village's performance in cultural preservation, economic impact, and service quality to keep management adaptive to challenges and changes.



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