

Policy Strategies for Accelerating Poverty Reduction In Central Maluku Regency: Evidence from Program Convergence and Innovation

Yuyun Masriana Ushan^{1*}, Muhammad Bugis², & Izaac Tony Matitaputty³

^{1,2,3}Postgraduate Program, Department of Economics, Development Economics Concentration, Pattimura University, Ambon
Email: mu.yoen@gmail.com

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Abstract

Poverty is a multidimensional development challenge that requires integrated and sustainable policy responses. Central Maluku Regency has introduced several innovative poverty alleviation programs, namely Masohi Merakyat, Dompot Siafa, and MANTAB (Pinjaman Tanpa Bunga, Interest-Free Loans), as locally driven initiatives to address poverty. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of these innovative programs and to formulate policy strategies for accelerating poverty reduction in Central Maluku Regency. This study employed a descriptive approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings indicate that, while the implementation of the innovation programs can be classified as effective, their overall level of effectiveness remains relatively modest, with several indicators falling within the moderately effective category. Key constraints identified include limitations in the accuracy of poverty data, insufficient program socialization, suboptimal cross-sectoral synergy, and weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Based on a SWOT analysis, this study recommends an aggressive strategy focused on strengthening program convergence, improving data quality, optimizing stakeholder collaboration, and enhancing adaptive monitoring and evaluation systems that are responsive to local conditions.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains a major development challenge that is multidimensional and continues to persist at both national and regional levels. Its complexity extends beyond income deprivation to include limited access to basic services, low human capital quality, social vulnerability, and regional disparities (Bugis & Hahury, 2022). Consequently, poverty alleviation requires integrated, comprehensive, and sustainable approaches. In line with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), poverty reduction has become a key development policy priority in Indonesia, including at the regional level.

Central Maluku Regency continues to experience fluctuating poverty dynamics. After a steady decline between 2017 and 2020, the poverty rate increased slightly in 2021, from 19.83% to 19.84%, largely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted nearly all sectors of socio-economic life and exacerbated local poverty conditions. In 2022, following the implementation of various regional economic recovery programs, the poverty rate declined to 17.46%. However, it rose again to 17.84% in 2023 before decreasing marginally to 17.67% in 2024. These trends indicate that Central Maluku Regency still faces significant challenges and requires sustained efforts supported by well-designed strategies to effectively suppress and accelerate poverty reduction.

In response to these conditions, the Government of Central Maluku Regency established poverty alleviation strategies within the Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2025, which emphasizes

four key focus areas: (1) reducing the expenditure burden of poor households; (2) enhancing community capacity and income; (3) developing and ensuring the sustainability of micro and small enterprises; and (4) strengthening policy and program synergies for poverty reduction. Achieving these objectives necessitates breakthrough measures and policy innovations to accelerate progress. Accordingly, through the Road Map for Strengthening the Regional Innovation System (Sistem Inovasi Daerah, SIDA) 2023-2026, the local government formulated a set of governance innovations aimed at improving public services, reducing poverty, and enhancing regional competitiveness. These initiatives include the Masohi Merakyat Program, Dompot Siafa Program, and MANTAB (Pinjaman Tanpa Bunga, Interest-Free Loans) Program.

The Masohi Merakyat Program is a housing assistance innovation implemented through technical facilitation and collaborative financing involving local and central governments as well as other stakeholders. In addition to improving housing quality for low-income households, the program also generates employment opportunities through labor-intensive housing schemes. Meanwhile, the Dompot Siafa Program focuses on providing financial assistance and basic necessities to vulnerable groups, such as orphans, impoverished widows, and the elderly, with the aim of easing household expenditure pressures. The MANTAB Program, in turn, seeks to expand access to business capital for micro and small enterprises through an interest-free loan scheme subsidized by the local government.

Although these programs are designed to reduce household expenditure burdens, increase income, and expand access to economic resources and social protection, their implementation effectiveness has yet to be comprehensively assessed. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation and effectiveness of poverty alleviation innovation programs in Central Maluku Regency and to formulate more comprehensive policy strategies to accelerate poverty reduction in the region.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive-analytical approach using mixed methods, integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine the effectiveness of innovative poverty alleviation programs and to formulate strategies for accelerating poverty reduction in Central Maluku Regency. The research was conducted in Central Maluku Regency, with the object of analysis focusing on three regional poverty alleviation innovation programs: Masohi Merakyat, Dompot Siafa, and MANTAB.

The study population comprised all beneficiaries of the three programs, totaling 2,320 individuals. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in 96 respondents. These respondents were proportionally distributed across the three programs. The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to beneficiaries, in-depth interviews with key informants, and direct field observations. Secondary data were obtained from official local government documents, program implementation reports, and relevant statistical publications.

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved assessing program effectiveness using a set of indicators adapted from Subagyo (2000), Budiani (2007) and Sutrisno (2010), namely:

1. Program targeting accuracy – which examines the extent to which program beneficiaries align with the predetermined target groups.
2. Program socialization – referring to the ability of program implementers to disseminate information effectively so that details of program implementation are well understood by the general public and, in particular, by intended beneficiaries.
3. Clarity of program objectives – which assess the degree of alignment between program outcomes and the objectives established during the planning phase.
4. Program monitoring – related to post-implementation activities undertaken as a form of ongoing support and oversight for program participants.
5. Observable changes / impacts – which capture social, economic, and behavioral transformations among beneficiaries following program implementation.

Program effectiveness was measured using a 5-point-Likert scale and analyzed through descriptive-quantitative methods to generate effectiveness ratios. The level of effectiveness was then interpreted based on standardized assessment criteria referring to the guidelines issued by the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2011) and Ridwan (2011), as summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Effectiveness Measurement Standards

Effectiveness Ratio	Description
≤ 20%	Highly Ineffective
21% - 40%	Ineffective
41% - 60%	Moderately Effective
61% - 80%	Effective
81% - 100%	Highly Effective

Source: The Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2011) and Ridwan (2011)

The second stage of analysis employed a policy analysis approach using SWOT analysis by identifying internal factors, namely strengths and weaknesses, as well as external factors, including opportunities and threats. This analysis was conducted to formulate policy strategies aimed at accelerating poverty reduction in Central Maluku Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Innovative Poverty Alleviation Programs in Central Maluku Regency

The Government of Central Maluku Regency has implemented a range of innovative poverty alleviation programs through a convergence-based approach aimed at addressing multiple dimensions of poverty, including the fulfillment of basic needs, social protection, and improved access to economic resources. The primary programs developed under this framework are Masohi Merakyat, Dompot Siafa, and MANTAB.

The Masohi Merakyat Program focuses on providing housing assistance for low-income households through community-based cooperation and labor-intensive mechanisms. In addition to improving housing quality, the program creates temporary employment opportunities and encourages collaborative financing among various stakeholders. Empirical evidence indicates that between 2021 and 2024, the program successfully improved 1,256 housing units, comprising 120 units in 2021, 387 units in 2022, 169 units in 2023, and a substantial increase to 580 units in 2024. The Dompot Siafa Program is designed to deliver social assistance in the form of financial support and basic necessities to vulnerable groups. In assessing program effectiveness, this study concentrated on Masohi City as the initial and sustained implementation area, given the availability of comprehensive data and the diversity of social vulnerability characteristics. Based on beneficiary records, the program reached 758 recipients between 2023 and 2024, including orphans, individuals who lost one or both parents, impoverished widows, and elderly beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, the MANTAB Program aims to enhance access to business capital for micro and small enterprises through an interest-free loan scheme supported by local government subsidies. Available data show that from 2020 to 2024, the program benefited 306 micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) actors, contributing to increased productive economic activities among low-income communities.

Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Implementation of Innovative Poverty Alleviation Programs

Effectiveness is a central concept in evaluating development policy programs. Steers (1985) emphasized that effectiveness should not be assessed solely on the basis of final outcomes, but also on the implementation process, including the accuracy of targeting and the program's capacity to adapt to its operating environment. Drawing on this perspective, this present study evaluates the effectiveness of innovative poverty alleviation programs using established effectiveness indicators, namely program targeting accuracy, program socialization, clarity of program objectives, program monitoring, and observable changes / impacts. The measurement of effectiveness was based on the perspectives of both program implementers and beneficiaries. Program implementers were considered key informants due to their empirical understanding of operational processes in the field, while beneficiaries represented the target groups that directly experienced program interventions. This dual-perspective approach would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of program effectiveness by capturing both managerial and recipient-based evaluations of program performance.

Perspectives of Program Implementers

The perspectives of program implementers were considered crucial, as they were the

primary actors directly involved in the program planning, implementation, and monitoring. Their engagement across all stages of program execution enabled them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, challenges, and practical realities of implementation in the field.

Table 2. Results of Program Effectiveness Measurement based on the Perspectives of Program Implementers

Indicator	Domp pet Siafa	MANTAB	Masohi Merakyat	Average	Effectiveness Level (%)	Description
Program Targeting Accuracy	3.80	3.87	3.80	3.82	76.44	Effective
Program Socialization	3.27	3.33	3.33	3.31	66.22	Effective
Clarity of Program Objectives	3.27	2.93	3.07	3.09	61.78	Effective
Program Monitoring	2.93	3.00	2.80	2.91	58.22	Moderately Effective
Level of Program Effectiveness	3.32	3.28	3.25	3.28	65.67	Effective

Source: Research findings, 2025

Program Targeting Accuracy

Based on the perspectives of program implementers, the indicator of program targeting accuracy demonstrates a high and consistently effective level of performance. In aggregate, this indicator achieved an average measurement score of 3.82, corresponding to an effectiveness level of 76.44%. This result indicates that the processes of beneficiary identification, alignment with program criteria, and program delivery had largely complied with established administrative standards and technical guidelines. Implementers reported that target group identification was clear and measurable, while program distribution was considered administratively precise. Nevertheless, alignment with actual beneficiary needs remains partial, suggesting that implementation continues to emphasize procedural compliance over needs-based responsiveness. Overall, adherence to implementation standards emerges as the primary factor contributing to the strong performance of this indicator.

Program Socialization

The program socialization indicator falls within the effective category, with an overall effectiveness level of 66%. Implementers perceived internal institutional capacity to be adequate, as reflected in high levels of program knowledge among implementing staff. However, the effectiveness of socialization efforts is still constrained by limited coverage and implementation time. Resource limitations, geographical challenges, reliance on conventional socialization methods, and short implementation periods have restricted the ability to reach all target groups optimally. As a result, although socialization activities have been carried out in accordance with procedural requirements, their effectiveness has not been evenly distributed across regions and beneficiary groups.

Clarity of Program Objectives

This indicator also remains within the effective category, achieving an effectiveness level of 61.78%. Implementers generally agreed that the programs contribute to poverty alleviation objectives, although outcomes have yet to reach optimal levels. The primary gap lies between normative targets and the actual realization of beneficiaries. In the Masohi Merakyat Program, land legality issues hinder the implementation of housing assistance, while in the MANTAB Program, business verification processes and limited banking human resources constrain beneficiary absorption. Despite these challenges, all programs are considered closely aligned with poverty reduction goals, whether through social protection, improvements in housing quality, or economic empowerment. Implementation timelines were assessed as generally adequate, although technical and administrative delays persist at certain stages.

Program Monitoring

Program monitoring represents the weakest performance among the evaluated indicators and is categorized as moderately effective, with an effectiveness level of 58.22%. Implementers acknowledged that monitoring activities have been conducted, but noted that they were neither routine nor systematic. Limited operational budgets, the absence of electronic-based monitoring systems, and restricted access to monitoring results have resulted in oversight practices that were largely incidental and fragmented. Although follow-up actions were relatively better developed, program improvements tended to be reactive in nature and were not yet grounded in comprehensive, data-driven evaluations.

Perspectives of Program Beneficiaries

Program effectiveness was also assessed from the perspective of target groups as direct beneficiaries. This measurement was essential to obtain a more objective and comprehensive understanding of program implementation, as beneficiaries had experienced the outcomes and impacts of the interventions.

Table 3. Results of Program Effectiveness Measurement based on The Perspectives of Program Beneficiaries

Indicator	Dompet Siafa	MANTAB	Masohi Merakyat	Average	Effectiveness Level (%)	Description
Program Targeting Accuracy	3.55	3.54	3.76	3.62	72.31	Effective
Program Socialization	2.77	3.08	3.30	3.05	60.99	Moderately Effective
Clarity of Program Objectives	3.06	3.15	3.18	3.13	62.67	Effective
Program Monitoring	2.03	2.58	2.54	2.38	47.65	Moderately Effective
Observable Changes / Impacts	3.28	3.64	3.31	3.41	68.19	Effective
Level of Program Effectiveness	2.97	3.24	3.23	3.14	62.89	Effective

Source: Research findings, 2025

Program Targeting Accuracy

From the beneficiaries' perspective, the program targeting accuracy indicator achieves an effectiveness level of 72.31%, which falls within the effective category but remains lower than the assessment provided by program implementers. This difference reflects a gap between administrative evaluations and the lived experiences of beneficiaries. Overall, the beneficiaries perceived the programs as relevant to their needs. However, several beneficiaries expressed expectations for strengthened training and business mentoring (particularly within the Dompot Siafa Program and MANTAB Program), as well as an increase in the value of housing assistance. The beneficiaries also generally considered the program targeting accuracy to be good, although perceptions of mistargeting persist due to the inclusion of beneficiaries viewed as relatively better off.

Program Socialization

According to the beneficiaries, the effectiveness of program socialization reaches 61.21%, which is lower than the assessment by implementers (66.22%), indicating a communication gap. While socialization activities were perceived to have taken place, they were considered uneven and insufficiently intensive. The relatively low level of public understanding further suggests that socialization efforts have not fully conveyed program content and mechanisms to target communities.

Clarity of Program Objectives

The beneficiaries' perceptions of this indicator indicate an effectiveness level of 62.67%, slightly higher than the implementers' assessment (61.78%). The beneficiaries tended to evaluate program success based on tangible benefits they experienced directly. Implementation timelines were viewed as generally adequate, although delays were noted, particularly during the disbursement phase. Notably, alignment between program design and beneficiaries' expectations received higher scores, indicating that despite technical constraints, the programs are still regarded as relevant and beneficial.

Program Monitoring

Program monitoring is perceived as weak by the beneficiaries, with an effectiveness level of only 47.65%, categorized as moderately effective; the Dompot Siafa program was even perceived as ineffective. The beneficiaries reported limited experiences of direct monitoring and minimal access to information regarding program oversight. The substantial discrepancy with implementers' perceptions (58.22%) suggests that monitoring practices remain largely internal and are not sufficiently visible to the beneficiaries, resulting in limited transparency and low community participation.

Observable Changes / Impacts

This indicator achieves an effectiveness level of 68.19%, indicating that the beneficiaries experienced positive changes as a result of program implementation. The MANTAB Program records the strongest impact (72.82%), primarily through income increases and business development. The Masohi Merakyat Program also contributed to improved housing quality, although it did not directly enhance short-term income levels. Meanwhile, the Dompot Siafa Program primarily generated short-term welfare effects, particularly in meeting basic needs and

reducing economic vulnerability, rather than producing immediate income growth.

Policy Strategies for Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Central Maluku Regency based on the SWOT Matrix

Building on the results of the effectiveness assessment, which generally categorize the innovative poverty alleviation programs as “effective” but with achievement levels that remain suboptimal, further evaluation and the formulation of more comprehensive policy strategies are required. To this end, a SWOT analysis was employed as a tool for internal and external policy evaluation. This approach would enable the local government to better understand existing implementation conditions and to identify strategic measures for enhancing policy effectiveness. The following section outlines the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing the performance of poverty alleviation programs in Central Maluku Regency.

Strengths (S)

1. Strong commitment from local leadership, reflected in regulatory frameworks and policy support for poverty alleviation initiatives.
2. Inter-agency coordination among regional government offices (Organisasi Perangkat Daerah, OPD) that supports program implementation.
3. High accuracy and appropriateness of targeting in benefit distribution and program execution.
4. Active participation of communities, social institutions, and non-governmental actors.
5. Provision of interest-free capital access for MSMEs to strengthen the economic capacity of low-income communities.

Weaknesses (W)

1. Suboptimal inter-institutional coordination, resulting in programs being implemented in a sectoral manner.
2. The absence of an integrated, accurate, and verified poverty database.
3. Uneven and unsustainable program socialization.
4. Limited implementation of regional innovation regulations, which have not yet become a priority for all implementing agencies / OPDs.
5. Budgetary constraints relative to the number of potential beneficiaries.
6. Monitoring and evaluation systems that remain unsystematic and largely focused on administrative compliance and outputs rather than outcomes and impacts.

Opportunities (O)

1. Improving economic conditions in Central Maluku Regency.
2. Poverty alleviation as a national priority and a key component of the global development agenda.
3. Support from national programs, including the three-million housing development initiative.
4. Policy synergy and convergence across government levels (central, provincial, and local).
5. Multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the private sector and social organizations.
6. The potential use of digital technology-based innovations for data management, benefit distribution, and monitoring.
7. Strengthening community-based development approaches that foster participation and social solidarity.

Threats (T)

1. Macroeconomic fluctuations that may reduce regional fiscal capacity.
2. The risk of program failure due to weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
3. Potential politicization of assistance, particularly during electoral periods.
4. Social tensions arising from unequal benefit distribution and limited access in certain areas.
5. The risk of non-performing loans in MSME financing programs due to inadequate beneficiary selection and mentoring processes.

Following the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through the SWOT matrix approach, a set of strategic directions for accelerating poverty reduction in Central Maluku Regency can be formulated. These strategies are structured into four categories: S-O, S-T, W-O, and W-T, which reflect the interaction between internal and external factors.

S-O Strategies

These strategies leverage internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities:

1. Developing an integrated digital innovation platform for poverty alleviation that connects programs across OPDs.
2. Strengthening coordination and collaboration among OPDs to enhance program convergence.
3. Expanding cooperation with external stakeholders in financing and implementing sustainable innovation initiatives.
4. Reinforcing the implementation of regional regulations related to innovation governance.
5. Broadening partnerships with banking institutions and the private sector to support MSME development.
6. Integrating social assistance programs with access to basic services and empowerment-oriented schemes.

S-T Strategies

These strategies utilize existing strengths to mitigate potential external threats:

1. Strengthening commitments to increase budget allocations for poverty reduction programs.
2. Establishing an integrated monitoring and evaluation system based on performance and impact indicators, involving all relevant OPDs.
3. Enhancing program transparency and accountability, including accessible public complaint mechanisms.
4. Strengthening community involvement in beneficiary verification and validation processes, as well as in program socialization.
5. Implementing continuous business mentoring and capacity-building support for beneficiaries.

W-O Strategies

These strategies aim to address internal weaknesses by leveraging available opportunities:

1. Formulating a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy as a roadmap for implementing convergent poverty alleviation programs.
2. Integrating regional poverty alleviation programs with national initiatives, such as social assistance schemes, the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan, PKH), and other sectoral interventions, within a unified convergence framework.
3. Developing an integrated data recording and verification system through regular data

- integration and updates in collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies.
4. Strengthening community participation in beneficiary verification and validation processes, as well as in program socialization.
 5. Designing collaborative financing schemes, including the use of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, religious social funds, village funds, and other non-Regional Budget sources to support the sustainability of innovation programs.
 6. Establishing an integrated monitoring and evaluation system based on performance and impact indicators, involving all relevant OPDs.

W-T Strategies

These strategies seek to minimize weaknesses while reducing exposure to external threats:

1. Consolidating institutional arrangements for poverty alleviation, including clarifying the roles and authorities of OPDs through operational regulations, aligning planning and budgeting processes, and designating innovation as a budgetary priority.
2. Developing an integrated data recording and verification system through regular data integration and updates in collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies.
3. Establishing an integrated monitoring and evaluation system based on performance and impact indicators, involving all relevant OPDs.
4. Implementing a reward and punishment mechanism to improve accountability in the execution of innovation programs.
5. Strengthening community involvement in beneficiary verification and validation processes, as well as in program socialization.
6. Enhancing beneficiary selection mechanisms, business mentoring, and periodic performance monitoring of MSMEs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the three innovative poverty alleviation programs examined, including Dompot Siafa, MANTAB, and Masohi Rakyat, have generally been implemented effectively, although several indicators still require further strengthening. The SWOT analysis further indicates that Central Maluku Regency is in a relatively favorable position, supported by enabling policy frameworks, strong commitment from local leadership, and substantial opportunities for innovation development. Nevertheless, both internal and external challenges underscore the need for a more systematic and convergent poverty alleviation strategy. In response, this study identifies six key strategic priorities: (1) the formulation of a poverty alleviation strategy as a convergence roadmap; (2) the development of an integrated digital innovation platform; (3) the integration of regional poverty alleviation programs; (4) the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system; (5) the consolidation of institutional arrangements for poverty alleviation; and (6) the strengthening of collaboration, transparency, and social participation. These strategies are expected to enhance program effectiveness and contribute to the acceleration of poverty reduction in Central Maluku Regency.

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