

## The Role of Village Funds in Alleviating Poverty in The Nias Islands

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### ABSTRACT

Poverty is a classic problem experienced by every country in the world, including Indonesia. In 2023, the highest percentage of poor people in North Sumatra Province was in the Nias Islands, namely West Nias Regency (22.81%), North Nias Regency (21.79%), South Nias Regency (16.39%), Nias Regency (15.10%), and Gunungsitoli City (14.78%). This figure is far greater than the percentage of poor people in North Sumatra Province at 8.15%. This study aims to determine the role of the Village Fund in alleviating Poverty in the Nias Islands. Researchers used panel data regression with the Village Fund as the main independent variable coupled with the Human Development Index and Economic Growth variables to be able to produce a more accurate regression equation model to explain Poverty in Nias Islands. The results showed that village funds had a negative and significant effect on poverty. In line with the research results and also regulatory support from the government related to allocating the village fund budget based on the poverty rate, the role of village funds in alleviating poverty in the Nias Islands is very important and needed. For this reason, the government should continue the village fund program to accelerate poverty reduction in villages, especially in the Nias Islands.

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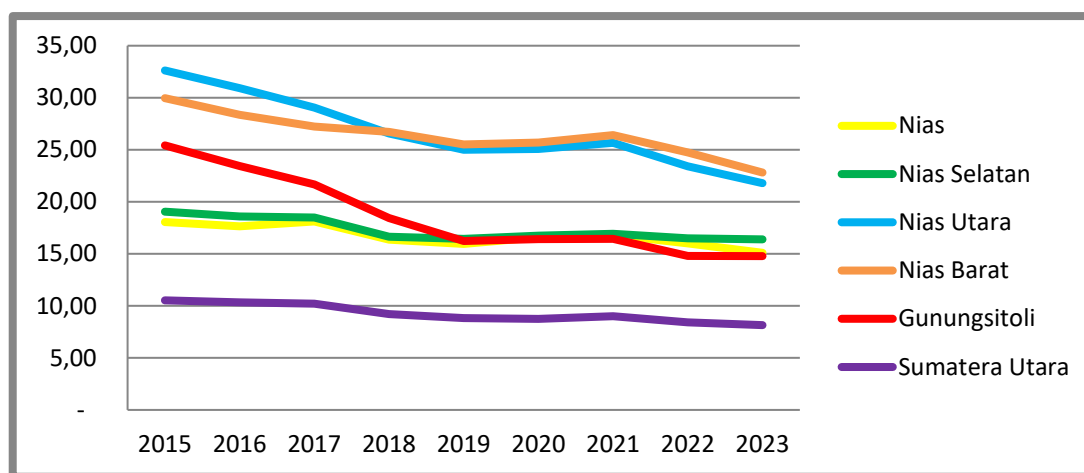
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### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is an economic problem experienced by all countries in the world, including developed countries. In Indonesia, the number of poor people in March 2024 was 25.22 million or 9.03% of the total population (BPS, 2024a). In North Sumatra Province, the percentage of poor people in 2023 was 8.15%. The regencies/municipalities in North Sumatra Province with the highest percentage of poor people in order are Kabupaten Nias Barat (22.81%), Kabupaten Nias Utara (21.79%), Kabupaten Nias Selatan (16.39%), Kabupaten Nias (15.10%), and Kota Gunungsitoli (14.78%) (BPS, 2024b). All five districts/cities are located in the Nias Islands.

The development of the percentage of poor people in Nias Islands from 2015 to 2023 can be seen in Figure 1 as follows:



**Figure 1. Percentage of Poor Population in Nias Islands 2015-2023**

From Figure 1. it can be seen that the percentage of poor people in Nias Islands has tended to decrease since 2015. Although it had increased in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the percentage of poor people decreased again in 2022 and 2023. Therefore, it can be said that the downward trend in the poverty rate in Nias Islands is good.

However, the percentage of poor people in Nias Islands is still far greater than the average of poor people in North Sumatra Province. Therefore, accelerated efforts are needed to alleviate poverty in the Nias Islands. The government has committed to developing from the periphery through the Village Fund program that has been distributed since 2015 as the implementation of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (Puspita et al., 2021). One of the goals is to alleviate poverty, which is still prevalent in rural areas.

The government is expected to be able to make programs and policies that can reduce the number of poor people in Nias Islands so that there is no large imbalance between the poor in Nias Islands and other districts/cities in North Sumatra Province. Among these programs and policies are fiscal policies using the state budget, programs to improve the quality of human life, and strategic programs to increase economic growth in a region.

In this study, the fiscal policy instrument used as the main independent variable is the policy of channeling the Village Fund from the central government to villages in the Nias Islands. Researchers added the Human Development Index and Economic Growth variables to strengthen the regression model. From these variables, researchers formulated the following hypothesis:

- H1 : It is suspected that there is an effect of the Village Fund on Poverty in Nias Islands;
- H2 : It is suspected that there is an effect of the Human Development Index on Poverty in the Nias Islands;
- H3 : It is suspected that there is an effect of Economic Growth on Poverty in the Nias Islands;
- H4 : It is suspected that there is a simultaneous influence of the Village Fund, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth on Poverty in the Nias Islands.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Poverty

Poverty is a condition in which individuals are unable to fulfill their basic daily needs. According to UU RI (2011) the poor are people who have no source of livelihood at all and/or have a source of livelihood but do not have the ability to meet the basic needs that are appropriate for their lives themselves and/or their families. As for BPS (2021), poverty is a situation in which a person cannot/is unable to fulfill the minimum basic needs needed to live a decent and dignified life.

According to Bank Dunia (2007), There are three ways to help lift people out of poverty: economic growth, community services, and public expenditure. Economic growth will increase economic activity in a region. Basic community services such as education and health services will

shape productive people at work. State spending can be used for infrastructure development, community services, social assistance to the poor, and so on.

The poverty data used in this study is the percentage of poor people in districts/cities in the Nias Islands.

#### Village Fund

The government is committed to development from the smallest element of government, namely the village. This is supported by regulations with the issuance of UU RI (2014) concerning Villages, one of which is related to the provision of Village Funds by the Central Government. Simangunsong et al., (2021) stated in their research article that the Village Fund policy is one of the solutions provided by the government to develop villages that have not been touched by development.

Since 2015, the Government has been channeling State Budget (APBN) funds to the Village Government, referred to as the Village Fund (BKF, 2018). The Village Fund is part of the transfers to regions that are designated for villages with the aim of supporting funding for governance, development implementation, community empowerment, and community (PMK, 2023).

The Village Fund is calculated based on the number of villages and allocated by taking into account the population, poverty rate, area, and level of geographical difficulty in order to improve the welfare and equitable development of the Village (Puspita et al., 2021). The Village Fund is used to finance village infrastructure development activities, village community empowerment programs, social assistance, and other activities. Therefore, the Village Fund should have both a direct and indirect impact on reducing poverty in the village.

#### Human Development Index

The Human Development Index illustrates how the quality of human life in a region. The Human Development Index is a geometric mean measure of the achievement of human development dimensions which include a long and healthy life, education, and having a decent standard of living (Suhyanto et al., 2020).

BPS (2024c) explains that longevity and healthy living are described by life expectancy at birth ( $e_0$ ), which is the number of years that a newborn baby is expected to live, assuming that the pattern of mortality rates by age at birth is the same throughout the baby's life. Knowledge is measured through indicators of average years of schooling and expected years of schooling. Average years of schooling is the average length (years) of the population aged 25 years and over undergoing formal education. Expected years of schooling are defined as the length (years) of schooling that a 7-year-old child is expected to undergo in the future. A decent standard of living is described by real adjusted per capita expenditure, calculated based on per capita expenditure values, price indices, and purchasing power parity.

Thus, a high Human Development Index will increase human productivity. Productive people will be active in working and creating jobs so as to increase income and quality of life. This will reduce the poverty rate in a region.

#### Economic Growth

Growth has important implications for the economic well-being of individuals. In fact, aggregate growth is probably the single most important factor affecting individual income levels. Therefore, understanding the determinants of aggregate economic growth is key to understanding how to improve the living standards of individuals in the world and thereby reduce world poverty (Barro & Sala-i-Martin, 2004).

Economic growth in a region indicates that there is an increase in economic activity in various sectors. This growth is also characterized by increased production of goods and services in a region. With growth, per capita income will increase. Therefore, good and equitable economic growth should have an impact on reducing poverty in a region.

## METHOD

This study uses secondary data sourced from the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bureau of Statistics. Village Fund data was obtained from the Ministry of Finance (Directorate General of Fiscal Balance) while the Percentage of Poor Population, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth were obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics. The data used in the study are data on the Percentage of Poor Population, realization of Village Funds, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth in Nias Islands from 2016 to 2022.

The methodology used in this research is a quantitative method using panel data regression analysis. Panel data is a combination of time series data and cross-sectional data (Basuki, 2014). In general, panel data is used for various reasons. One of them is that when you want to do the analysis, the number of years of observation is limited (Pratomo & Hidayat, 2007). Data processing is done using the EViews 13 application. The tests carried out are the T-Test (partial), F-Statistic Test (simultaneous), and the coefficient of determination.

Before conducting the test, first select the most appropriate model between the Common Effect Model (CEM), Fixed Effect Model (FEM), or Random Effect Model (REM). To get the most appropriate model, the Chow Test, Hausman Test, and Lagrange Multiplier Test are conducted.

### 1. Chow Test

The Chow test is a test to determine the Fixed Effect or Random Effect model that is most appropriate to use in estimating panel data (Basuki, 2014). If the Chi-square probability value is smaller than the tolerance value of 0.05, the correct model is FEM. However, if the Chi-square probability value is greater than 0.05 then the correct model is CEM.

### 2. Hausman Test

The Hausman test is a statistical test to choose whether the Fixed Effect or Random Effect model is most appropriate to use (Basuki, 2014). If the cross-section random probability value is smaller than the tolerance value of 0.05, the correct model is FEM. However, if the random cross-section probability value is greater than 0.05, the correct model is REM.

### 3. Lagrange Multiplier Test

To determine whether the Random Effect model is better than the Common Effect (OLS) method, the Lagrange Multiplier test is used (Basuki, 2014). If the Breusch-Pagan value is smaller than the tolerance value of 0.05, the right model is REM. However, if the Breusch-Pagan value is greater than 0.05 then the right model is CEM.

The independent variables used are Village Funds, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth, while the dependent variable used is Poverty. The panel data regression equation in this study is:

$$KM_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 Log(DD)_{it} + \beta_2 IPM_{it} + \beta_3 PE + \varepsilon_{it}$$

With:

- i : i-th entity
- t : t-th period
- $\alpha$  : constant
- $\beta_n$  : regression coefficient
- DD : Village Fund
- IPM : Human Development Index
- PE : Economic Growth
- $\varepsilon_{it}$  : error term

## RESULT

### Chow Test

The Chow test has been conducted with the results in Table 1 as follows:

**Table 1. Chow Test Results**

Effects Test	Statistic	d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section F	41.558897	(4,27)	0.0000
Cross-section Chi-square	68.882564	4	0.0000

Based on Table 1, the Cross-section Chi-square probability value of 0.0000 is smaller than 0.05 indicating that the FEM model is better applied than the CEM model.

### Hausman Test

The Hausman test has been conducted with the results in Table 2 as follows:

**Table 2. Hausman Test Results**

Test Summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Chi-Sq. d.f.	Prob.
Cross-section random	11.926669	3	0.0076

Based on Table 2, a cross-section random probability value of 0.0076 < 0.05 indicates the FEM model is better applied than the REM model.

### Analysis Result

Based on the Chow Test and Hausman Test, the better panel data regression model applied in this study is the Fixed Effect Model (FEM), and no longer needs to do the Lagrange Multiplier Test. Regression results using the FEM model can be seen in Table.3 as follows:

**Table 3. Fixed Effect Model (FEM) Regression Results**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	157.2644	28.58101	5.502411	0.0000
LOG(DD)	-3.615550	1.424600	-2.537941	0.0172
IPM	-0.691405	0.283401	-2.439669	0.0215
PE	-0.073986	0.171655	-0.431017	0.6699
Effects Specification				
Cross-section fixed (dummy variables)				
R-squared	0.950550	Mean dependent var		21.01629
Adjusted R-squared	0.937729	S.D. dependent var		4.901737
S.E. of regression	1.223185	Akaike info criterion		3.438425
Sum squared resid	40.39691	Schwarz criterion		3.793933
Log likelihood	-52.17244	Hannan-Quinn criter.		3.561146
F-statistic	74.14322	Durbin-Watson stat		1.048599
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

### T-Test (Partial)

**Table 4. T-Test Results**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	157.2644	28.58101	5.502411	0.0000
LOG(DD)	-3.615550	1.424600	-2.537941	0.0172
IPM	-0.691405	0.283401	-2.439669	0.0215
PE	-0.073986	0.171655	-0.431017	0.6699

From Table 4. obtained the probability value of the Village Fund variable is 0.0172 smaller than 0.05 with a coefficient value of -3.615550 so it can be concluded that the Village Fund has a negative and significant effect on Poverty.

The probability value of the Human Development Index variable is 0.0215 smaller than 0.05 with a coefficient value of -0.691405 so it can be concluded that the Human Development Index has a negative and significant effect on Poverty.

The probability value of the Economic Growth variable is 0.6699 greater than 0.05 with a coefficient value of -0.073986, so it can be concluded that Economic Growth has a negative but insignificant impact on Poverty.

### F-Test (Simultaneous)

**Table 5. F-Test Results**

Cross-section fixed (dummy variables)			
R-squared	0.950550	Mean dependent var	21.01629
Adjusted R-squared	0.937729	S.D. dependent var	4.901737
S.E. of regression	1.223185	Akaike info criterion	3.438425
Sum squared resid	40.39691	Schwarz criterion	3.793933
Log likelihood	-52.17244	Hannan-Quinn criter.	3.561146
F-statistic	74.14322	Durbin-Watson stat	1.048599
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000		

Base on Table 5, the F-statistic probability value of 0.000000 is smaller than 0.05, indicating that the Village Fund, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth variables simultaneously have a significant impact on Poverty.

### Coefficient of Determination

From Table 5. obtained the Adjusted R-squared coefficient of determination of 0.937729. This shows that the Village Fund, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth variables are able to explain the Poverty variable by 93.772993. The remaining 6.025% is explained by other variables that are not included in the object of this study.

### Interpretation of Results

Based on the panel data regression results with the FEM model according to Table 3, the following equation is obtained:

$$KM_{it} = 157.2644 - 3.615550 \text{ Log}(\text{DD})_{it} - 0.691405 \text{ IPM}_{it} - 0.073986 \text{ PE} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

### The Effect of Village Funds on Poverty

The Village Fund has a negative and significant effect on Poverty. This means that an increase in the realization of the Village Fund can reduce poverty in the Nias Islands, and vice versa. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Sigit & Kosasih (2020) which looks at how village funds affect poverty in districts/cities in Indonesia. The same results were also obtained from research Arfiansyah (2020) in Central Java, Susilowati et al., (2017) in East Java, and other studies.

From the research results, the Poverty regression coefficient is -3.615550 or -3.62. This shows that if the realization of village funds is increased by 1%, it will be able to reduce the percentage of poor people by 3.62%. This means that the village fund distribution policy has an important role in alleviating poverty in the Nias Islands. Therefore, the central government should consider providing additional village fund budgets to all villages in the Nias Islands.

The certainty of village funds being channeled to village governments is also very well maintained because village funds are directly channeled from the state general treasury account to the village treasury account through the regional general treasury account (PMK, 2023) through a system developed by the Ministry of Finance. Although the village funds are procedurally channeled through the regional general treasury account of the regional government, the funds in the regional general treasury account are immediately deducted and distributed to the village account based on the letter of authorization to transfer village funds from the regent/mayor (PMK, 2023).

Puspita et al., (2021) in his book state that the challenges of the village fund policy are formulating a fairer and more equitable distribution formula for village funds, increasing village readiness both in terms of quantity and quality of apparatus as well as the quality and intensity of

village assistance, and synergizing the implementation of village-based programs in terms of funding and types of activities.

Currently, the government has also made efforts to make continuous improvements in distributing village funds that are more fair and equitable. The formula for allocating village funds is divided into four parts: basic allocation, affirmation allocation, performance allocation, and formula allocation (PMK, 2023).

Of the four formulas, the affirmative allocation and formula allocation have considered the poverty rate in the village. The affirmation allocation is an allocation that is divided proportionally to underdeveloped villages and very underdeveloped villages and can take into account the high number of poor people in underdeveloped villages and very underdeveloped villages. The formula allocation is an allocation that is calculated by taking into account the population, poverty rate, area, and level of geographical difficulty (PMK, 2023).

In line with the research results and also regulatory support from the government related to the allocation of the village fund budget based on the poverty rate, the role of village funds in alleviating poverty in the Nias Islands is very important and needed. For this reason, the government should continue the village fund program to accelerate poverty reduction in villages, especially in the Nias Islands

### **The Effect of Human Development Index on Poverty**

The Human Development Index has a negative and significant impact on Poverty in Nias Islands. This is in line with research conducted Suliswanto (2012) in each province in Indonesia, Mukhtar et al., (2019) in Indonesia, Ramdhani et al., (2022) in DKI Jakarta, and other studies.

From the research results, the Human Development Index regression coefficient is -0.691405 or -0.69. This means that if the Human Development Index increases by 1%, it will have an impact on reducing the percentage of poor people by 0.69%. For this reason, the government should continue policies that support the increase in the Human Development Index in the Nias Islands such as providing health services, and education, and improving infrastructure that supports the economic productivity of the community. Thus it is hoped that the current poor population will get a more decent life.

### **The Effect of Economic Growth on Poverty**

Economic Growth has a negative but insignificant impact on the Human Development Index in the Nias Islands. These results are in line with research conducted Safuridar (2017) in East Aceh Regency and other studies. From the research results, the regression coefficient of Economic Growth was -0.073986 or -0.07, meaning that it did not significantly affect poverty in the Nias Islands. This indicates that the economic growth that has occurred in the Nias Islands has not been evenly distributed to all levels of society. Economic growth is less felt by the poor in the Nias Islands. Therefore, the government should encourage the community's economy through MSME coaching programs, providing MSME corners, providing markets or other business places. This is expected to be able to increase more equitable economic growth and reduce poverty in the Nias Islands.

### **Simultaneous Effect of Village Funds, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth on Poverty in Nias Islands**

Based on the F-test (simultaneous), the F-statistic probability value is 0.000000. This means that the Village Fund, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth variables simultaneously have a significant influence on Poverty in the Nias Islands. The Adjusted R-squared value of 0.937729 shows that the Village Fund, Human Development Index, and Economic Growth variables are able to explain Poverty in the Nias Islands by 93.7729% or 93.77%. The other 6.23% is explained by other variables not included in this study. Future researchers should be able to add or complete existing variables so that the results of further research can be closer to perfect.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that the Village Fund partially has a negative and significant impact on Poverty in the Nias Islands. Village funds have an important role in alleviating poverty in the Nias islands. For this reason, the government should continue the program and policy of channeling village funds to alleviate poverty. The Human Development Index partially has a negative and significant effect on Poverty in the Nias Islands. For this reason, the government should make programs and policies that can increase the Human Development Index such as health services, education, and infrastructure that support economic productivity in the Nias Islands. Economic Growth partially has a negative but insignificant effect on Poverty in the Nias Islands. For this reason, the government should strive for equitable economic growth at every level of society, one of which is by supporting MSME businesses.

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