



Local Governance and Poverty Reduction in Decentralising Indonesia: Case in Riau Province

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is still a problem that continues to occur so that it is included in the agenda of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). This poverty issue has received serious attention from developing countries including Indonesia. The paradigm shift from centralization to decentralization that occurred in Indonesia gives hope for the community to be able to live in prosperity. However, the authority that has been owned by the local government has not been able to be utilized optimally in solving the problem of poverty in Riau Province. Based on the empiric phenomenon, this article seeks to answer the question how is the strategy carried out by the local governance in reducing poverty in Riau Province? This study uses qualitative research methods. The data collected in this study comes from interviews, books, research journals, reports, and articles in mass media and online media. Data analysis is done by interactive methods and analyzed using theories or approaches that are relevant to research. The results of this study indicate that the role of local governance in overcoming poverty in Riau Province by; (1) Funding assistance policies for the poor; (2) Infrastructure development to the countryside; (3) empowering indigenous people and communities; (4) Providing access to economic resources for the poor. The conclusion in this study is that the strategies carried out by the local governments have not been able to reduce poverty in Riau Province, because collaboration with private actors has not been optimized.

Keywords: local governance; collaboration; poverty reduction; decentralization; Riau Province

INTRODUCTION

One of the serious problems that are of concern to the global world is poverty. The United Nations has poverty as the "denial of choices and opportunities" that is most basic for human development - to lead a long, healthy, creative life and enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, self-esteem, and the respect of others (Dziedzic, 2006:1). Poverty is still a big challenge for developing countries to be resolved, not least for Indonesia. After the fall of the New Order regime, there was a fundamental change in the system of government which had previously embraced centralized change turned into decentralization. Rondinelli (1981) defines decentralization as the transfer of authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from a



higher level of government to any individual, organization or agency at a lower level. The decentralization policy which is expected to be an instrument that helps in overcoming poverty, but in fact has not brought much influence on the decline in poverty rates. Therefore, the agenda to reduce poverty is included in the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were declared at the UN meeting in 2000 which contained targets to be achieved by countries in the global world. With regard to the realization of the MDGs, countries need to adopt a decentralized system. This was stated by Cheema & Rondinelli (2007), who stated that decentralization of the core prescriptions of international development and democratic adjustment and is seen by many advocates for achieving sustainable economic, political, and social development and for attaining the UN's Millennium Development Goals. The argument from Cheema & Rondinelli (2007) is not much different from what was suggested by Awortwi (2016) which explains that decentralization and local governance of key implementation strategies for SDGs are evidence that there is a correlation between the level of decentralization and the progress of the MDGs. No doubt these lessons provide valuable inputs for the implementation of the SDGs.

After the agenda of the MDGs ends in 2015, the MDGs are replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are set to determine the global development agenda for the coming decades and thus deserve the attention of all stakeholders involved in (sustainable) development. Sustainable development is a continuous and collective effort for bringing the advancement of human prosperity and well-being in lasting balance with planetary support systems (Monkelbaan, 2019). One of the agendas of the MDGs that are maintained and included in the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to reduce poverty. This shows the importance of overcoming the problem of poverty to answer global challenges.

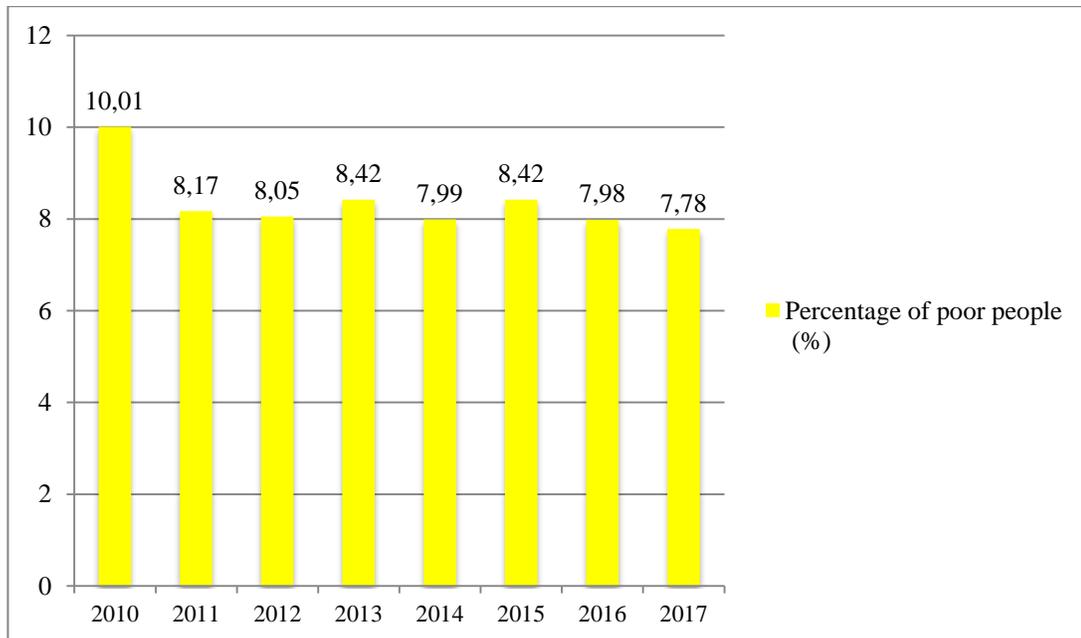
Furthermore, research on the problem of poverty in Indonesia has been carried out by scholars, both in local and national contexts and with various approaches. First, development and reducing poverty (Marcus & Asmorowati, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Földvári, 2016). Second, poverty reduction policies (McCarthy & Obidzinski, 2017; Warr, 2005). Third, economic growth and poverty (De Silva & Sumarto, 2014; Miranti, 2010; and Suryahadi, Hadiwidjaja, & Sumarto, 2012).

Meanwhile, the difference between this research and previous research is that this study tries to explain the relationship between governance in this era of decentralization by reducing poverty by taking the case in Riau Province. Riau Province has unique characteristics related to the phenomenon of poverty. This province is one of the provinces in Indonesia which has abundant natural resources such as petroleum and income from the oil palm plantation sector. However, the abundant wealth of natural resources does not have a significant impact on the welfare of the community in Riau. This can be seen from the percentage of poor



people in Riau Province who experienced fluctuations even though overall they experienced a decline from 2010 to 2017 as described below:

Figure 1
Number of Poor Population in Riau Province in 2010-2017



Source: Statistics of Riau Province, 2018

Decentralization ideally has the effect of prosperity and empowerment for the community, but in the case of Riau Province, it has not had the effect as expected. The design of the development carried out was also not evenly felt by all communities in Riau. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to try to explain how the strategy carried out by the Riau Province government in reducing poverty in the era of decentralization.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach or method. A qualitative method according to Creswell (2014: 4) is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups as a social or human problem. In the context of this study, it will reveal and explain the Riau Provincial Government's strategy in reducing poverty. Therefore, to disclose this, data from sources of interviews and data sourced from documents such as books, research journals, reports, and articles in mass media and online media are needed. However, what needs to be considered in using the sources of these documents is one of the ultimate meaning of a document depends on the context in which it is considered, but there are various types of



contexts that are relevant, such as production contexts and various contexts of use, whether intended or not (Ten Have, 2004: 104).

Data analysis in this study used qualitative analysis with an interactive model by Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014). Data collected from various sources both from interview results and from documents condensed and displayed. This condensation of data refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or changing data from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical documents. Next, displaying data is assembling the information and displaying it systematically. Collection of collected data, selected and displayed systematically and organized is useful for further activities in data analysis, namely verifying and describing the data with interpretations based on relevant theories. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from all stages that have been passed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Poverty is a complex problem that must be resolved immediately so as not to add to other social problems. Therefore, better local governance will enhance economic and social outcomes and lift prosperity and living standards (Giguère & Considine, 2008:12). With regard to this, the role of the government, especially local governments, is responsive to the problem of poverty by carrying out economic development in the community and its environment. This is due to the principle of decentralization which lays the ground for regional autonomy so that regional governments can carry out development and improve the welfare of the people in their regions.

Shah & Shah (2009) explained that local governance is a broader concept and is defined as the formulation and execution of the collective action at the local level. Collective action in this local context includes in overcoming the problem of poverty. Overcoming the problem of poverty is the main task of the government by making various efforts and strategies. The strategy that has been carried out in overcoming poverty in Riau Province is first, providing assistance to the poor. This assistance is needed for overcoming absolute poverty. Absolute poverty measures for poverty in relation to the amount of money are essential for food, clothing, and shelter (UNESCO, 2017). The assistance program for the poor is carried out by local governments in the form of *Rumah Layak Huni* (RLH).

The RLH program is targeted to have 6000 units built in 2019 starting in 2017. The construction of the RLH is still far from the reality that there are still many poor people who need houses. The poor who need housing are 218 thousand housing units and the majority of poor people who do not have homes are in coastal areas (Nasution, 2018). This RLH is a strategic program carried out by the Government of Riau Province which has a direct impact on the lives of poor people in Riau Province.

Then, the local government also distributes business assistance to the poor. Business assistance provided to poor communities in Riau Province through the Joint Business Group (KUBE). In 2016, business assistance was handed over to 600



households with a budget of 1.7 billion rupiahs (Department of Social, 2016). The budget for KUBE is increasing every year and in 2018 a 2 billion Rupiah budget is realized to help businesses in the poor in Riau Province. In order for the assistance to be available, it is right on target and effectively carried out strategic steps such as providing good technical guidance to the poor and evaluating and monitoring the implementation of the assistance.

The second strategy implemented by local governments is infrastructure development. Development therefore implies the improvement over time and on a sustainable basis of the level and distribution of income and the physical and human resource base (Potts 2002:11). Poverty reduction efforts by increasing infrastructure development and regional development develop during the era of decentralization where local governments can freely use their own budgets. The strategy undertaken is to carry out infrastructure development in rural areas. The development of this rural area is implemented because the poor are centralized in the area and are useful for increasing mobilization so that economic activity will be better.

Development of rural infrastructure has been carried out with funding sourced from Village Fund Allocation (ADD). According to Government Regulation Number 43 of 2014 concerning Villages, Village Fund Allocation (ADD) is a balanced fund received by districts/cities in the district/city Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget after deducting Special Allocation Funds. ADD is utilized by the village government to carry out various infrastructures development activities such as the construction of village roads, bridges, drainage, clean water facilities and the construction of village clinics (*polindes*).

Furthermore, the regional government also undertakes industrial area development which aims to support the economic activities of the community. Based on Riau Province Regional Regulation Number 9 of 2018 concerning the Riau Province Industrial Development Plan for 2018-2038, the industrial area in Riau Province is divided into 2 parts, namely:

1. Region of Industrial Growth Center (WPPI) which is located in 3 Regencies/Cities, namely:
 - a) Dumai City (Pelintung Industrial Area, Lubuk Gaung Industrial Area and Pelindo Industrial Estate);
 - b) Siak Regency (Tanjung Buton Industrial Area); and
 - c) Bengkalis Regency (Buruk Bakul Industrial Area);
2. Construction of industrial land outside the WPPI, namely:
 - a) Indragiri Hilir Regency (Kuala Enok Industrial Estate);
 - b) Pekanbaru City (Tenayan Raya Industrial Area); and
 - c) Pelalawan Regency (Science Techno Park).

The development of rural areas and the development of industrial areas is an important part of efforts to reduce poverty in Riau Province. The development is complemented by the construction of transportation infrastructure to support economic development in Riau Province. Investment in the infrastructure development sector is inseparable from the appointment of Riau Province as the



center of the economic corridor in Sumatra which is listed in the Master Plan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (MP3EI).

All development activities have contributed to reducing poverty, reducing inequality between urban and rural areas, and absorbing employment. This development is also beneficial in building connectivity from the village level to the regency and city level and encourages the investment climate in Riau Province. This regional development is carried out in a sustainable manner as is expected in the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The third strategy is the empowerment of communities and indigenous peoples. Empowerment is the asset of poor people to participate in, negotiate (Narayan, 2002). Further explained by Narayan (2002) the key to empowerment is access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organizational capacity. In the context of empowering the poor in Riau Province, the local government involves the community and indigenous people in making policies that are oriented towards improving their welfare through the Development Planning Consultation (*Musrenbang*). This pattern of development planning involving the community is the essence of democracy and decentralization (Pal, 2008). The implication of this community participation is that people are given opportunities and opportunities to determine policies and programs according to their needs.

The results of the involvement of the community and indigenous peoples as part of community empowerment are the vision, mission, programs, and activities contained in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPMD) and the Regional Development Plan (RKPD) of Riau Province as aspirations from the community. Riau's vision for 2014-2019 is listed in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPMD) is "Realization of an advanced Riau Province, a prosperous society, Melayu culture, and high competitiveness, decreasing poverty, providing employment and strengthening the apparatus".

Programs that are aspirations from the community, namely educational programs, community nutrition improvement programs, poor population service programs, housing development programs, social security and assistance programs and social protection, poor empowerment programs, *Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (KAT) and *Penyandang Masalah Kesejahteraan Sosial* (PMKS), programs to improve rural community empowerment, and rural economic institution development programs (Riau Provincial Government, 2014).

The poor and *Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (KAT) contribute to social problems in Riau Province. The number of poor people in Riau Province in 2016 was 303,438 people and the *Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (KAT) amounted to 60,340 people (Department of Social, 2016). Therefore, the regional government has a special program to empower the improvement of living standards of the poor by allocating a budget of 3.6 billion Rupiah and for KAT empowerment a budget of 1.3 billion Rupiah is allocated (Department of Social, 2016).

Empowerment of the poor and the KAT is a form of accountability of local governments in carrying out government functions in order to fulfill the basic rights



of the poor. This accountability is maintained by the Government of Riau Province by increasing organizational capacity so that the empowerment programs of the poor can continue to be carried out continuously. Capacity building for government organizations is carried out through training, workshops, and coordination so that Riau's vision to reduce poverty can be achieved.

Finally, it is giving access to the poor. One form of poverty that occurs is structural poverty. According to Sobhan (2006), one of the causes of structural poverty is an imbalance in the ownership of assets or resources. In this regard, the strategy of the Riau Provincial Government in tackling poverty is to provide access to resources for the poor by providing opportunities and employment opportunities. The Unemployment Rate in Riau Province continued to decline from 2015 which amounted to 6.72% to 5.76% in 2017 (Statistics of Riau Province, 2018). The expansion of employment opportunities is carried out by the regional government to the village level through the development of rural economic institutions, the development of cooperatives and supporting micro, small and medium enterprises (UMKM).

Furthermore, the poor are also given access to other economic sources such as management rights to natural resources such as land and forests. Bachriadi & Wiradi (2011) explain that inequality in land tenure and management in Indonesia causes prolonged conflict and causes poverty. This also applies in Riau Province where the control of land and forests in Riau Province is currently still controlled by companies and corporations. This imbalance of access to control and management of natural resources is what causes poverty to occur in Riau Province. Based on these facts, policies that are related to land management that are pro-poor are needed. Deininger (2003) stated that land policies are of fundamental importance to sustainable growth, good governance, and the well-being of and the economic opportunities open to rural and urban dwellers-particularly poor people.

The efforts made by the local government in providing land and forest management for the poor are one of them is by recommending Social Forestry policies in Riau Province. Based on the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. 83 of 2016, it is stated that social forestry is a sustainable forest management system that is carried out in state forest areas or customary / forest forests carried out by local communities or customary communities as the main actors to improve their welfare, environmental balance and socio-cultural dynamics in the form of Village Forests (HD), Community Forests (HKm), Community Plantation Forests (HTR), *Adat* Forests (HA), and Forestry Partnerships (KK).

The broadest area of social forestry in Riau Province in the Indicative Map of Social Forestry Allocation (PIAPS) is 1.42 million hectares. But the realization of social forestry in Riau Province does not reach 100,000 hectares (Walhi Riau, 2019). The details of social forestry in Riau Province are as follows:



Table 1
Realization of Social Forestry in Riau Province

No.	Social Forestry Scheme	Area (hectares)
1	Village Forests (HD)	43,910
2	Community Forests (HKm)	5,898
3	Community Plantation Forests (HTR)	4,192
4	Forestry Partnerships (KK)	4,000
	Total	58.000

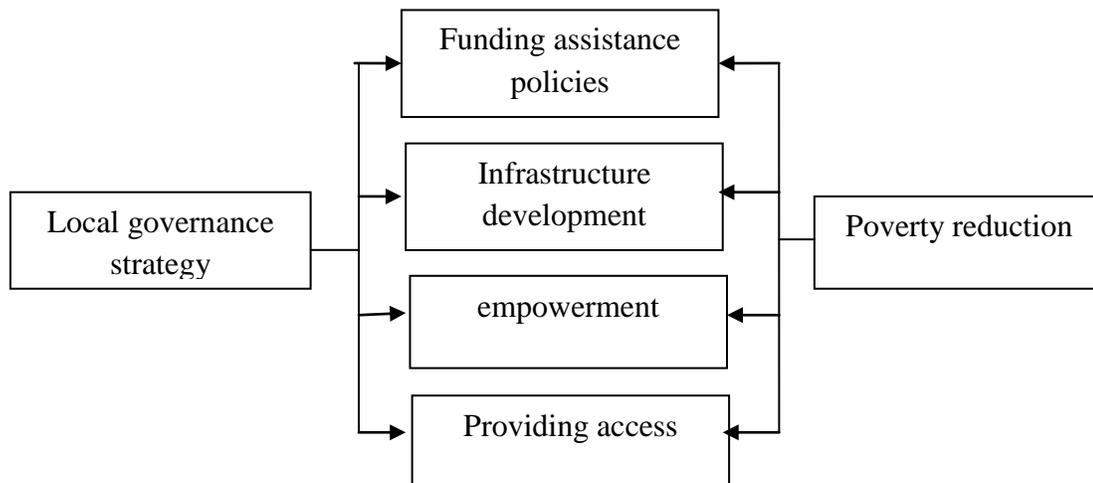
Source: Data processed from Walhi Riau (2019)

Based on the data above, there are only remaining *adat* forest schemes that have not been realized in Riau Province. Submission of *adat* forest management has been carried out by the local government but is still unresolved. There are several *adat* forests that have been submitted to the regional government to be determined by the Government so that management is given to indigenous peoples as proposed by indigenous peoples in *Suku Asli Anak Rawa*, in *Kampung Penyengat*, *Sungai Apit*, Siak Regency, covering an area of 18,952 hectares, and also proposed *Kenegerian Gajah Bertalut* covering an area of 4,414 ha, *Kenegerian Batu Sanggan* 641 ha, *Kenegerian Petapahan* 251 Ha and *Kenegerian Kuok* covering 2,541 ha with a total area of 7,847 ha.

The local government recommends social forestry to be legalized by the government as an effort to provide access to natural resources to the community so that it can help the economy. Meanwhile, this is also beneficial in reducing inequality in land ownership so far which is controlled by corporations, especially forestry sector corporations and the plantation sector. Providing economic access to the poor shows that the local government has tried to do social protection for the basic rights of the community so that the poor can enjoy a better life.

Based on the explanation of the poverty reduction strategy in Riau Province, it can be simplified in the following figure:

Figure 2
Poverty Reduction Strategy in Riau Province



Source: Processed data from researchers, 2019

Weak Collaboration with Private Sectors in Poverty Reduction Efforts

Poverty reduction which is one of the objectives of the SDGs can not only be carried out by regional governments. Although in the era of decentralization, the local government has more dominant roles and authority than central government institutions. Local governments can use their authority and potential to overcome the problem of poverty that continues to occur. Riau Province which is an area with potential and wealth of natural resources, but has not been able to bring its people into a more prosperous life.

The local government has actually made various efforts to alleviate poverty by collaborating with various parties. Ansell & Gash (2008) define collaborative governance as follows a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.. This explanation by Ansell & Gash (2008) is not different from what was conveyed by Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh (2012) who stated that collaborative governance as the processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished. Based on these explanations, the keywords of collaborative governance can be taken is the involvement of state actors and non-state actors in decision making and policy implementation.

It is this collaboration that local governments are trying to do with both the central government, district/city governments, and non-state actors such as NGOs and



the private sector in reducing poverty. Collaborative efforts with the central government can be seen by integrating and synchronizing poverty reduction programs. The program implemented as a form of collaboration between the central government and regional government as an example is the *Program Keluarga Harapan* (PKH) and the *Program Bantuan Sosial Beras Sejahtera* (Rastra).

Meanwhile, to support collaboration in reducing poverty in Riau Province, inter-governmental coordination was carried out by establishing a Poverty Reduction Coordination Team (TKPK). This TKPK is a forum for cross-sectoral and cross-stakeholder coordination for poverty reduction at the provincial level. Provincial and District/City TKPK in Riau Province have the task of coordinating poverty reduction while controlling the implementation of poverty reduction policies and programs in accordance with the National Team Decree. Thus, the program that has been made by the government and regional government can be implemented in an integrated and sustainable manner.

Furthermore, the collaboration between local governments and civil society has also been carried out on various occasions. The involvement of NGOs in poverty reduction in the form of providing policy advocacy, assistance, and through evaluating and monitoring poverty reduction policies. The policy advocacy that was successfully carried out by NGOs was one of which was to provide access to land and forest management for the community so that they could improve their standard of living to be even better. This policy advocacy was carried out by the Riau Peatland Communities Network (JMGR), Jikalahari, Walhi Riau, The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN) Riau, and World Resources Institute (WRI) Indonesia.

Collaboration carried out by local governments with the central government and civil society in Riau Province has been done well. This is different when collaborating with a private sector that cannot be implemented properly. This condition causes losses in an effort to accelerate poverty reduction efforts because the private sector has the resources needed to overcome poverty. Pietrobelli (2007: 21), states that the development of the private sector in developing countries is regarded as essential. The logic behind this statement is simple: poverty reduction is the main objective of development co-operation and a target of development policies. Economic growth is essential for development, and growth is best achieved through the private sector.

The private sector with its networks and financial resources is expected to be able to help local governments in development and poverty reduction. However, the private sector in Riau Province has not shown its contribution to development and poverty reduction in Riau Province. The activities carried out by the private sector in Riau Province were limited to the provision of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) assistance to communities around the operational area such as those conducted by PT. RAPP and PT. IKPP. In fact, there are still many companies and corporations that have not fulfilled their obligations to implement CSR. This is not in accordance with the obligations of companies that must contribute to development in Riau Province in



accordance with Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2012 concerning Corporate Social Responsibility in Riau Province.

The benefits of private sector involvement in development and poverty reduction with local governments are for program synchronization so that programs can be distributed that are the company's obligations and programs that are the authority of the local government. However, the efforts of the regional government to collaborate with the private sector were hampered due to the company's weak commitment to fulfill its obligations in developing the region.

CONCLUSION

The role of local governance in the era of decentralization is needed in reducing poverty. The decentralization system provides authority for local governments to innovate in overcoming problems experienced by the community. In this regard, the regional government of Riau Province has made efforts to reduce poverty on a participatory basis. The participatory-based poverty reduction strategy is to provide assistance to the poor, implement infrastructure development in rural areas, empower communities and indigenous peoples, and provide access to economic resources for the poor.

However, the participatory strategy undertaken by local governments in reducing poverty in Riau Province has not been optimally carried out. This is caused by governance in overcoming the poverty that has not been done in an integrated and comprehensive manner. This is, of course, contradictory to efforts to reduce poverty which are essentially shared responsibilities between the government, the community, and the private sector. However, in the context of poverty alleviation in Riau Province, it shows that collaboration or partnership has not been established with the private sector. The private sector only provides assistance sporadically without coordination and cooperation with local governments in financing development and poverty alleviation. The involvement of the private sector is absolutely necessary so that poverty alleviation efforts can be carried out in a participatory and integrated manner so that all planned programs can be achieved with maximum resources.

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