

Development Communication Convergence: Problems in Village Transfer Management in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra

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Abstract – This article analyzes the convergence of development communication in managing village transfer programs in Indonesia. This study describes the communication process that occurs between managers in managing development in villages. Critical assessment within this study aims to determine the convergence of communication in reducing communication gaps in the management of the Village Transfer. Data were collected by conducting interviews, in-depth observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Data were collected qualitatively and analyzed descriptively. The results showed that the convergence of communication did not fully occur among stakeholders in which villagers were not directly and fully involved in the process. The Village Transfer Program truly provides the greatest benefits for community welfare, a strong motivation from all elements of the village community to play an active role in every development process by emphasizing the role of the three pillars of village development namely the villagers, the village government, and the village forum (BPD.)

Keywords – Village Transfer, Communication, Convergence, Divergence, Stakeholders.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social inequality particularly rural poverty in Indonesia caused mismatched between real demand of rural communities and the implementation of development. Thus, the development has little impact on social welfare increasing the number of poor households in rural area (Khan 2001; Priasto 2015; Arumsari *et al.* 2017). The Government of Indonesia has developed a program called Village Transfer as an effort to increase the social welfare in villages. It has been implemented since 2015 until now. The program is focused on building village infrastructures and community empowerment.

The transfer is allocated by the Central Government (APBN) in the amount of 1000 US\$, per village (Ministry of Finance 2017). According to a research conducted by SMERU in 2018 (a research institute that focused on poverty), problems within this program such as corruption, collusion and nepotism are caused by the absence of special policies for the poor (Shukri *et al.* 2017). The usage of the fund is also not based on community demand priority and ignores community involvement (Laonet *et al.* 2013; Lancaster 2015). The communication process in managing the village transfer is not participatory resulting disagreement between stakeholders or usually called convergence of communication. This problem is very crucial

because even though the amount of the fund is very big, it cannot alleviate poverty of the community.

Problems in rural development process are caused by several factors and one of them is misunderstanding or convergent communications (interactive) among stakeholders in the village. (Mendel 2004). Misunderstanding or convergent communication result in less optimal impact on community participation in developing the village (Kahan 2015; Marzuki 2015; Khan and Akhter 2017; Sanusi 2017). The usage of village transfer are ineffective because of inadequate capacity and capability of the village government and because of the inactive involvement of community as mentioned by (Mendel 2004; Syamsi 2014 Paellorisky and Solikin 2019) that low community participation, especially in interactive communication resulted in the development process is not going well since the planning to the evaluation stages.

The orientation of this program's designers and its recipients particularly village heads are different that there are many problems exist (Widodo 2017). Development is halted and thus give no impact to rural welfare because of the system of village transfer management particularly when the fund is quite abundant (Lewis 2015).

The Sumardjo's communication convergence model (1999) explains that this model can be implemented effective and efficiently in the context of agricultural counseling or other developments. Convergent communication rests on the process of mutual/relational communication with an emphasis on information and on a mutual understanding where communication patterns that occur among actors need to be understood. The convergence communication model applies the concept of retrospective (reviewing as a reference for future strategic planning) in achieving mutual understanding, mutual agreement and collective action.

Information about development programs is disseminated that divergence (differences) in program development becomes convergence (common interests). According to (Syandi 2009; Nurrisziana *et al.* 2017), interactive communication is in line and pay attention to the principles that apply in the form of convergent communication include: 1) information, 2) uncertainty, 3) convergence of interests 4) mutual understanding, 5) common objectives 6) joint action, and 7) network of relationships or social relations.

The Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) (2016) found 62 cases country a total of 1.8 million US\$ at the village government level. The village administration becomes institutions that are vulnerable to corruption, especially after

the initiation of the village transfer program. A new phenomenon emerged where the management of economic resources in the village is aimed for the personal interests of the village head and his apparatus become. The village government manipulates and ignores the prerequisites of public participation as a means of vertical supervision in village development planning (local elite capture). Convergent communication among all village transfer managers is indicated to be the cause of the problem.

Communication on Rural Development

Rogers (1976) mentions the critical perspective of development communication is a change in approaching on development. This approach will affect changes in the development communication approach because development is a process that must provide access and opportunities to community sustainably. The development paradigm will give consequences in the pattern of development communication.

Communication has been used for "development" purposes for a long time. In reality, Indonesia continues to conduct development aimed at making social change in society where all the development should be communicated to all elements involved in the development itself. Development communication is ways or efforts that can be done in communicating ideas from parties who need a development. Efforts made are a process of cooperation to achieve goals from development ideas.

Every actor involved in the development process including individuals, organizations and nations have rights and responsibilities, participating in development to benefit from it. According to Sumardjo (1999), the convergence approach is more appropriate in the era of globalization because it establishes an interface between the interests of all stakeholders and location specifications. This approach puts human dignity (farmers) in a more appropriate manner; the presence of farmers with their own interests and abilities becomes more recognized and valued, so that it encourages higher community participation.

Convergence of communication is a form or pattern of communication one with others in an activity where each participant or element has a common understanding, meaning, belief, faith and take joint action towards a goal. While, according to the results of research conducted by Subejo (2014), involving managers or stakeholders in development programs needs dialogue in order to develop and define emerging and relevant issues in planning a development initiative so that mutual understanding can be established.

The typology of communication convergence uses the approach of Perception, Interpretation, Understanding, Believing and Action (PIUBA). Convergence Pattern is where all managers are in a convergence pattern that has the same understanding, meaning, belief, trust and common action in managing development.

Several previous studies explained that development communication is by involving or community participation in the development process but according to Mulayan (2018) there has been no special effort to include marginalized people, especially women, the poor, elderly, disabled, ethnic minority and religious minorities in the development process in villages that utilize the village transfer program. Added by Arumsari (2017), digital and social media can be used as a means of communication in rural development. Kuswandoro (2016) explained that operationally, it is necessary to develop a spirit of togetherness in collective action, strengthening social capital in the paradigm of "village develops".

The development communication phase according to Rusadi (2014) is a convergence model, namely the development that uses

- (1) Multi platform channel
- (2) Sources of innovation and creativity across individuals, families/groups, countries.
- (3) Cross-national, regional and global dependency.
- (4) Collaborative processes.

Hedebro (1982) revealed that in modern communication, there is a political orientation in development communication, namely:

- (1) Everyone has the right to fulfill their information demand in accordance with ongoing community consensus,
- (2) The importance of equilibrium of information exchange at personal, regional and national levels.
- (3) Information from foreign cultures needs to be balanced with adequate national (local and internal) information.
- (4) Enabling the creation of *two-way* communication pattern at every level in society.
- (5) Equal opportunity for everyone to communicate according to own abilities and existence of attention to its effectiveness,
- (6) Respecting individual participation in society properly (individual privacy),

- (7) Everyone has the right to be a communicator to get their basic needs constitutionally.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods with a case study approach. The paradigm used is a critical paradigm to analyze the communication process that occurs among the village transfer managers so that the role of each manager in conducting the program is identified. This aimed to find the same understanding communication process among managers.

The instruments used were in-depth interviews, observations, documentation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The initial phase of this research is by doing direct observation of their communication process starting from survey of the construction project site, village meetings to sub district meetings. The second phase is conducting interviews with informants to get information on the role of village transfer managers. The next stage is conducting FGD as a confirmation method of the interview's result. The final stage is analyzing the communication process that occurs with the Creswell (2007) descriptive approach.

The research locations is Panombean Panei Sub District, Simalungun District, Nagori Bosar Village, Panombean Pematang and Banuh Raya (Figure 1). Site selection uses a purposive sampling method by looking at the progress of each village in managing the village transfer. The research started in September 2018 - January 2019. The informants of this research consisted of 38 individuals who comprised of the managers at the district, sub-district and village. Informants are staff at the Community Development and Empowerment Agency, regency experts of empowerment and technical, district staff, village heads, village secretary, implementing team (TPK), head of the sub-village assistant, local counselor, community leaders, residents and village representative board (BPD).

Village Nagori Bosar, Pematang Panombean and Banuh Raya Subdistrict Panombean Simalungun is the location of this research. Simalungun District has implemented the Village Fund Program in 31 villages and it has been recorded five cases of village funds misuses in five villages with one imprisonment to a village head. This fact indicates that gap of communication among program managers Simalugun Regency. Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze converged communications in the village transfer management and to formulate strategies and implementation procedures of convergent communications in village transfer management. The results of this research can

be practically as a policy reference in the implementation of village transfer management for the welfare of the community.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION N

The results of the analysis of the convergence communication of fund management at the research site showed a lack of convergent communication of village fund managers from the district to village level. Convergent communication only occurs among village heads, village secretaries, village government staff, sub-village heads, sub-district heads, district government service staff, sub-district staff, implementing teams, village assistants, local assistants

and community leaders. The participation of rural residents (except those mentioned earlier), from the beginning to the evaluation of the program implementation tend to be low or less optimal. Their inactive role in the communication phases and few presence was seen during the village and sub-village meeting. Also, their participation was seen very low during the community empowerment activities as described in Figure 2. It seemed that each communication event that occurs did not involve all of elements of village transfer management.

This program did not induce an interactive communication between village transfer managers resulting some parties were ignored particularly ordinary citizens.

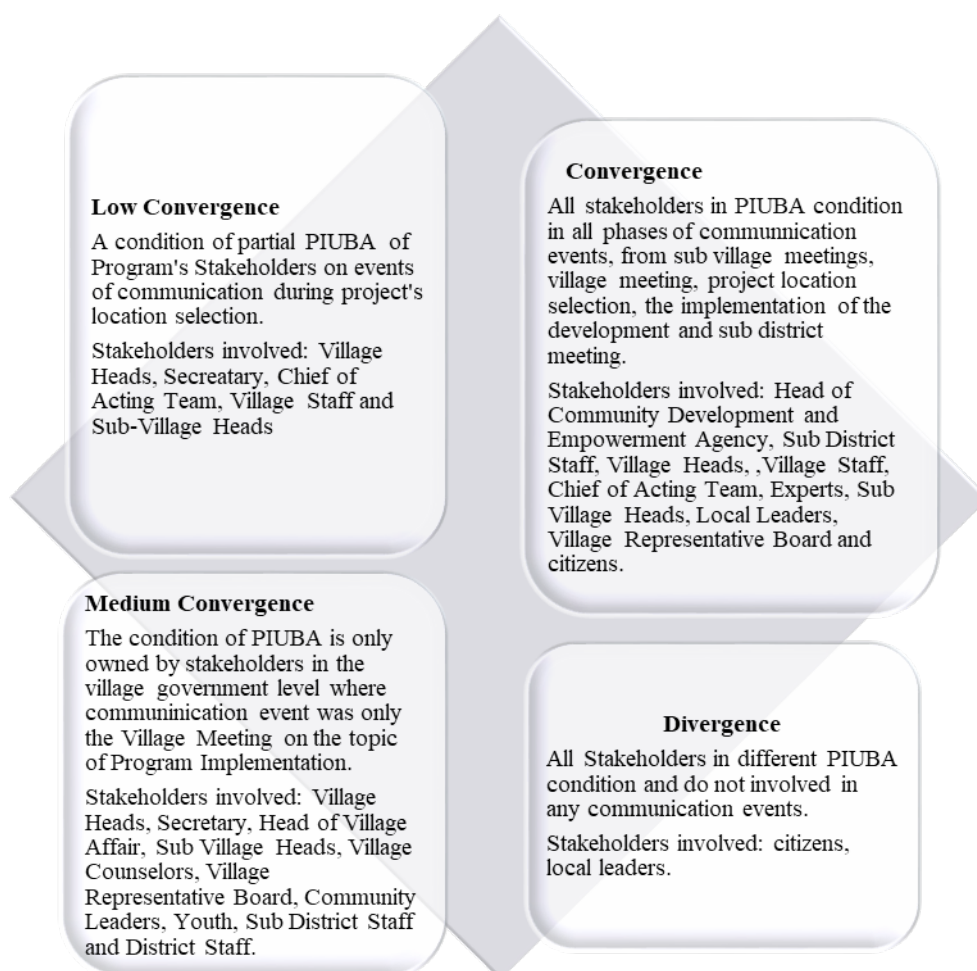


Figure 2: Convergence Situation in the Management of Pematang Panombean, Nagori Bosar and Banuh Raya Village Transfer (2019)

In Figure 2, the quadrants show differences in the pattern of communication convergence in communication events. At low convergence, stakeholders who were in the

PIUBA condition are the head of the village, the village secretary, Chief of Acting Team, village staff, head of sub village, and village counselors. This condition occurred in

executing the initial survey activities in selecting the project location. The site selection was determined during this phase.

Meanwhile in the medium convergence, PIUBA condition was only owned by stakeholders at the village government level where communication events occurred only at the beginning of the program implementation, namely in the socialization activities held by the district government regarding programs to be conducted in the village and the implementation of village meeting or the Village Government Work Plan (RKP). Stakeholders involved in the socialization activities were those invited to attend the official meeting at the village or sub-district office. They are village head, village secretary, Head of

Village Affair, Sub Village Heads, Chief of Acting Team, village counselors, Agency Staff, sub-district staff and community leaders.

Divergence is the opposite of the condition of convergence where the possibility of a common/same understanding of the program from every managers is completely absent because there is no communication interaction. This condition was experienced by residents who did not understand the existence of the program in the village, and did not want to know any information or there was no curiosity about the communication events that were taking place in the village in the context of the village fund program.

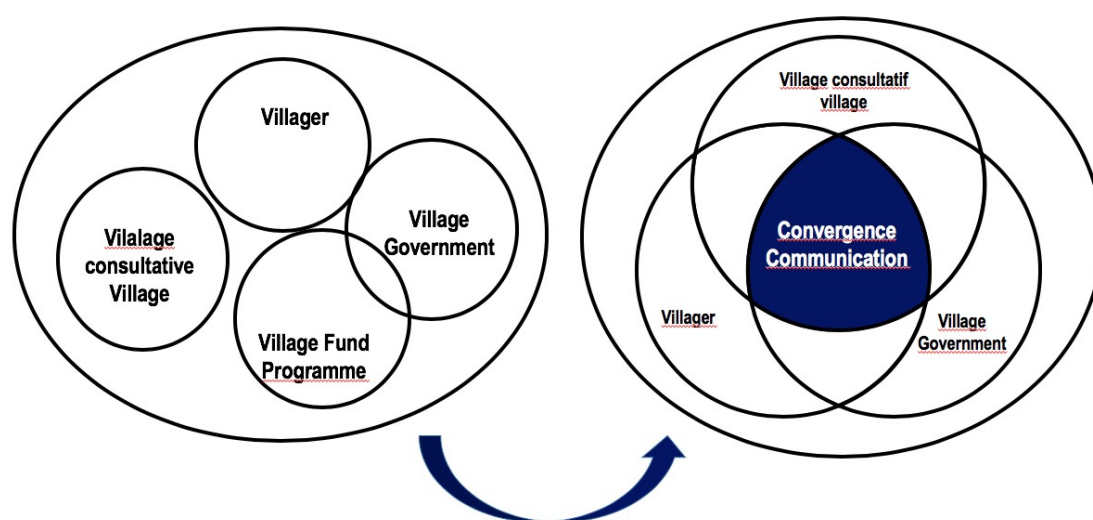


Figure 3 Ideal Conditions for Convergence of Communication on Village Transfer Management

Communication convergence is created if all those involved in the communication event have an interactive dialogue so that an understanding and action are taken together (Retno Sri Hartati Mulyandari1), Sumardjo2) 2010; Mulyandari *et al.* 2016) and if it is connected with the Figure 3, it appears that in the process of village fund management it does not happen. The communication map of village transfer managers shows that the communication that occurs between the managers is dominated by the village head. Village Representative Board and villagers do not have closeness to the program in terms of communication. It is clear that ordinary citizens do not have closeness to the program because there is no interactive dialogue or communication.

The ideal condition of convergence communication in the implementation of the village transfer program within

the circle of the village government, village representative board and ordinary citizens is in one bond or slice. The slice shows that managers do not have different perceptions, interpretations, understandings and actions in carrying out development. Any decision to be carried out in the village is the result of a consensus. The implementation of village transfer program is a process of continuous communication events among all managers. The communication activities in each communication event among managers is the arena of the mutual information exchange, interactive dialogue and agreement emergence.

1. Community Participation

The research found that the divergent communication in the management of village transfer did not stop the implementation of the project. The construction of village

facilities such as roads and drainage continued even though the community was not directly involved in the activities. The results of the study show that community perceive village transfer as funds managed by the village government, unlike other projects which is normally received by the community such as cash transfer. However, the Village Law regulates that village transfer are funds used for village development with the active participation of villagers in its management. The community misperception resulted in people's mistakes in interpreting the village transfer program. Residents perceived that this program is only managed by the village government and that residents do not have to involve in its management. Misperceptions and interpretations lead to distrust of villagers to the village government in managing the funds. The results of community interviews show mistrust of citizens (KH) towards village transfer managers.

"The lack of understanding of the citizens about the village transfer program, no socialization I do not know that transfer funds goes to village, the village heads were called to sub district and Agency office, then conducting Development Planning Meeting (musrenbang) but because there was no socialization to residents so people do not come when invited when there is a meeting about village problems. There are no meetings for program's socialization at sub village level so that the people do not come in the sub village meeting regarding the village fund, only village head knows and it is when the Development Planning Meeting". (KH)

The absence of citizens in every communication event of village fund management is due to the lack of detailed information to the community. Managers particularly the village government disseminate information through the village information bulletin board page located in the village office and some were taped at traditional kiosks. Information conveyed through these media does not effectively make people know and understand the activities being conducted in the village. Villagers usually do not read the notice, moreover those put in front of the village office.

According to the sub village heads, they are also conducting house to house invitation but residents denied it and even said that there were no announcements posted about the program. Residents who do not get the information will be reluctant to engage in development

activities because they felt that they are not get involved in the development activities.

The lack of community attendance at sub village and village meetings indicates that development decisions in the village are mostly decided by the village government. The communication process that occurs between the managers is more dominated by the village government. The very low socialization level is causing residents not knowing that there is a meeting in the village where they should be involved. Following is the conversation of one of the residents in Nagori Bosar Village:

"There never was, there was never any such thing as meeting. There is no socialization at all except socialization from local health centre, politician, lots of from General Election Commission (KPU), candidates for legislative members who come to the village with many offers and opportunity of funding if selecting them. About this village transfer, there is nothing at all in the sub village meetings, what is exist is only the sub district development meeting (musrenbang), this is where the development projects proposals are discussed." (HE).

According to residents, information about the village fund and its activities are not received by citizens making them reluctant to take part in the planning and evaluation processes. Information only reaches community leaders or certain people in the village. Very minimal socialization causes the development activities in the village not known to the public in an informative manner. The communication carried out by the village transfer managers tends to be conducted with parties who have a close relationship or a particular group, where the group is people who are close to the village government and are used to working on village projects. For the village government, this method makes it easier to carry out development; especially the construction of village facilities because of the demand for progress in the use of funds that must be immediately fulfilled and accountability reports are made. Built village infrastructures are only known in detail by some of the parties such as village officials, the implementation team, village counselors, and the sub district staff who are responsible in monitoring and supervision. Supervision from residents is very minimal and in line with what is mentioned by (Harrison and Sayogo 2014) that residents should has a right to information in the form of transparency.

This condition means that villagers need information about the program being carried out in the village; residents expect the village government to provide opportunities for

residents to participate in the implementation of development. Citizens' curiosity is actually very large. As a result of the absence of clear information that can be used by residents in understanding what is happening in the village, it causes a low willingness to participate. According to (Gaventa 2006; Mwiru 2015; Maksum and Rohman 2019), it is absolutely important to involve villagers in managing development so that the development is more effective and villagers would be more enforced in conveying their aspirations. Intensive dissemination of information will give impact to citizen's curiosity which will allow them to participate in development. Active community participation in a development program will have an impact on the success of the program (Suryani 2011).

The communication channel used by managers, especially the village government, can use other media to convey information to all citizens with social media, groups and other social media, as stated (Murinska Gaile 2013; Nurritziana *et al.* 2017; Harjanti *et al.* 2018) that information will be conveyed widely to the public using digital media facilities such as short text messages (SMS), whatsapp and other social media.

The impact of divergent communication is that all managers are not in a single communication event that reflects differences in *Perception, Interpretation Understanding, Believing, and Action* (PIUBA). This has become an anomaly in program implementation. All elements of the village community should be involved in communication events that dialogue the interests of the common interest (Kahan 2015); if this continues, it will cause great loss to the village, and also the nation that has allocated substantial amount of funds to villages. Poverty will persist even though efforts have been made to alleviate it through the village transfer program.

The lack of community trust in the results of development leads to a lack of participation. Villagers who participated in the development process were resulted from trust in their village leaders. According to Afifah *et al.* 2017 distrust of society increase because of the lack of *trust* in the government inducing decreased level of participation. Distrust is caused by dishonest attitude with the management of village transfer or less transparency in the utilization and management of development.

2. Communication Strategy

Understanding among all development managers is absolutely needed in order to achieve program objectives and communication strategies are needed. Frandsen and Johansen 2017 explain that

the communication strategy should be used by a program or organizations working in achieving program objectives. A good communication strategy is when the communicator, the message, the channel and the receiver produce the effect of attitude changing from the giver and the receiver of the message (Cangara 2013; Bungin 2015; Mefalopulos 2008). Meanwhile, Mohr and Nevin defines that a communication strategy as the use of a combination of communication phases which includes the frequency of communication, communication formalities, communication content and communication channels.

Based on the results of the focus group discussions with residents in three villages, data obtained shows that that the communication strategy steps that can be taken in implementing the village transfer program in Desa Banuh Raya, Nagori Bosar and Pematang Panombean are as follows:

- (1) Selecting the suitable media for socialization, not only use announcements posted in the village kiosks but also increasing direct communication intensity from the sub village heads to residents (*face to face*). The leadership of each village official is applied by opening space for dialogue or direct discussion for individuals namely villagers in order to obtain their input, responses and thoughts on development programs (Rahamah, *et al* 2011).
- (2) Increasing the use of available social media as a means of outreaching and *updating the* process and development of programs starting from planning, implementation to reporting. For example, social media such as Facebook or whatsapp groups so that residents can know the development progress in their respective villages. Socialization is the process of crossing the life span through which individuals acquire and interact with certain social and cultural values and standards of society. The media as a powerful socialization tool is responsible for forming the individual's socialization process. (McKee *et al.* 2014; Genner and Süss 2017).
- (3) Creating village information system based on the rural policies or Village Law (Antlöv *et al.* 2016). The media of Village Information System can be channeled through various media, such as meetings, stickers, banners, and other media (Sulistyowati and Dibyorin 2013; Widiyanti 2017) to reach citizens. Citizen participation will increase when information is fully distributed and

will give positive impact to the community to be more communicative and take behavioral actions that support development.

- (4) Increasing the capacity of managers in communicating village transfer programs. Communication skill of leaders or village fund managers is an indicator of effective management of development activities (Ibrahim *et al.* 2017) because there is still much unclear information received by the managers of the program. As explained by (Kolzow 2014) that effective leaders need a good communication skill especially in building the roles of all managers. Increasing capacity and empowerment to managers will increase the ability to innovate in new communication and communication culture. The results revealed that leadership empowerment leads to an increase in the results of open innovation through organizational learning cultural intervention. (Naqshbandi and Tabche 2018)
- (5) Enhancing the participation of citizens in evaluating the program externally (JICA 2001; Warsono and Ruksamin 2014 Ofosu and Ntiamoah 2016) aiming to build the capacity of management, increasing the sense of belonging and enhancing effective feedback, and increasing accountability.
- (6) Increasing the use of social media as a means of updating the progress village development projects on social media (Facebook, the Whatsapp group, Instagram) because it allows citizens to directly monitor the development of village fund management in the village and in the sub village. Communion and information through social media is very effective to resolve an issue and convey the aspirations of the villagers, especially in areas already covered by media (Suri 2019).

The utilization of village transfer for rural development requires a dialogue or interactive communication among all the managers of the various levels of society elements. The lowest element of society is the villagers. As long as the villagers can communicate and convey their aspirations that a more prosperous life support could be achieved (Infallible and Rohman 2019). The sustainable community participation in the development process is a good village governance model (Tshoose 2015).

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the village transfer program is running even though people are not optimally involved, people know that there are development activities within their village but they are determined by elites in the village (topdown). (2) The aspirations of the community are not conveyed through meetings starting from the sub village to the village level, so even though the development is running, the impact tends to be not needed by the community. The aspiration collection should be bottom-up. (3) Mutual understanding between managers only occurs partially. Mutual understanding on the network of relationships or social relations occurs at the structural level. (4) The scope of Village Transfer Program Program is to the village so that the people assume that this program has no direct effect on the needs of citizens. In order to increase the involvement of citizens in determining development programs in accordance with the real needs of rural communities, sustainable and interactive communication among stakeholders is needed that mutual understanding (converged communications) can be achieved.

The hope of the village fund program is to be able to answer the real needs of villagers, especially in the utilization of village funds; the convergent communication of development that utilizes village funds is to highlight the involvement of villagers, especially ordinary citizens in every decision of the village development.

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