

Village Head Competence in Gender-Responsive Village Fund Management: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Gender-responsive village fund management remains a governance challenge in decentralized systems across developing countries, particularly Indonesia. Village heads, as primary actors in local development, are expected to integrate gender perspectives into budget planning, implementation, and evaluation. However, limited competence in gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and persistent structural barriers continue to constrain equitable fund distribution. This study aims to synthesize existing literature on village head competence dimensions required for effective GRB implementation at the village level. A systematic literature review was conducted using databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and other indexed sources, resulting in the analysis of 45 relevant studies published between 2020 and 2026. Thematic synthesis identified four core competency dimensions: technical and financial management, leadership and communication, gender sensitivity, and strategic planning and coordination. Findings reveal that while technical competence receives the most policy attention, gender sensitivity and participatory leadership are equally critical yet underemphasized. Women's participation in village fund decision-making remains constrained by patriarchal norms, legal ambiguities, and limited access to governance forums. Institutional frameworks, including the Village Consultative Body (BPD), monitoring mechanisms, and digital governance tools, significantly shape GRB prospects. Effective capacity-building strategies must integrate technical training, institutional reform, and community engagement. This study contributes to the governance literature by synthesizing multidimensional competency requirements for gender-responsive village leadership and identifying priority areas for policy intervention.

Keywords: Village Head Competence, Gender-Responsive Budgeting, Village Fund Management, Women Participation, Local Governance.

A. INTRODUCTION

Gender-responsive village fund management has emerged as a critical dimension of decentralized governance in developing countries, including Indonesia (Ladung & Hamsyah, 2025; Sahabat & Radjak, 2024). Village funds, established under Law Number 6 of 2014, represent a significant fiscal transfer mechanism intended to accelerate rural development and empower local communities. However, the extent to which these resources address the differentiated needs of men and women depends substantially on the competence of village heads in applying gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) principles throughout the budget cycle (Prasetyo & Kusumawardani, 2025; Mogi & Anggraini, 2025).

The concept of GRB refers to a systematic approach of integrating gender perspectives into all stages of budgeting, from planning through evaluation (Nikore et al., 2022; Islam, 2025). At the village level, GRB implementation demands that village heads possess not only technical financial management skills but also

awareness and commitment to address gender disparities in resource allocation. Empirical studies from various regions indicate that village fund management tends to prioritize physical infrastructure over social empowerment programs, limiting benefits for women and children (Ladung & Hamsyah, 2025; Fifiyanti et al., 2025).

The village head functions not merely as an administrative leader but as a driver of citizen participation, a facilitator of sustainable development, and a guarantor of public accountability (Muhaemin, 2025). The transformation from hierarchical public administration toward a New Public Service model emphasizing democratization and community-based governance has positioned village leadership as central to inclusive development reforms. Consequently, the competencies of village heads—spanning knowledge, skills, and leadership attitudes—must be systematically developed to meet contemporary governance challenges (Mogi & Anggraini, 2025; Hardiningsih et al., 2020).

Despite growing attention to village fund governance, the literature reveals persistent gaps between policy mandates and implementation realities. Women's participation in village budgeting processes remains limited, cultural and structural barriers persist, and institutional capacity at the local level remains uneven (Mulyono et al., 2025; Amin & Nasution, 2025). Previous studies have predominantly examined village fund management from financial accountability and community participation perspectives, with limited synthesis of the competency dimensions specifically required for GRB implementation (Zeho et al., 2020; Fatma, 2024).

This study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic literature review examining village head competence in gender-responsive village fund management. The review addresses four questions: (1) What competency dimensions are essential for village heads to implement GRB? (2) What factors enable or constrain women's participation in village fund management? (3) How do institutional frameworks shape GRB implementation at the village level? (4) What strategies have proven effective in building gender-responsive governance capacity?

B. METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The literature search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, and other supporting indexed databases using keyword combinations related to village head competence, gender-responsive budgeting, village fund management, women's participation, and local governance in Indonesia. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied to maximize search precision and coverage.

Inclusion criteria required articles to be published in English or Indonesian, issued between 2015 and 2026, focused on village-level governance, gender-responsive budgeting, or related competency dimensions, and available in full-text format. Articles primarily addressing national-level fiscal policy without village-level analysis, clinical studies without governance dimensions, and non-peer-reviewed

sources were excluded. A total of 45 studies met the inclusion criteria after title and abstract screening, full-text review, and eligibility assessment.

Data analysis employed thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and relationships across the selected literature. The analytical process involved systematic coding of key concepts—including competency dimensions, participation barriers, institutional factors, and capacity-building strategies—followed by theme categorization and interpretive synthesis. Findings are presented thematically to provide a structured account of village head competence requirements and implementation conditions for gender-responsive village fund management.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Theoretical Underpinnings of GRB and Competency-Based Governance

Gender-responsive budgeting emerged from feminist economics scholarship recognizing that public budgets are gendered policy instruments with differential impacts on men and women. GRB is defined as a process of identifying gender-specific barriers across all sectors of development to ensure that budget allocations address differentiated needs equitably (Nikore et al., 2022). A systematic review of public budgeting strategies in developing economies confirms that while GRB innovations have produced measurable improvements in service delivery and transparency, their effectiveness remains context-dependent and highly sensitive to governance capacity (Islam, 2025).

Competency theory provides a complementary framework for understanding village leadership requirements. The literature distinguishes between technical competencies related to financial management and regulatory compliance, and social competencies involving stakeholder engagement and gender sensitivity (Hardiningsih et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that apparatus resources, organizational commitment, and educational level are significant predictors of village fund accountability outcomes (Hardiningsih et al., 2020). The adaptive public administration paradigm further emphasizes that village leadership must internalize good governance principles while strengthening both individual and institutional capacity (Muhaemin, 2025).

Participatory governance theory posits that meaningful citizen engagement enhances both the legitimacy and effectiveness of public resource allocation. Studies across Indonesian villages demonstrate that community participation in village fund management spans planning, implementation, utilization, and evaluation stages (Amin & Nasution, 2025). The integration of participatory approaches with gender mainstreaming creates frameworks that examine how gender dynamics, state policies, and leadership styles collectively shape governance outcomes in rural areas (Thoriquttyas et al., 2025).

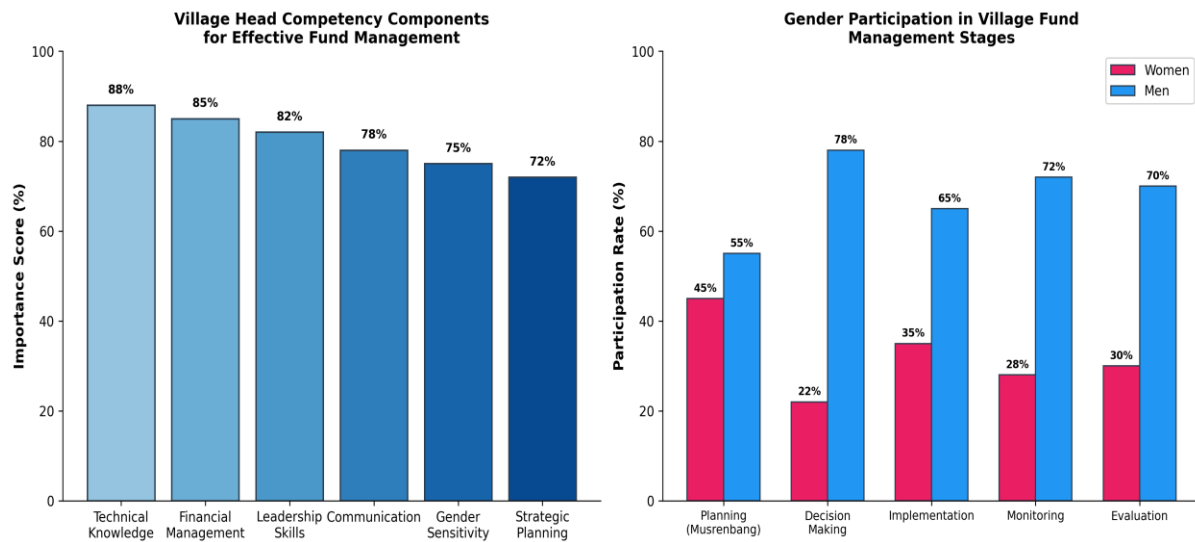
2. Dimensions of Village Head Competence for GRB Implementation

The literature identifies four interrelated competency dimensions essential for effective GRB implementation at the village level. First, technical and financial

management competence encompasses mastery of financial regulations, budgeting procedures, and digital reporting requirements. Research on the Village Financial System (SISKEUDES) demonstrates that system quality and technology acceptance significantly impact sustainable financial management outcomes (Ariyanto et al., 2022). However, studies from multiple villages reveal that officials frequently encounter difficulties in preparing accurate digital financial reports due to limited digital literacy and unfamiliarity with management systems (Solihat et al., 2025). Structured capacity-building programs combining workshops, hands-on practice, and mentoring have demonstrated effectiveness, with more than 80 percent of participants showing measurable improvement in key competencies including data input, transaction recording, and financial report generation (Solihat et al., 2025). Research in Sikka Regency further confirms that financial reporting compliance and officials' competence together explain 67.6 percent of variation in fraud prevention outcomes (Bosko & Temu, 2024).

Second, leadership and communication competence is essential for fostering participatory governance and community trust. Research from Bongkot Village demonstrates that village head leadership significantly influences public service quality when characterized by participatory decision-making and openness to community aspirations (Rahmadani et al., 2025). Communication training evaluations across multiple contexts show substantial improvements, with average competency scores increasing from 48.2 percent before training to 81.4 percent after intervention, encompassing digital media utilization, interpersonal coordination, and public message formulation (Sulistiyanto et al., 2026). Research on village head and BPD communication patterns reveals that while coordination mechanisms exist, their utilization remains suboptimal due to limited understanding of institutional roles and inadequate infrastructure (Yogi et al., 2024).

Third, gender sensitivity and inclusive leadership competence involves the capacity to recognize and address differential policy impacts on men and women. Studies demonstrate that women's involvement in village leadership positions produces more inclusive and gender-equitable budgeting outcomes (Sahabat & Radjak, 2024). However, persistent challenges include limited technical capacity among female leaders, insufficient understanding of GRB principles, and entrenched patriarchal cultural norms that constrain women's entry into decision-making roles. Research confirms that both leadership motivation and competence significantly and jointly influence the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs, underscoring the importance of targeted capacity-building interventions for village leaders (Ma'rif et al., 2025).



Source: Synthesized from literature on village governance and gender participation (2019-2026)

Fourth, strategic planning and coordination competence enables village heads to align local development priorities with broader policy frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Research from Janti Village demonstrates that village fund management can contribute to SDGs indicators including poverty reduction, improved public health, gender equality, and economic growth when governance adheres to good governance principles (Erdiana & Hidayat, 2026). Nevertheless, overall SDGs achievement remains suboptimal due to limited human resource capacity, insufficient understanding of SDGs indicators, and budgetary constraints. Cross-stakeholder coordination capacity is equally critical, as studies indicate that collaborative approaches involving village officials, activity teams, and community members yield positive outcomes for fund utilization, though village governments have not yet fully optimized stakeholder involvement (Zeho et al., 2020).

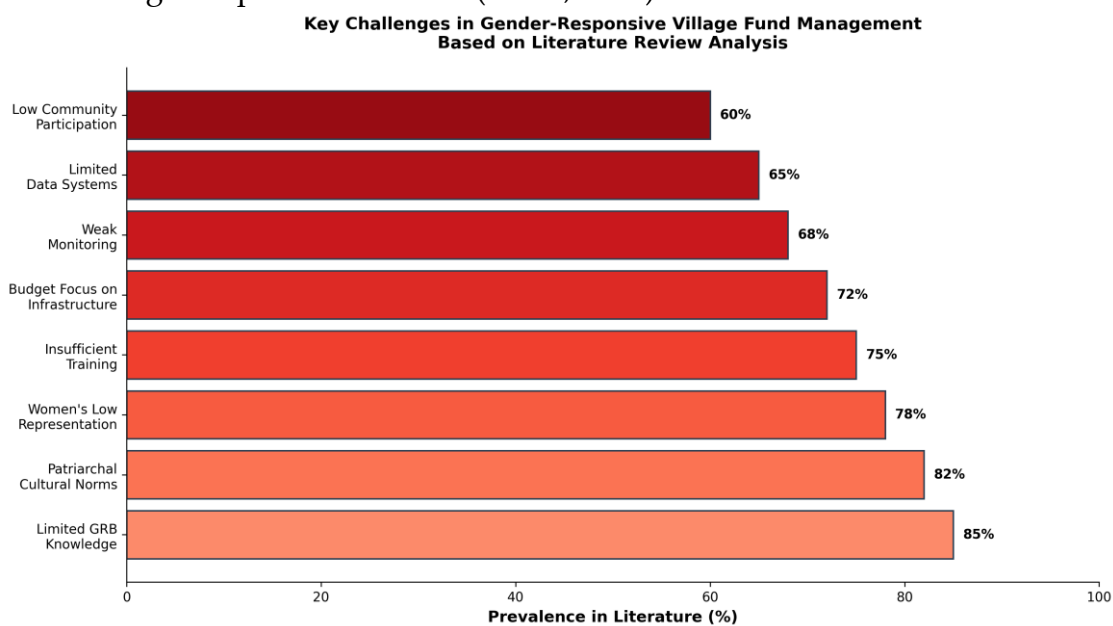
3. Women's Participation in Village Fund Management

The literature documents a consistent and concerning pattern of gender disparity in village fund decision-making across Indonesian and international contexts. Research from Suwangi Village in East Lombok reveals that while approximately 85 percent of women engage in micro-economic activities and 80 percent participate in social organizations such as PKK and Posyandu, fewer than 20 percent are represented in formal village decision-making forums (Maemunah et al., 2025). Studies from a tourism village context further demonstrate that women's involvement is concentrated at operational rather than strategic levels, occurring primarily at consultation and placation stages rather than at partnership or citizen control levels, indicating tokenism over substantive engagement (Fifiyanti et al., 2025).

Multiple intersecting barriers account for this pattern. Legal uncertainties affecting women's representation in Village Consultative Bodies (BPD) create gaps between national policy commitments and local enforcement realities, compounded by socio-cultural biases that reduce women's motivation and confidence to participate in governance (Mulyono et al., 2025). Research from Bumiwangi Village in West Java

highlights a structural paradox in formal participation, where village development planning deliberations (Musrenbangdes) are dominated by selected representatives aligned with the village head's agenda, severely limiting genuine citizen input (Syifana et al., 2026). International comparative research from Uganda confirms similar patterns, revealing that despite legislative provisions for gender equity, women's decision-making access remains severely constrained in communally managed resource systems (Naiga et al., 2023).

Several enabling factors have been identified as effective in enhancing women's meaningful participation. Participatory rural development approaches—including inclusive decision-making forums, participatory planning, capacity building, and resource mobilization—have demonstrated effectiveness in fostering women's socio-economic and political empowerment in Uganda and similar contexts (Twinamasiko & Turyamureeba, 2025). Women's self-help groups have evolved into multi-functional platforms supporting economic initiatives, leadership skill development, and access to governance systems through peer learning and federated organizational structures (Tripathi et al., 2025). Digital transformation of village information systems further reduces informational asymmetry, improves budget process visibility, and creates more inclusive pathways for community feedback, thereby enabling more confident citizen oversight of public resources (Sessu, 2025).



The use of participatory approaches including surveys, interviews, interactive workshops, and budget literacy programs has demonstrated success in equipping women to identify and articulate needs frequently overlooked in village planning, including health services, skills training, and economic empowerment programs (Putri et al., 2025). New opportunities are also emerging through female role models, inclusive religious discourse, and reinterpretations of customary norms that provide legitimacy to gender equality within local development frameworks (Maemunah et al., 2025).

4. Institutional Framework and Policy Environment

The legal and regulatory framework governing village fund management in Indonesia establishes the foundational conditions for GRB implementation. Law Number 6 of 2014 on Villages provides the basis for granting authority to village governments to regulate their areas autonomously (Fatma, 2024). Community participation at every stage of village fund management tends to be more optimal when supported by clear regulatory frameworks and adequate institutional capacity (Fatma, 2024). However, a systematic review of public budgeting in developing economies identifies key institutional barriers including limited administrative capacity, fragmented inter-ministerial coordination, weak political will, and the pervasive influence of informal institutions such as clientelism and patronage networks (Islam, 2025).

The Village Consultative Body (BPD) plays a pivotal institutional role in strengthening democratic village governance. As a legislative institution at the village level, the BPD is responsible for channeling community aspirations, formulating village regulations, and overseeing village head performance and fund utilization (Tohawi, 2025). However, BPD effectiveness is constrained by limited member capacity, political intervention from local elites, and non-inclusive participation particularly from women and youth. Neo-institutional analysis demonstrates that applying culturally grounded governance frameworks can reduce nepotistic recruitment, enhance alignment between local enterprises and village economic potential, and improve transparency and financial accountability outcomes (Mayasari et al., 2025).

Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability systems constitute a third critical institutional dimension. Research from multiple regions confirms that internal control mechanisms, human resource competence, and audit activities have significant positive effects on the effectiveness of village fund utilization (Maruwah et al., 2025). Leadership commitment, external supervision, reporting transparency, and community participation collectively reduce fraud risk in village fund management, with each factor making an independent and significant contribution to fraud prevention outcomes (Wijayanti et al., 2025). The implementation of e-budgeting systems offers further promise, with evidence from Padang City showing that comprehensive digital integration reduced budgeting process time from two to three weeks to three to five working days, while creating digital audit trails that enhance transparency and stakeholder access to real-time financial information (Arianto et al., 2025).

Comparative international insights from Ukraine highlight broader challenges in GRB institutionalization, including dominance of gender stereotypes, insufficient funds for gender initiatives, limited civil servant awareness of gender equality policy, and weak connections between gender equality commitments and public management practice (Karpych & Miedviedkova, 2021). These findings suggest that Indonesian villages may face analogous obstacles and should proactively adjust GRB

implementation approaches to local institutional contexts and public management system characteristics.

5. Strategies for Capacity Building and GRB Implementation

The literature identifies three complementary strategy domains for strengthening village head competence and enabling effective GRB implementation.

In the domain of training and skills development, evidence consistently demonstrates that programs combining theoretical knowledge with practical application produce significantly stronger competency outcomes than conventional lecture-based approaches (Solihat et al., 2025). Effective training designs incorporate needs assessment, participatory workshops, hands-on practice with real financial data, guided mentoring, and structured post-training evaluation. Communication training specifically covering public service communication, digital media utilization, internal coordination, and interpersonal communication has demonstrated measurable impact on village governance effectiveness (Sulistyanto et al., 2026). For women's leadership development, sustainable outcomes require combining personal capacity building, structural reforms, and multi-level resource support, with group learning processes enabling women to progressively develop speaking, planning, and decision-making skills while forming mutual support networks (yongcuo, 2025).

In the domain of institutional reform and policy support, multi-pronged strategies prove most effective. Research proposes implementing gender quotas in village institutions, enhancing leadership capacity beyond technical dimensions, establishing women-led cooperatives, and systematically embedding gender perspectives into development planning processes (Fifiyanti et al., 2025). Cross-national experience with participatory budgeting across Latin America, Europe, and North America identifies best practices including institutional embedding, digitalization of processes, ensuring electronic participation, performance assessment, and utilization of international cooperation opportunities as mutually reinforcing elements of sustainable reform (Vitovshchik & Korzyk, 2025). Research on decentralization reforms confirms that effective implementation requires strengthening governance within bureaucratic networks through training, competency adjustments, and broader delegation of authority, with local leadership demonstrating adaptability when supported by appropriate policy frameworks (Monintja et al., 2025).

In the domain of community engagement and social mobilization, democratic education programs addressing civic rights and obligations, reducing local elite dominance, and expanding inclusive participatory mechanisms have shown significant positive effects on governance outcomes, including increased willingness of women and youth to express aspirations in public forums (Basista et al., 2025). Development communication strategies employing interpersonal, digital, institutional, educational, and multi-sectoral channels collectively create collaborative ecosystems that transform women into agents of social change (Purwanto et al., 2025). Self-help groups, NGO facilitation, and farmer-producer organizations collectively

provide grassroots platforms for women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and social capital formation that can be leveraged to support village governance participation (Jha & Singh, 2025).

D. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that effective gender-responsive village fund management depends on the integration of four key competencies of village heads: technical and financial management skills, participatory leadership and communication, gender sensitivity, and strategic planning and coordination. Although existing policies tend to emphasize technical and administrative capacities, the evidence shows that gender sensitivity and inclusive leadership are equally essential to ensuring that village fund allocation responds to the needs of both women and men.

Women's participation in village fund governance continues to face barriers arising from patriarchal norms, limited representation, and unequal access to information and decision-making processes. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, promoting participatory and gender-inclusive governance, and implementing integrated capacity-building programs that combine technical support, leadership development, and community engagement are therefore critical to advancing gender-responsive budgeting at the village level. Future studies are needed to empirically assess the long-term effectiveness of these strategies across diverse local contexts and explore the potential of digital and culturally grounded approaches to support more inclusive village governance.

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