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Community Empowerment through SELANTANG to Improve Elderly Quality of Life in Surabaya

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Article Information	Abstract
Article history: Accepted 25-07-2026 Fixed 25-07-2026 Approved 10-08-2026 Keywords: <i>Community Empowerment; Elderly; Resilient Elderly School; Quality of Life</i>	Abstract: The increasing number of elderly population requires empowerment programs that can improve the quality of life of the elderly in a sustainable manner. One of the efforts undertaken by the Surabaya City Government is through the Resilient Elderly School Program (SELANTANG). This study aims to analyze community empowerment in the SELANTANG Program as an effort to improve the quality of life of the elderly in Surabaya City with the research location in Baratajaya Village. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques consisting of interviews, observation and documentation. The data sources used are primary and secondary data. The focus of the study uses the Community Empowerment theory by Ansell & Gash (2008) with 4 principles of community empowerment, namely 1) Equality 2) Participation 3) Self-Sufficiency and Independence 4) Sustainability. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the SELANTANG program in Baratajaya Village has contributed positively to improving the quality of life of the elderly, especially in understanding health, independence and increasing social activities. However, the implementation of the program still faces several challenges, including the lack of participation of some elderly and the lack of regeneration of implementing cadres to support the sustainability of the program.

Introduction

Elderly people are defined as individuals aged 60 years and over, as stipulated in Law Number 13 of 1998 concerning the Welfare of the Elderly. One important indicator in assessing the level of well-being of the elderly is their quality of life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), quality of life is an individual's perception of their position in life, influenced by cultural context, value systems, expectations, and life goals. Quality of life for the elderly encompasses four main dimensions: physical, psychological, and spiritual (Tasya et al., 2025). Improving the quality of life for the elderly is crucial within the framework of inclusive development, where every individual has an equal opportunity to live a decent, healthy, and dignified life.

Globally, the number of elderly people is increasing rapidly. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that the global population aged 60 years and over is estimated to be around 2.1 billion by 2050 (WHO, 2025). In Indonesia, the phenomenon of population aging also shows a significant trend. The percentage of elderly people in Indonesia reached 12% in 2024, an increase compared to previous years, and is projected to reach around 20% in 2045, as stated by Prof. Dr. Dante Saksono Harbuwono (Deputy Minister of Health of the

Republic of Indonesia) (Tarmizi, 2024). This indicates that Indonesia is moving towards an aging population structure (aging society).

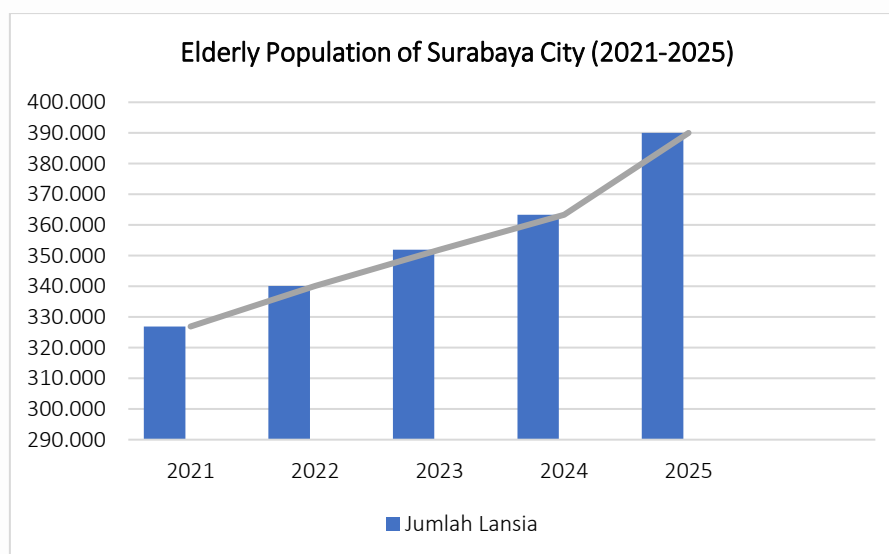


Figure 1. Number of Elderly Population in Surabaya City

Source: (BPS Kota Surabaya, 2026)

Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest metropolitan city, has also seen a significant increase in the number of elderly people over the past five years. The Surabaya Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that the population aged 60 and over reached 326,900 in 2021, with a continued increase over the past five years, reaching 390,003 by 2025. This data indicates that the number of elderly people continues to increase annually, prompting the local government to develop various innovative programs, one of which is the Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) Program. This increase in the number of elderly people impacts various aspects, including the increased need for healthcare services, the growing burden of economic dependency, and the challenge of creating an inclusive and elderly-friendly social environment.

The Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) Program in Surabaya is a form of social policy innovation established by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) to improve the quality of life for elderly people through non-formal education approaches. This program is a development of the Elderly Family Development Group (BKL) program, designed to empower the elderly community to address the need for interventions that focus not only on physical health but also on psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. SELANTANG aims to develop independent, healthy, active, and productive seniors through various educational activities, such as health counseling, life skills training, and social and spiritual development.

Based on data from the Surabaya City Department of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (DP3APPKB), the SELANTANG Program was implemented in various areas of Surabaya in 2025, covering several sub-districts such as Gubeng, Wiyung, Tegalsari, Kenjeran, Rungkut, Gunung Anyar, Sukolilo, Lakarsantri, and Krembangan, and spread across several urban villages. The number of elderly people participating in this program reached 1,722 by December 2025, spread across North Surabaya, South Surabaya, East Surabaya, West Surabaya, and Central Surabaya. This distribution demonstrates the city government's commitment to expanding and equitable service coverage

for the elderly, although potential disparities in access remain between regions that require further study.

The implementation of the Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) Program in Surabaya reflects a community empowerment approach that emphasizes capacity building for individuals and groups of elderly people. This program positions the elderly not only as objects of service but also as active subjects involved in various learning and self-development activities. Through the involvement of integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, local communities, and family support, the elderly are encouraged to actively participate in the process of improving their quality of life. This approach strengthens the independence of the elderly and builds collective community awareness in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for the elderly. International evidence also indicates that active ageing is associated with better quality of life across health, social, environmental, and personal domains. A systematic review by Marzo et al. (2023) found a generally positive relationship between active ageing and quality of life among older adults, supporting the importance of programs that encourage continued participation in social and community activities. This perspective is relevant to SELANTANG because its educational and social activities seek to strengthen older adults' knowledge, independence, and social relationships.

Previous research on the implementation of the SELANTANG program in Babatan Village, Surabaya City, conducted by Windani & Rosdiana (2025), showed that the program has made a positive contribution to improving access to and understanding of health services for the elderly. However, social barriers remain, such as the very minimal participation of male elderly. This condition prevents the program's benefits from being felt equally by all elderly groups. Furthermore, there are obstacles such as the low comprehension or ability of some elderly people to understand the material presented during the learning process, which hinders the program's achievement in improving the quality of life for the elderly.

An analysis of community empowerment is crucial to understanding how the capacity building process for the elderly in the SELANTANG program is designed and implemented. This analysis is based on the community empowerment theory by Ansell & Gash (2008) with four principles: 1) Equality, 2) Participation, 3) Self-reliance and independence, and 4) Sustainability (Margolang, 2018). Through this approach, we can identify the extent to which elderly individuals, as subjects, are able to access resources, improve their skills, and actively participate in activities that support their independence and quality of life through empowerment principles. Thus, the study of community empowerment not only provides conceptual understanding but also generates recommendations that can be used to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the SELANTANG program in the future.

The participation dimension also needs to be understood in light of barriers that older adults experience. Townsend et al. (2021), in a systematic literature review, identified individual factors such as health and motivation, environmental accessibility, and existing social networks as important influences on older adults' social participation. These findings provide an international point of comparison for examining why some older residents participate in SELANTANG while others face health, mobility, or motivation-related constraints.

Based on this background, the research problem is formulated as to how community empowerment within the SELANTANG program can improve the quality of life for elderly people in Surabaya. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine the role of community

empowerment within the SELANTANG program in improving the quality of life for elderly people.

Method

This research is a qualitative study using a descriptive qualitative approach. According to (Sugiyono, 2020), descriptive qualitative research is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivity used to examine the conditions of natural objects, with the researcher as the key instrument. This approach focuses on systematically, factually, and accurately describing the facts and characteristics of the objects being studied. Qualitative research was chosen because of its flexibility and ability to explore data in depth and context. Thus, the researcher has the ability to explore the more complex and diverse phenomenon of community empowerment in the implementation of the Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) program.

The research was conducted at two locations directly related to the research focus: the first location at the Surabaya City Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, and Population and Family Planning (DP3APPKB), a government agency responsible for policy formulation, coordination, and implementation of the SELANTANG program. The second location was the Baratajaya Village, specifically at the Community Empowerment Hall 2, Gubeng District, Surabaya City, as one of the active locations for the SELANTANG program implementation in Surabaya.

The data sources in this study were primary and secondary. According to (Abdussamad, 2021), primary data is data obtained directly from the party providing information to the data collector or the party responsible for providing the data. The author obtained primary data from interviews with the Surabaya City DP3APPKB (Regional Empowerment and Development Agency), SELANTANG program implementing cadres, and elderly SELANTANG program participants in Baratajaya Village, as well as from observations. Meanwhile, according to (Abdussamad, 2021), secondary data is data obtained indirectly by the data collector, through documents or other people. The author obtained secondary data through journals, reports from relevant agencies regarding SELANTANG program implementation data, previous research, and online news.

The data analysis technique used in this study involved several interrelated stages. The researcher first organized and prepared the data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation related to the SELANTANG program. Next, the data was read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of program implementation. Afterward, a coding process was conducted to identify key information related to the principles of community empowerment, namely equality, participation, self-reliance, and independence. The coding results were then grouped into themes according to the research indicators and presented in a narrative description that integrates various data sources. The final stage was data interpretation by linking field findings to the concept of community empowerment to understand the SELANTANG Program's contribution to improving the quality of life for the elderly in Surabaya (Creswell, 2019).

Result and Discussion

The research findings obtained during the fieldwork are presented based on the principles of community empowerment. Data were obtained through observation, documentation, and interviews with the parties involved in the SELANTANG program, namely the Surabaya City DP3APPKB (Regional Community Empowerment Agency), program

implementing cadres in Baratajaya Village, and elderly community members as program participants. The presentation of research findings in this section aims to illustrate the findings obtained in the field in accordance with the principles of community empowerment, which include equality, participation, independence and self-reliance, and sustainability. Therefore, the research findings are organized into several subsections as follows:

1. Equality

The main principle that must be upheld in the community empowerment process is the equality of position between the community and the institutions implementing various community empowerment programs from various backgrounds (Dwi & Farid, 2020). Equality is a crucial foundation for creating an empowerment process that is inclusive, fair, and capable of reaching all target groups. Equality is not only defined as providing equal opportunities to participate in the program but also includes fair treatment in services, information delivery, and participant involvement in every activity. With the principle of equality, the empowerment process is expected to increase a sense of appreciation and encourage optimal community participation.

Based on research results, the implementation of the SELANTANG program in Baratajaya Village has demonstrated the application of the principle of equality in elderly empowerment activities. This is evident in the provision of equal opportunities to all elderly who meet the age requirements to participate in the program without any special treatment or restrictions. The DP3APPKB stated that all elderly aged 60 and over have the same right to participate in the program, while the decision to participate or not is left to each individual. This situation demonstrates that the SELANTANG program strives to provide open access to all elderly in accordance with the established program objectives.

The application of the principle of equality is also evident in the implementation of program activities at the village level. Based on interviews with cadres and program participants, all participants received equal treatment during the program. There were no differences in services or special treatment for certain participants, so that information and program benefits were received equally by all elderly. This situation aligns with the principle of community empowerment, which places all community members on an equal footing in the program implementation process. The equality principle implemented in the SELANTANG program reflects an effort to create an inclusive and open activity environment for all elderly participants.

Furthermore, research results also indicate that program participants did not experience any discrimination or differential treatment during SELANTANG activities. This indicates that the principle of equality is not only applied administratively but also directly experienced by program participants in their daily activities. This condition indicates that the program has succeeded in creating a fair relationship between organizers, cadres, and elderly participants. Therefore, the implementation of the principle of equality in the SELANTANG program aligns with the concept of community empowerment, namely providing equal opportunities, access, and services to all target groups so that they can receive program benefits equally.

2. Participation

The principle of participation in community empowerment emphasizes the importance of active community involvement in every stage of program implementation, whether through participation, decision-making, or utilization of program results. Participation is an effort to

fully engage the community as agents of change and determinants of development initiatives (Nur et al., 2021). Participation is a key element of empowerment because the community is positioned not only as a beneficiary but also as a subject directly involved in the program's sustainability. Good participation is characterized by community awareness, willingness, and active involvement, in accordance with each individual's abilities and circumstances. With participation, empowerment programs are expected to be more effective because the community has a sense of ownership in the activities being implemented.

Based on research results, the implementation of the SELANTANG program has demonstrated the application of the principle of participation through the involvement of seniors in various program activities. The DP3APPKB (Regional Development Planning Agency) authorized cadres in each sub-district to determine program participants because cadres are considered to have a better understanding of the social conditions and characteristics of seniors in their areas. These conditions indicate that program implementation takes into account the cadres' close relationship with the community, allowing participant engagement to be more aligned with field conditions. Furthermore, cadres play an active role in inviting, assisting, and coordinating seniors to regularly participate in program activities.

Based on actual conditions in the field, elderly participation in the SELANTANG program has not been fully optimal. This is evident in the fact that some seniors have not yet participated or have not registered as program participants. An interview with Ms. Dyah, a cadre implementing the SELANTANG program in Baratajaya Village on May 12, 2026, revealed that the low participation of some seniors is influenced by various factors, such as personal busyness, health conditions, limited mobility, and a low interest in socializing. Some participants, who were previously active in the activities, decided to discontinue due to health conditions and overlapping check-up schedules. This situation indicates that elderly involvement in the program is influenced not only by the cadres' efforts to engage the community but also by the physical, psychological, and motivational readiness of each senior.

This finding is consistent with Townsend et al. (2021), who explain that older adults' social participation is shaped by a combination of health, personal motivation, accessibility, and social networks. In the context of Baratajaya, the reported barriers suggest that invitations alone may not be sufficient. Flexible activity schedules, accessible venues, family encouragement, and learning materials adapted to participants' needs could be considered as practical options, subject to confirmation by program managers and participants.

On the other hand, the research results also indicate that some older adults actively participate due to their personal interest and awareness of participating in beneficial social activities. This is evident from statements by program participants who expressed interest in participating in SELANTANG to fill their free time and engage in positive activities. This reflects that community participation in empowerment programs is more easily fostered when there is an internal drive to participate. Therefore, participation in the SELANTANG program demonstrates the involvement of older adults in empowerment activities, although several obstacles remain in its implementation that affect the level of participant participation.

Based on the research findings, it is clear that the principle of participation in community empowerment depends not only on the program organizers and cadres as implementers in the field, but is also influenced by the conditions and willingness of the community as the program's target group. In implementing the SELANTANG program, cadres have attempted to encourage the involvement of older adults through invitations and

mentoring. However, successful participation still requires awareness and motivation from the elderly participants themselves. Therefore, participation in community empowerment programs needs to be supported by collaboration between program organizers, cadres, and the community to optimally achieve program objectives.

3. Independence and Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency and self-reliance in community empowerment view the community not as completely powerless (the "have nots"), but as possessing capabilities, albeit limited (the "have little"). Self-sufficiency represents the potential and capacity of village communities to utilize their resources to achieve independence in managing development (Sehabuddin et al., 2022). This concept aligns with the implementation of the SELANTANG Program, which positions older adults as active participants in the learning process and improves their quality of life. Research shows that the implementation of the Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) Program in RW2, Baratajaya Village, reflects the principles of community empowerment in the dimensions of independence and self-sufficiency.

Based on the research findings, older adults, as beneficiaries of the program, are given the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills to support their independent lives. The SELANTANG Program provides education on various learning materials related to elderly life, such as spirituality, the seven dimensions of resilient older adults, motivation, elderly health, nutrition, osteoporosis, hypertension, psychological disorders, and tourism activities. These materials aim to empower older adults to lead healthy, active, and productive lives. This material is a form of capacity building aimed at enhancing individuals' abilities to independently address life's challenges. Seniors are not only provided with information but also guided to apply that knowledge in their daily lives.



Figure 1: Material Delivery in the SELANTANG Program

Source: Personal Documentation, 2026

The SELANTANG program's content delivery to improve the independence of the elderly also demonstrated active participation from the participants. Observations showed that the participants enthusiastically participated in the activities and actively asked questions of the presenters, fostering two-way communication. This demonstrates that the elderly are not positioned as passive recipients of material, but are actively involved in the learning process, tailored to their needs. Active community participation is crucial because the success of

empowerment is determined not only by the program itself but also by community involvement in its implementation.

Interviews with elderly participants also revealed changes in their independence after participating in the SELANTANG program. Tikah, a participant, stated that the SELANTANG program provided benefits in the form of knowledge about health and illnesses in the elderly, enabling them to better understand how to maintain their own health. Furthermore, the program also enabled the elderly to become more socially active, allowing them to gather and interact with other participants. These statements demonstrate that the SELANTANG program not only improves the elderly's physical and health abilities but also enhances their self-confidence and social relationships.

In addition to providing material assistance, the independence dimension of the SELANTANG program is also strengthened by an evaluation system that measures Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL). These measurements are conducted at the beginning of the program to determine the level of independence of older adults in carrying out daily activities. ADL and IADL results are used to assess the extent to which older adults are able to meet their personal needs independently. These measurements demonstrate that the SELANTANG program is not solely focused on activity implementation but also includes indicators used to assess the development of participants' independence.

Thus, the research results indicate that the SELANTANG program has implemented the principles of community empowerment in the dimensions of independence and self-reliance through the provision of knowledge, capacity building for older adults, active participant participation, and evaluation of independence levels. This program has successfully encouraged older adults to become more independent in maintaining their health, carrying out daily activities, and participating actively in social life. Therefore, the SELANTANG program can be said to empower older adults as subjects with the potential and ability to independently improve their quality of life.

4. Sustainability

Sustainability is a key principle in community empowerment, ensuring that the program can continue to operate and provide long-term benefits to the target community (Yemima & Hamid, 2023). Sustainability is not only understood as the continuity of activities, but also encompasses the program's ability to continue to develop through institutional support, community participation, human resources, and a sense of community ownership of the program. In the context of the Resilient Elderly School Program (SELANTANG), the principle of sustainability is crucial because this program seeks to improve the quality of life for the elderly through ongoing education, health development, and social empowerment.

Based on research findings, the sustainability of the SELANTANG Program is supported by support from both the central and regional governments. This is evident in a statement by Ms. Mira, a representative of the Surabaya City DP3APPKB, who stated that the SELANTANG program is a national program of the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) related to elderly empowerment and also receives funding from the Surabaya City Government. The support from the BKKBN and the Surabaya City Government demonstrates that the SELANTANG program has a strong policy foundation, ensuring that its implementation is not temporary but is designed to be ongoing and support the well-being of the elderly.

In addition to institutional support, the research also indicates a program development strategy as a means of maintaining sustainability. Based on an interview with Mrs. Mira, the

strategy involved expanding the program's implementation to the sub-district level to ensure a broader reach for the elderly community. However, this expansion still took into account the number of elderly in the target area, ensuring effective program implementation. From a community empowerment perspective, this development strategy demonstrates participatory and needs-based planning. The program is not implemented uniformly without considering field conditions, but is tailored to the potential and needs of the community in each region.

The sustainability of the SELANTANG Program is also influenced by the role of cadres as the primary implementers of activities at the community level. Based on an interview with Mrs. Dyah, a cadre implementer, program sustainability is highly desirable because it provides significant benefits for the elderly, especially those who previously lacked routine activities in their later years. However, Mrs. Dyah also emphasized the importance of cadre regeneration for the program's future sustainability. Cadres function to mobilize community participation, assist participants, and maintain the continuity of activities in the field. Therefore, cadre regeneration is a crucial part of program sustainability, as without human resources to continue this role, program implementation could potentially face obstacles in the future.

Program sustainability is also strengthened by support from program participants themselves. A statement from Mrs. Tikah, a program participant, indicates that elderly people feel that SELANTANG activities benefit their daily lives, both socially and health-wise. The program helps elderly people maintain activities, gain health knowledge, and interact with other elderly people. When the community perceives a program as providing tangible benefits to their lives, a sense of ownership develops. This sense of ownership is a key factor in maintaining program sustainability, as it encourages continued participation and support.

Thus, the research findings indicate that the sustainability of the SELANTANG Program reflects the principle of community empowerment through government support, program development strategies, cadre involvement, and the active participation of elderly participants. The program focuses not only on short-term activities but also strives to maintain and develop program benefits sustainably. However, program sustainability still requires attention to cadre regeneration and human resource strengthening to ensure optimal implementation of the SELANTANG Program.

The sustainability issue also highlights the importance of sound implementation and meaningful targeting in community empowerment. Mamentu et al. (2023), including Rusli Isa, found that an empowerment policy can fail to improve the intended group's quality of life when assistance is not directed to the appropriate beneficiaries. Although their study concerned small-scale fishers rather than older adults, it offers a relevant policy lesson for SELANTANG: continuity should be accompanied by attention to target-group needs, accountable implementation, and evaluation of who actually benefits. In addition, Hanasi and Isa (2025) emphasize transparency, communication, community involvement, and service quality as elements that can support public trust. Applied cautiously to SELANTANG, these insights reinforce the value of maintaining communication with older residents and involving them in reviewing program activities. Bulonggodu et al. (2024), in a study of village-level public services, similarly highlight timeliness, accuracy, and service-provider conduct as useful dimensions for assessing service effectiveness. These dimensions could inform future evaluation of SELANTANG's delivery arrangements, while recognizing that their study examined a different service context.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, there are four indicators that assess the success of the Resilient Elderly School (SELANTANG) program in improving the quality of life of the elderly in the Baratajaya Village, Gubeng District, Surabaya City, as follows:

The implementation of the SELANTANG program in Baratajaya Village has effectively implemented the principle of equality in empowering the elderly. This is demonstrated by providing equal opportunities, access, and services to all elderly people according to age criteria without discrimination or special treatment. The implementation of this principle of equality is also directly felt by participants in the activities, enabling the program to create an inclusive, equitable environment that supports optimal elderly participation.

The implementation of the SELANTANG program has implemented the principle of participation through the involvement of elderly people in Baratajaya Village in various empowerment activities and the active role of cadres in inviting and assisting participants. However, the level of elderly participation is not yet optimal due to factors such as health, limited mobility, personal busyness, and low interest in socializing. Active participation tends to only occur among elderly people who have the awareness and personal motivation to engage in beneficial social activities.

The SELANTANG program in Baratajaya Village has positioned the elderly as subjects with potential and the ability to develop. Through the provision of various educational materials, this program has been able to increase the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence of the elderly in carrying out their daily lives. The active participation of participants in the learning process and the measurement of ADL and IADL as evaluation indicators demonstrate that the program has made a real effort to assess the development of the elderly's level of independence. Thus, the principle of community empowerment in the dimensions of independence and self-sufficiency has been achieved, as an effort to improve the quality of life in empowering the elderly community.

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the SELANTANG program has implemented the principle of sustainability in community empowerment. Support from the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) and the Surabaya City Government demonstrates the existence of a policy and funding foundation that strengthens the program's sustainability. Furthermore, the strategy for expanding program implementation locations reflects efforts to develop the program. The program's sustainability is also supported by the active role of cadres, although cadre regeneration remains a priority to ensure the program continues to run optimally in the future. The tangible benefits experienced by participants encourage the sustainability of the SELANTANG program.

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