

Local Leadership, Collaboration and Women's Participation in Flood Disaster Management

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Abstract: This article examines how local leadership, inter-agency coordination, risk communication, and women's participation operate in flood disaster management in Wombo Induk Village, Tanantovea District, Donggala Regency Central Sulawesi. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, drawing on structured interviews with five informants representing the village head, hamlet heads, village secretary, and a women's community leader/Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK), complemented by field observations and documentation. Data were analyzed through data condensation, categorization, and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that disaster governance in Wombo operates through a layered leadership structure. The Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) and village government provide formal authority, evacuation guidance, aid distribution, and external coordination, while hamlet heads, community leaders, local organizations, and community networks support mobilization, information dissemination, and collective action. Community deliberation (*musyawarah*) serves as an important mechanism for determining assembly points and allocating responsibilities. However, the absence of a dedicated disaster management forum, communication gaps across levels of government, limited post-disaster community participation, and women's involvement that remains concentrated in food provision indicate that local capacities have yet to be fully institutionalized. This article argues that village resilience cannot rely solely on formal leadership but requires the institutionalization of collaborative local leadership that connects government institutions, community networks, local knowledge, and women's participation within sustainable disaster risk reduction mechanisms.

Keywords: local leadership; disaster governance; collaboration; women's participation; community resilience

1. Introduction

Disaster management at the village level is fundamentally a matter of governance: who has the authority to make decisions, who is trusted by the community, how information flows, and how external resources are translated into actions that respond to local conditions. The Sendai Framework identifies strengthening disaster risk governance as one of the four priorities for disaster risk reduction, alongside understanding disaster risk, investing in resilience, and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and recovery (UNDRR, 2015). This perspective shifts attention beyond emergency response

alone toward the institutional and social capacities that enable communities to anticipate, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Within the Indonesian context, the local dimension is particularly important because disaster risk reduction is implemented within settings where government bureaucracies, community organizations, local leaders, volunteers, and households interact. Ruslanjari et al. (2024), in their study of Disaster Preparedness Villages (*Kampung Siaga Bencana*) in Yogyakarta, demonstrate that local leadership and two-way communication with village governments are important factors in sustaining community preparedness initiatives. Similarly, through their study of community networks in Semarang, Gisevius, Niesters and Braun (2025) emphasize the role of community leadership in building adaptive capacity to coastal hazards. These findings suggest that disaster leadership should not be understood solely in terms of formal administrative positions, but also in terms of the capacity to connect actors, mobilize resources, and build trust.

Wombo Induk Village provides an important case for examining these relationships. Field data indicate that the village has a population of 1,249 and is characterized by relatively dense settlement patterns, economic activities largely dependent on agriculture and livestock, and infrastructure that remains vulnerable in several locations. Field observations also identified a bridge damaged by a flash flood that continues to be used on a limited basis. Interviews with village officials documented previous experience with flash flooding and subsequent problems related to access to clean water. Under these conditions, leadership, communication, and coordination are not merely abstract governance concerns but directly shape the community's capacity to manage disaster risk.

Notably, disaster management mechanisms in Wombo continue to operate even though informants reported that the village does not yet have a dedicated forum that permanently addresses disaster-related issues. In this context, preparedness and response functions are carried out through the village government structure, guidance from the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), hamlet heads, community leaders, the Indonesian National Armed Forces and National Police (TNI/Polri), as well as other organizations and social networks. This suggests that local response capacity has emerged through collaborative practices that are already functioning to some extent, but have not yet been fully institutionalized.

This situation raises an important analytical issue. On the one hand, formal hierarchies are necessary to provide legitimacy, access to resources, and coordination with institutions above the village level. On the other hand, the effectiveness of disaster response is strongly shaped by local knowledge, trust, community deliberation (*musyawarah*), and the capacity of local actors to mobilize residents. The collaborative governance literature highlights the importance of coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors, while research in Indonesia demonstrates that weak coordination and leadership can constrain collaboration in disaster management (Khafian, 2023). The relationship between formal and informal leadership is therefore more productively understood as complementary rather than dichotomous.

Gender constitutes another important dimension of this governance arrangement. Data from Wombo show that women participated in managing communal kitchens and food distribution during disaster response. The head of the Family Welfare Empowerment organization (PKK), for example, mobilized local women and university students to manage food provision for disaster-affected residents. Although these contributions were essential to the disaster response, they also reveal a division of responsibilities in which women's participation remained largely concentrated in reproductive and service-oriented roles. A systematic review of women's participation in disaster risk management in Indonesia found that women have participated across different phases of disaster management, although their involvement remains limited and needs to be strengthened toward higher levels of partnership and empowerment (Karistie et al., 2025). Research on gender mainstreaming in disaster management in Bantul similarly highlights the importance of expanding women's participation in planning and capacity-building processes (Ramailis and Sakir, 2023).

Against this background, this article examines how leadership, collaboration, communication, and women's participation shape disaster governance in Wombo Induk Village. The study contributes to the existing literature by conceptualizing disaster leadership as a relational configuration at the village level, in which formal authority provides legitimacy and access to institutional resources, while community actors contribute social embeddedness, situational knowledge, and mobilizing capacity. The article argues that the central weakness of disaster governance in Wombo lies not in the absence of local action, but in the limited institutionalization of existing collaborative practices into sustained disaster management forums and coordination protocols.

2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Local Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction

The concept of leadership in group studies refers not only to formal positions but also to actions that enable a group to achieve its objectives (Cartwright and Zander, 1968). In disaster contexts, leadership functions include providing direction, building trust, organizing collective action, and connecting communities with resources beyond the village. The quality of leadership can therefore be understood in terms of relational capacity, particularly the extent to which an actor can make decisions that are understood, accepted, and acted upon by community members.

Contemporary empirical evidence further underscores the importance of this relational dimension. Ruslanjari et al. (2024) found that the sustainability of Disaster Preparedness Villages (Kampung Siaga Bencana) is associated with local leadership, community self-reliance, social logistics, and two-way communication. Meanwhile, Gisevius, Niesters and Braun (2025) conceptualize community leaders as network brokers who can strengthen adaptive capacity to coastal hazards. A broader study of community resilience in Indonesia similarly identifies local leadership, community networks, trust, and participation in community-based programs as important dimensions of resilience (Saputro and Sejati, 2026).

Village leadership in disaster management can therefore be analyzed through three interrelated functions: authority, brokerage, and mobilization. Authority refers to the legitimate capacity to make decisions; brokerage involves the ability to connect communities with the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), security institutions, and other organizations; while mobilization refers to the capacity to organize residents for evacuation, aid distribution, and post-disaster recovery.

2.2. Collaborative Governance and Disaster Risk Governance

Disasters often exceed the capacity of any single institution to manage them effectively. The concept of collaborative governance views complex public problems as requiring interaction among institutions and between governmental and non-governmental actors. In the context of disaster management in Indonesia, Khafian (2023) shows that emergency disaster management requires coordination between government and non-government institutions, while weak coordination and leadership can constrain the collaborative process. A study of the Cianjur earthquake similarly emphasizes the complementary roles of leadership and collaboration in effective disaster governance (Darmanto, 2024).

At the local level, however, the critical issue is not merely the number of actors involved but the quality of the relationships among them. Clear divisions of responsibility, effective information flows, mechanisms for verifying field conditions, and regular coordination forums are essential because mismatches between higher-level decisions and actual needs on the ground can result in inappropriate responses. This perspective is particularly relevant to Wombo, where one informant described a communication failure concerning the provision of only one evacuation shelter despite two villages being affected. This experience highlights the importance of reciprocal communication between higher-level institutions and local actors in ensuring that disaster responses reflect actual conditions and needs on the ground.

2.3. Gender and Participation in Disaster Governance

An inclusive disaster risk reduction framework positions women not merely as disaster-affected groups but also as actors who contribute knowledge, participate in decision-making, and support recovery processes. UNDRR (2015) emphasizes the importance of inclusive disaster risk governance and the participation of women and other community groups in decision-making processes. Research in Indonesia similarly indicates that women participate across different phases of disaster management, although substantive representation remains uneven (Karistie et al., 2025).

It is therefore important to distinguish between operational participation and influence over decision-making. Managing food provision is a vital function during emergency response, but participation in such activities does not necessarily mean that women are equally involved in determining evacuation points, setting aid priorities, allocating resources, or designing preparedness strategies. This distinction provides an analytical lens for examining women's participation in Wombo, particularly in assessing whether

their involvement remains concentrated in operational roles or extends into strategic decision-making within local disaster governance.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to understand leadership and coordination practices within their local social context. The research was conducted in Wombo Induk Village, Tanantovea District, Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi. Primary data were collected through structured interviews, field observations, and documentation. Field records documented interviews conducted in October 2026 with five informants representing different positions within the village and community: the village head (RB, 42 years old), the head of Hamlet I (IFN, 36 years old), the head of Hamlet III (ABD, 41 years old), the village secretary (AA, 31 years old), and a community leader who also served as the head of the Family Welfare Empowerment organization (PKK) (RM, 45 years old).

Informants were purposively selected based on their positions within the village administration, their roles in territorial coordination, and their involvement in community activities. The diversity of these positions enabled the study to examine vertical relationships between village actors and the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) as well as higher levels of government, horizontal coordination among local actors, and women's participation in disaster management. Field observations were used to understand local infrastructure and everyday conditions in the village, while documentary materials were used to support data triangulation.

Data analysis followed the processes of data condensation, categorization, and theme development within the qualitative analytical tradition of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014). The initial analysis employed axial coding to organize the empirical material into categories concerning formal leadership, coordination, communication and preparedness, the provision of basic needs for disaster-affected residents, women's participation, and constraints on disaster response. For the purposes of this article, these categories were synthesized into five analytical themes: (1) layered leadership; (2) community deliberation (*musyawarah*) and risk communication; (3) collaboration and the provision of basic needs; (4) women's participation; and (5) institutional gaps.

The study retains the informants' initials as recorded in the original dataset to minimize the disclosure of their identities. The available research documentation does not specify a formal ethical approval number. Therefore, this article does not claim formal ethical clearance. Information on ethical approval should be included only if such documentation is available in the original research records.

4. Collaborative Local Leadership in Community-Based Disaster Governance

The findings demonstrate that disaster governance in Wombo is shaped by the interaction between formal authority, locally embedded leadership, community-based communication, multi-actor collaboration, and women's participation. Disaster management does not operate through a single actor or a strictly hierarchical chain of command. Instead, different actors perform complementary functions according to their institutional authority, proximity to the community, access to local knowledge, and capacity to mobilize collective action. Formal institutions provide legitimacy, coordination, and access to external resources, while village and community actors translate institutional directives into locally appropriate responses.

These relationships suggest that disaster governance in Wombo is best understood as a form of collaborative local leadership, in which formal administrative authority operates alongside social legitimacy and community-based capacities. Village officials, hamlet heads, community leaders, women's groups, local organizations, and residents contribute in different ways to risk communication, evacuation, aid distribution, the provision of basic needs, and post-disaster recovery. Community deliberation (*musyawarah*) and locally embedded communication channels further connect formal decisions with conditions experienced by residents.

However, these collaborative capacities have not yet been fully institutionalized. Existing practices demonstrate substantial local capacity, but the absence of a dedicated disaster management forum, communication gaps across levels of government, and the concentration of women's participation in operational roles indicate continuing institutional and participatory limitations. The following sections examine these dynamics through six interconnected dimensions, ranging from layered leadership and local risk communication to multi-actor collaboration, women's participation, institutionalization, and the broader analytical pattern of collaborative local leadership.

4.1. Layered Leadership: Formal Authority Meets Social Legitimacy

Disaster response at the village level requires more than a formal chain of command. It depends on how institutional authority is translated into locally accepted forms of leadership and collective action. In Wombo, disaster management leadership is not centered on a single actor. BPBD provides external command and institutional guidance, while the village government translates these directives into action at the community level. The village head (RB) explained:

“Usually, when a disaster occurs in this village, BPBD takes the lead in managing the response. The village officials and I are responsible for directing the community and distributing assistance to ensure that it reaches the affected residents according to the available data.” (Informant RB)

This statement illustrates the division of responsibilities between supra-village authorities and village-level leadership. The village government does not merely act as a passive implementer but also plays an important role in translating institutional directives into

local action, organizing community members, and distributing assistance. This pattern becomes more apparent in RB's explanation of the relationship between the village government and local leaders: "In terms of leadership, the village government and traditional leaders work together according to their respective responsibilities. However, when dealing with disasters, we follow the instructions provided directly by BPBD." (Informant RB). Disaster leadership in Wombo is therefore better understood as a layered configuration rather than as a simple dichotomy between formal and informal leadership.

This finding is consistent with Ruslanjari et al. (2024), who highlight the importance of local leadership and two-way communication for the sustainability of Disaster Preparedness Villages (Kampung Siaga Bencana), as well as Gisevius, Niesters and Braun (2025), who identify community leadership as an important component of adaptive capacity. In the Wombo context, formal positions confer authority, but social trust determines the extent to which leadership directives are accepted and followed by the community. RB emphasized that leaders are trusted because they are "responsible, have integrity, and are able to mobilize and support the community," while also demonstrating their words through concrete actions. This indicates that administrative legitimacy and social legitimacy operate simultaneously and reinforce one another.

4.2. Community Deliberation, Hamlet Heads, and the Mosque as Risk Communication Infrastructure

Effective disaster communication depends not only on the availability of information but also on the social mechanisms through which warnings and instructions reach local communities. In village settings, familiar institutions and locally trusted actors can become important components of this communication process. In Wombo, disaster communication operates through formal administrative structures as well as social channels embedded in everyday community life. The village head described the use of the mosque as an important means of communicating evacuation information:

"As the village leader, I provide instructions to the community through announcements at the mosque to inform residents about evacuation points. The community also has its own awareness, which enables them to anticipate the possibility of flooding." (Informant RB)

The head of Hamlet I (IFN) further explained that information dissemination was preceded by a deliberative process:

"Before informing the community, village officials hold a *musyawarah* to make decisions regarding the designated assembly point. Each hamlet head is then responsible for gathering residents at the designated location." (Informant IFN)

This account is particularly significant because *musyawarah* functions not merely as a social norm but also as an operational mechanism for determining assembly points, allocating responsibilities, and translating village-level decisions into action at the hamlet level.

This practice is consistent with the principles of strengthening disaster risk governance outlined in the Sendai Framework (UNDRR, 2015), which identifies governance as one of the key priorities of disaster risk reduction. What is distinctive in Wombo is the presence of locally embedded communication channels that bridge institutional guidance from BPBD and community action. Such channels demonstrate that effective risk communication is not solely a matter of technology. It also depends on who communicates the message, which channels are used, and how institutional directives are interpreted and translated into action by actors who are socially embedded within the community.

4.3. Multi-Actor Collaboration, Basic Needs, and Vertical Feedback Gaps

Disaster response becomes increasingly complex when immediate protection, evacuation, logistical assistance, and the restoration of basic needs must be addressed simultaneously. Such conditions require coordination among actors operating at different institutional and community levels. In Wombo, disaster response involves BPBD, the village government, hamlet heads, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), the National Police, Scout groups, motorcycle communities, nature-lover organizations, university students, and local residents. This diversity of actors demonstrates that disaster response exceeds the capacity of any single institution. Nevertheless, collaboration does not always proceed without coordination problems. The village secretary (AA) explained:

“It happens quite often, usually because the central government does not fully understand the actual conditions in the village. As a result, the response provided does not always correspond to conditions on the ground. For example, during the previous flood there was a communication problem because the central government provided only one evacuation post, even though two villages had been affected.” (Informant AA)

The village government subsequently reconfirmed the actual conditions on the ground and established an additional evacuation post. This case demonstrates that the central problem was not simply a lack of resources, but rather a mismatch between the information available to decision-makers and the realities encountered at the local level. The collaborative governance literature emphasizes the importance of cross-institutional coordination. In the Wombo case, the empirical evidence highlights a particularly important aspect of such coordination: effective collaboration requires rapid bottom-up feedback to ensure that external assistance is based on an accurate understanding of local conditions and needs.

The problem of access to clean water further underscores the importance of coordination that is responsive to local conditions. The head of Hamlet III (ABD) described the situation following the flood:

“Dealing with the problem of clean water was quite difficult because residents depended on well water, but the wells had also been contaminated by mud. It took around two weeks before clean water became available. During those two weeks, residents collected clean water from the river.” (Informant ABD)

The informant further explained that wells were constructed at several locations farther from the river as part of the response. This experience broadens the understanding of disaster leadership beyond evacuation and emergency command to include the restoration of basic needs. Leadership capacity should therefore be assessed not only by the ability to manage the initial emergency response, but also by the capacity to adapt interventions to the changing needs of the community throughout the disaster and recovery process.

4.4. Women's Participation: From Logistical Work to Questions of Authority

Community participation in disaster response is also shaped by how responsibilities are distributed among different social actors. Women's involvement is particularly important to examine because participation in essential response activities does not necessarily translate into equal influence over strategic decision-making. In Wombo, women's participation was particularly visible in food preparation, management, and distribution. The village secretary reported that women were involved in managing food provision and that a communal cooking post was established to prepare supplies distributed by BPBD. The head of the Family Welfare Empowerment organization (PKK), RM, provided a more detailed account:

"I invited and coordinated the women in Wombo Village to manage food provision, including cooking and distributing the food provided by BPBD. During the disaster response, several students from Tadulako University also participated in managing food provision." (Informant RM)

This quotation demonstrates that RM performed a leadership function by mobilizing and directing community members, organizing human resources, and ensuring the distribution of food supplies. Women's contributions should therefore not be reduced to ordinary domestic activities. In an evacuation setting, food logistics constitute an essential component of disaster response infrastructure.

However, the dataset does not provide comparable evidence of women's involvement in determining evacuation points, coordinating directly with BPBD, or participating in other strategic decision-making processes. The systematic review by Karistie et al. (2025) shows that women participate across different phases of disaster management in Indonesia, but their participation needs to be expanded toward stronger forms of partnership and empowerment. The Wombo case reinforces the importance of distinguishing between participation in implementation and participation in decision-making. Strengthening women's participation should therefore go beyond expanding their logistical responsibilities and instead create meaningful opportunities for women to engage in risk mapping, preparedness forums, evacuation planning, resource allocation, and post-disaster evaluation.

4.5. Response Capacity That Has Yet to Be Fully Institutionalized

The existence of local disaster-response practices does not necessarily mean that those capacities have become part of a permanent governance system. A community may possess experience, networks, and effective response mechanisms while still lacking an

institutional structure capable of preserving and reproducing those capacities over time. This tension is particularly visible in Wombo, where various disaster response mechanisms already operate despite the absence of a dedicated disaster management forum. When asked whether such a forum existed, the head of Hamlet III (ABD) stated: “No, Wombo Induk Village does not yet have a dedicated forum like that.” (Informant ABD)

This brief statement carries significant analytical implications. Wombo already possesses several functioning elements of disaster response, including musyawarah, a BPBD-village-hamlet communication chain, experience in aid distribution, the involvement of community organizations, recovery activities, and women’s leadership in logistics. In other words, practical and socially embedded capacities already exist, but they have not yet been fully transformed into permanent institutional mechanisms. This helps explain why coordination may function effectively in one situation while remaining vulnerable to communication failures in another.

This finding is consistent with studies of community resilience in Indonesia that identify local leadership, community networks, trust, local knowledge, and participation as important components of resilience, while also highlighting the need to strengthen the linkages between informal capacities and formal governance arrangements (Saputro and Sejati, 2026). In the case of Wombo, therefore, the central challenge is not to build local leadership from the ground up, but rather to institutionalize collaborative practices that have already demonstrated their capacity to function in disaster response.

4.6. Synthesis: Collaborative Local Leadership as a Pattern of Disaster Governance in Wombo

Taken together, the findings support an analytical proposition that disaster governance in Wombo operates through a pattern of collaborative local leadership. This pattern consists of four interconnected components. First, formal authority is exercised through BPBD and the village government. Second, community-embedded leadership operates through hamlet heads, community leaders, the head of the PKK, and local organizations. Third, social feedback is facilitated through musyawarah, mosque-based communication, and the verification of actual conditions on the ground. Fourth, collective action is manifested through evacuation, aid distribution, clean-water provision, food logistics, and environmental recovery.

The main limitations of this pattern lie in institutionalization and inclusion. In the absence of a dedicated disaster management forum, knowledge accumulated through previous disaster experiences risks remaining attached to individual actors and ad hoc responses rather than being transformed into institutional knowledge. Similarly, although women have demonstrated leadership capacity through their involvement in food logistics, this capacity has not yet been fully translated into strategic decision-making authority. Strengthening disaster governance in Wombo therefore requires a permanent institutional mechanism capable of documenting roles and responsibilities, evacuation points, communication channels, alternative water sources, logistical actors, and women’s representation in decision-making processes. These recommendations are not

detached from the empirical evidence; rather, they arise directly from the patterns of strengths and institutional gaps identified through the interviews.

4.7. Policy Implications

First, Wombo Village needs to institutionalize a permanent village-level disaster risk reduction forum or mechanism that includes representatives from the village government, all hamlets, BPBD as a coordinating partner, community leaders, youth groups, women's groups, and volunteer networks. This recommendation follows directly from the finding that many of these functions have already operated on an ad hoc basis, although a dedicated disaster management forum has yet to be established.

Second, the communication mechanism should incorporate a clear feedback protocol from the hamlets to the village government and from the village government to BPBD. The experience of an insufficient number of evacuation posts demonstrates that verification of actual field conditions should become an integral part of formal decision-making. *Musyawarah*, which has already functioned as a local deliberative mechanism, can be maintained, while its decisions and outcomes should be systematically documented.

Third, preparedness for clean-water provision should become a priority because the data identified well contamination and delays in restoring access to clean water. The mapping of alternative water sources, the condition and availability of wells, and responsibilities for water distribution should therefore be incorporated into preparedness planning before another disaster occurs.

Fourth, women's participation should be expanded beyond logistical responsibilities to include planning and evaluation. The head of the PKK and other women representatives should be formally represented in the disaster management forum so that their experience in managing emergency food provision can contribute to decision-making processes and the planning of household and community needs.

Fifth, post-disaster evaluation should place greater emphasis on sustaining community participation throughout the recovery process. The data indicate that community participation declined during post-disaster environmental clean-up. A village-level disaster management forum could therefore use participatory evaluation to identify barriers to continued community involvement and establish clearer responsibilities for recovery activities.

5. Kesimpulan

This study demonstrates that flood disaster management in Wombo Induk Village cannot be understood solely through the conventional distinction between formal and informal leadership. Field practices instead reveal a layered leadership structure in which BPBD and the village government provide formal authority and institutional resources, hamlet heads facilitate community mobilization, while community leaders, women, local organizations, security institutions, and residents collectively expand local response capacity. *Musyawarah*, mosque-based announcements, and the verification of conditions

on the ground serve as important mechanisms for connecting institutional decisions with community needs. At the same time, the absence of a dedicated disaster management forum, communication gaps across different levels of government, challenges in sustaining post-disaster participation, and women's involvement that remains concentrated in food provision indicate that these local capacities have yet to be fully institutionalized as a permanent preparedness system.

The main contribution of this article is to demonstrate that local resilience is built through the interaction of formal authority, social trust, situational knowledge, and community feedback. Strengthening disaster governance in Wombo should therefore go beyond expanding formal command structures or bureaucratic arrangements. Instead, it requires the institutionalization of existing collaborative networks, clearer communication across levels of governance, and greater opportunities for women to participate in strategic decision-making. Through such institutionalization, past flood experiences can be transformed from memories of crisis into organizational knowledge that strengthens disaster risk reduction and community preparedness at the village level.

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