

# The Role of Community Social Extension Workers to Promote Social Welfare Programs in Rural Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Community social extension workers are essential in developing social welfare, especially in promoting social welfare programs in rural areas. Social extension officers (government officials) have limitations in reaching all villagers, and villagers have the limitations in using ICT to access social extension materials. This study investigates the role of community social extension workers as volunteers in promoting government social welfare programs in rural areas. We found that the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia had registered 1,381 volunteers spread over 1,255 villages in 51 regencies/municipalities. Community social extension workers promote social welfare programs in rural areas; they carry out social counseling with guidelines from the Ministry. Social extension media include print, digital, outdoor, and demonstration media. Social extension materials were re-delivered to the local community with various adjustments to the language, media, and equipment so that the local community quickly perceived it.

**Keywords:** social extension, rural development, digital communication, social welfare, voluntary

## 1 Introduction

In the era of information disruption related to the advances in information and communication technology (ICT), rural communities are often made confused by the various information circulating on social media [1]. Rural communities often cannot distinguish between information in the form of facts or hoaxes<sup>1</sup>, between official information from the government and information that is not official from the government. Hoax or fake news is a form of cyber crime that may seem petty and simple but has a massive impact on people's social life [2]. The most hoaxes came from social media in the form of Facebook 92.40 percent; chatting applications 62.62 percent, and websites 34.40 percent [3]. Villagers often get hoax

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<sup>1</sup> A hoax is an information that is engineered to cover up actual information. In other words, a hoax is defined as an attempt to distort facts using convincing information that cannot be verified. It can also be interpreted as obscuring the actual information, by flooding the media with the wrong message so that it can cover up the correct information.

information through social media and consider it official information from the government, but in reality, it is fake news.



**Fig. 1.** Example of a social assistance hoax  
*Source:* [4]

Social assistance from the government is one of the hoaxes that has stirred up the people. One social assistance program hoax was during the registration process for beneficiaries of the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan/PKH). The hoax announced a registration through a URL, even though the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs had never carried out the online PKH registration process.

Although the information is open and easily accessible to rural communities, efforts are needed to implement social welfare programs' communication, information, and education (CIE) in rural communities so that people can find correct and factual information. Human resources who can carry out CIE about social welfare programs in rural communities. Community social extension workers are one of the social welfare human resources who communicate, inform and educate social welfare programs [5]. The role of community social

extension workers is very strategic in rural areas, especially in the era of information disruption, because they are a bridge between the government and rural communities. In contrast to social extension officials tasked with carrying out social assistance in specific programs such as the Family Hope Program, Sembako Program, and Child Social Welfare Program, the community social extension workers are expected to be able to provide information on all social welfare programs. Community social extension workers supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia are the key actors in carrying out the social extension in the community and are prominent community members such as religious, traditional, women, and local youth leaders [6]. A social extension is a process of changing behavior through disseminating information, communication, motivation, and education by social extension workers. It can either be orally, in writing, or demonstrated to the target group so that the same understanding, knowledge, and willingness to participate actively in developing social welfare can emerge from it [5]. The principle of counseling is the development of community behavior through a non-formal educational approach to help provide options so that they can solve the problems faced independently. Therefore, it becomes interesting to conduct a study on the role of community social extension workers in promoting social welfare programs in rural areas.

## **2 Methods**

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method that provides detailed descriptions of specific circumstances, social settings, and relationships [7]. We chose this approach to explore secondary quantitative data on the role of community social extension workers in promoting social welfare programs in rural areas.

Our data collection methods include: (a) secondary data from literature studies of academic papers and related government documents, and (b) primary data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with the government's functional social extension officials and community social extension workers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with the government's functional social extension officials, while interviews with the community social extension workers were conducted through phone and texting applications. We also triangulated to check the validity of the data. Triangulation is a method for data validation that utilizes data from multiple sources for comparison or matching [8].

Semi-structured interviews in 2022 were conducted to obtain up-to-date information on policies and the role of community social extension workers in promoting social welfare programs in rural areas. This is due to the previous years of research in 2019, 2020, and 2022 the community social extension workers were in extraordinary conditions. Particularly before the COVID-19 pandemic, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and when there was still a special work unit that fostered community social extension workers, the Center for Social Extension of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and after the absence of that special work unit.

## **3 Results and Discussions**

### **3.1 Community Social Extension Workers Profile**

Community social extension workers are one of the human resources for social welfare [9] who are social volunteers [10] and from the local community. Appointment of community social extension workers taking into account the limited number and reach of functional social extension officials with the status of State Civil Apparatus. In 2020, there were only 488 functional social extension officials recorded [11] and most of them work for the Ministry of Social Affairs as central government officials and do not frequently interact with rural communities.

In 2022, the number of community social extension workers recorded is 1,381 people spread across 34 provinces and 51 regencies/municipalities. The formation of community social extension workers began in 2018 until 2022 by the Center for Social Extension of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Referring to an online survey conducted by Irmayani et al. [12] on 754 community social extension workers from 1,265 community social extension workers registered in 2020, the demographic characteristics of community social instructors are obtained.

More than half of the community social extension workers are generally spread across Java (29.71 percent) and Sumatra Island (28.50 percent). The rest are quite evenly distributed on the island of Kalimantan (12.60 percent), Sulawesi Island (15.53 percent), Bali and Nusa Tenggara Islands (10.48 percent). Meanwhile, a small proportion is in the Maluku Islands and Papua Island (3.18 percent).

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics

<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n=754</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	56	
Female	44	
<b>Region</b>		
Sumatra	28.5	
Java	29.71	
Kalimantan	12.6	
Sulawesi	15.53	
Bali and Nusa Tenggara	10.48	
Maluku and Papua	3.18	
<b>Age</b>		
17 - 40	68.57	
41 - 60	30.9	
61 above	0.53	
<b>Education</b>		
High school	42.71	
Diploma/Bachelor	56.5	
Master/Doctor	0.8	
<b>Occupation</b>		

Entrepreneur	27
Private sector	20
Village officials/Honoraries	23
Homemaker	17
Farmers/Fishermen/Labors	9
Student/Unemployed	4

Source: [12]

The average age of community social extension workers is in the young adult age category, namely in the age range of 17 to 40 years, which is 68.57 percent. Furthermore, respondents in the middle age category aged 41 to 60 years amounted to 30.90 percent. In addition, respondents in the elderly category or age range 61 years and over is 0.53 percent. When viewed in terms of age, most of the community social extension workers are generations who are already familiar with ICT, making it easier for the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs to carry out technical guidance online. Community social extension workers require a minimum education level of Highschool equivalent. There is 56.50 percent of Highschool graduates, 42.71 percent with Diploma/Bachelor graduates and 0.80 percent Master/Doctor. The education of community social extension workers is also relatively good and is expected to convey information to the community well. Suppose we look at the main job of community social extension workers. In that case, 27 percent are self-employed, 23 percent are village officials/honorers, 20 percent are private, 17 percent are homemakers, 9 percent are farmers/fishers/laborers, and as many as 4 percent are students/unemployed.

### 3.2 Providing Communication and Information Services

Community social extension workers provide CIE services regarding the beneficiaries of the social welfare services (Pemerlu Pelayanan Kesejahteraan Sosial/PPKS), Potential and Sources of Social Welfare (Potensi dan Sumber Kesejahteraan Sosial/PSKS) and Social Welfare Programs. PPKS are individuals, families, groups, and or communities who, due to an obstacle, difficulty, or disturbance, cannot carry out their social functions, thus requiring social services to meet their physical and spiritual needs adequately and reasonably [13]. The PPKS include street children, neglected children under five, neglected elderly people, people with disabilities, and poor families. The public does not widely know what is classified as PPKS, so social extension workers are required to carry out the socialization.

PSKS are individuals, families, groups, and/or communities that can participate in maintaining, creating, supporting, and strengthening the implementation of social welfare. There are 12 types of PSKS in the form of individuals, groups, or institutions: (a) Professional Social Worker, (b) Community Social Worker (Pekerja Sosial Masyarakat /PSM), (c) Disaster Preparedness Cadets (Taruna Siaga Bencana /Tagana), (d) Social Welfare Institutions (Lembaga Kesejahteraan Sosial /LKS), (e) Youth Organizations, (f) Family Welfare Consultation Agencies (Lembaga Konsultasi Kesejahteraan Keluarga/LK3), (g) Pioneer family, (h) Forum for Community-Based Family Social Welfare (Wahana Kesejahteraan Sosial Keluarga Berbasis Masyarakat /WKSBM), (i) Women social welfare leaders, (j) Social Counselor, (k) Sub-district Social Welfare Personnel (Tenaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Kecamatan /TKSK), (l) Entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the various programs and nomenclature of the

potential and sources of social welfare have not been widely known and utilized by the community [14].

Social welfare programs include the Family Hope Program, Sembako Program, Child Social Welfare Program, Social Entrepreneurship, Integrated Assistance, Social Rehabilitation of uninhabitable houses, and assistance for disaster victims. These various programs have beneficiary requirements, program mechanisms and conditions. The various provisions, terms and mechanisms of the program are due to the limited sources of information and the lack of clarity in the information obtained by the village community. Thus, a community social extension worker is needed to explain this. The lack of clarity of information causes confusion and conflict among the people [15]. The use of social media is one of the sources of dismay itself, and the need to conduct fast and appropriate social extension to deescalate the situation [16].

Social extension workers carry out counseling activities not only face-to-face, but also take advantage of online digital media [17]. There are various factors that affect counseling activities, namely learning facilities, training, and the scope of learning materials. The most dominant influencing factor is the scope of the learning material[18]. The social extension materials are sourced from the Center for Social Extension's multi-media service, which is taken online by community social extension workers. Multi-media counseling services can be in the form of the Center for Social Extension's Website, Youtube channels, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Tiktok [19].

**KEMENTERIAN SOSIAL REPUBLIK INDONESIA** **PS** **#KEMENSOS** *Hadir*

## Bersama Kita Lawan Corona Bersama Kita Cegah Dampak Sosial di Masyarakat

**SALING GOTONG ROYONG**  
Bekerja sama, bahu membahu dalam mempermudah penanganan virus Covid-19 dengan tetap berada di rumah secara bersama-sama agar mempercepat pemutusan rantai penularan virus.

**SALING TOLERANSI**  
Saling toleransi dan menghormati satu sama lain, tidak melakukan pembelian bahan pokok ataupun produk kesehatan (masker dll) secara berlebihan dalam satu waktu.

**SALING MENGINGATKAN**  
Saling mengingatkan untuk tetap tenang dan tidak terprovokasi, selalu mengikuti anjuran pemerintah terkait informasi pencegahan dan penanganan covid-19.

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**Fig. 2.** Examples of social counseling materials

*Source:* [20]

Social extension materials can be directly disseminated to the public. Thus, the social extension has made a social extension transformation called cyber extension. The cyber extension comes with the hope of breaking the boundaries of time, space, and distance. The cyber extension is the gate to the smart extension [21]. Cyber extensions utilize the power of networks, computer communication and interactive multimedia to facilitate the mechanism of sharing information or knowledge[22]. A social extension program no longer has to be carried out in the field [23] which requires face-to-face contact between the extension worker and the community. However, when it comes to cyber extension, the beneficiaries of social welfare services in the village often experience obstacles, so the message from the extension material does not reach the rural community. This is because, among other things, the rural community in villages does not have internet access, the community's language skills, and the extension materials are too short or incomplete. Therefore, it is necessary to transform the extension material according to the conditions and situations of the rural community. The transformation of digital extension materials is carried out by community social extension workers and disseminated orally at formal and informal meetings in the village. Social extension workers have a strategic role as mediators between the government and society. Extension workers carry out government programs to the community (top down) and convey community aspirations to the government (bottom up) for evaluation and improvement of the program[24].

### **3. 3 Providing Responsive Services**

Community social extension workers are not only given the task of conveying information but also providing responsive services. Responsive Service is a quick response service to help people who experience social problems or obstacles related to social welfare [19]. These responsive services include providing counseling and group guidance services to individuals, groups, and communities and facilitating the accessibility of resource systems related to solving social problems.

These counseling services are provided to people who need advice and solutions to the problems they face. In addition, in the event of a disaster where the Ministry of Social Affairs become the leading sector of post-disaster action [25], community social extension workers can assist the Psychosocial Support Service Team (LDP) to communities affected by natural/social disasters. This was done by the community social extension workers when there was a flood in Jakarta [26]. Community social extension workers are tasked with: (a) conducting an assessment of the condition of the community affected by the disaster (number of victims, disaster impact, social impact, potential existing resources, (b) providing motivation and spiritual healing, (c) carrying out activities to overcome community trauma, e.g., inviting children to play games, and competitions, (d) conducting outreach on prevention/reduction of risk/impact of disasters to the community, (e) cooperating with other stakeholders in providing services to the community.

In terms of facilitating the accessibility of resource systems related to solving social problems, for example, family problems linked to LK3. The duties of community social extension

workers are: (a) assessing individuals/families/groups experiencing problems, (b) listening to complaints from the problems raised, (c) giving motivation and reinforcement, (d) seeking information on program services or agencies/institutions that have the capacity and authority in problem-solving. Sources of information can be obtained from the Sub-District/Municipality/Provincial Social Service, (e) help find solutions to the problems, (f) refer to competent parties if the problem is beyond the capacity and ability of the community social extension workers.

### **3.4 Providing Assistance Services**

Community social extension workers give assistance services [15] to local community groups or institutions to increase capacity and capability in implementing social welfare programs. The forms of assistance carried out include: (a) inviting the community to take an active role in the activities of social groups, local community organizations, and village, hamlet, and neighborhood government activities, (b) activating and increasing the role and function of local community institutions that are ready to play a role in helping to organize social welfare such as Karang Taruna, PKK, mosque youth groups, community self-help cooperatives, Joint Business groups (Kelompok Usaha Bersama/KUBE), farmer groups, community organizations, and others, (c) assisting in program planning/local institutional activities, (d) inviting social groups community/local community organizations to participate in addressing priority social issues in their area through joint social actions or social movements. Thus, community social extension workers act as agents of change in the development of rural communities but have not provided the optimal results [19].

## **4. Conclusion**

Community social extension workers have the main task of carrying out information and communication services for social welfare development but also provide responsive services and assistance services. Community social extension workers transform digital counseling and field counseling in rural communities so that rural communities are not confused and panicked due to the misinformation on social media. This study recommends that the existence of community social instructors be maintained, considering that rural communities still need a bridge between the village community and the government related to social welfare development.

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