

Outreach on the Use of Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) to Empower Low-Income Communities in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang City

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Abstract: Poverty remains a serious challenge in Indonesia's national development, including in Seberang Palinggam Village, South Padang District, Padang City, which has been designated as one of the 23 slum settlement points in Padang City. The majority of its residents work as fishermen, port laborers, and small traders with unstable incomes, making them one of the most in need of social protection program interventions. This article aims to describe and analyze the implementation of socialization on the utilization of the People's Welfare Direct Cash Assistance (BLT Kesra) as an effort to empower the underprivileged community in the village. This activity uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were obtained through observation, interactive discussions, documentation, and relevant literature studies. The research results show that before the socialization activities were carried out, the community's understanding of the objectives, distribution mechanisms, and utilization of the Kesra BLT was still limited. After the socialization was conducted in a participatory and communicative manner, the community's understanding increased, especially regarding the targeted, productive, and responsible use of the assistance. The socialization also succeeded in raising awareness that the BLT Kesra not only functions as short-term consumptive aid but also as a first step toward the economic independence of the community. However, the effectiveness of the program still faces challenges such as inaccuracies in recipient data and the lack of ongoing support. Therefore, socialization needs to be carried out periodically and integrated with skills training programs and business mentoring to create a more sustainable empowerment impact.

Keywords: Direct Cash Assistance, BLT, Poverty, Community Empowerment, Socialization.

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the structural issues that remains a serious challenge to Indonesia's national development. Although various efforts to combat poverty have been carried out continuously, socioeconomic disparities among communities have not yet been fully resolved. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the percentage of Indonesia's poor population in September 2024 stood at 8.57 percent, with an absolute number of 24.06 million people a decrease of 1.84 million compared to March 2023 (BPS, 2025). Although this downward trend is commendable, the figure still reflects the significant social burden that must be borne by the government and all stakeholders. The phenomenon of urban poverty exhibits distinct characteristics that cannot be ignored; during the same period, the percentage of the poor in urban areas reached 6.66 percent, equivalent to 11.05 million people (BPS, 2025). High rates of urbanization not matched by sufficient job creation, limited access to adequate housing, and income inequality are the main factors exacerbating poverty in urban areas.

West Sumatra Province, including the city of Padang as its provincial capital, is no exception to this problem. The poverty rate in West Sumatra in September 2024 reached 5.42 percent, or 315,430 people, with an urban poverty rate of 4.16 percent (West Sumatra BPS, 2025). As a center of regional economic growth, the city of Padang faces the paradox of urbanization: amidst the city's economic progress, pockets of poverty still persist in densely populated and slum-like residential areas. The Seberang Palinggam neighborhood, located in South Padang District, is one area that reflects this reality; it was designated as one of 23 slum sites in the city of Padang under Padang Mayor's Decree No. 163 of 2014 (Elviyanti, 2018). The majority of residents earn their livelihoods as fishermen, port workers, and small-scale vendors with irregular incomes; they live in settlements that border directly on rivers and hillsides, making them vulnerable to natural disasters as well as economically vulnerable.

To alleviate the economic burden on low-income households, the Indonesian government has designed and implemented various social protection programs, one of the most well-known of which is the Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) program. The BLT program is a policy instrument that provides direct cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households both conditional and unconditional with the aim of maintaining the purchasing power of low-income households and strengthening the national social security system (Hastuti et al., 2021). As part of a broader social protection policy, the BLT not only serves as a short-term economic buffer but is also expected to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty eradication and the improvement of social welfare (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

Although the BLT program has a strong policy foundation and has demonstrated positive impacts, its implementation on the ground is not without various challenges. First, there is still a lack of precision in targeting beneficiaries due to suboptimal data updates (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2024). Second, public understanding of the program's objectives and mechanisms remains limited due to a lack of outreach at the sub-district level (Hadi et al., 2025). Third, funds tend to be spent on daily consumption needs without generating sustainable economic impacts. Fourth, limited interagency coordination in the planning and oversight of BLT distribution has created gaps in program accountability (Sa'adah et al., 2023, in the Surabaya BLT study, 2025). These conditions underscore that the success of the BLT program is not solely determined by the amount of assistance distributed, but also by the quality of the accompanying communication and support.

Given these challenges, outreach activities are a crucial element in the implementation of the BLT program. Outreach is not merely about disseminating administrative information; rather, it serves as a vehicle for community empowerment to enhance understanding, capacity,

and awareness in utilizing assistance wisely and productively. This approach aligns with the paradigm of community empowerment, which emphasizes that social assistance programs should not only serve as a temporary economic safety net but also as a foundation for enhancing long-term economic capacity and self-reliance. The government has a strategic opportunity to integrate the BLT with empowerment programs such as skills training, MSME mentoring, and access to capital for small businesses to create a more sustainable impact for beneficiaries (Kompasiana, 2025).

Based on the above discussion, this article aims to describe and analyze outreach activities regarding the use of BLT as an effort to empower low-income communities in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang City. More specifically, this article examines: (1) the form and implementation of BLT outreach activities in the village; (2) the level of understanding and response among beneficiary communities after participating in the outreach; and (3) the relevance and impact of the outreach in encouraging the productive use of BLT as part of efforts to economically empower the community. The results of this study are expected to provide constructive input for the subdistrict government, city government, and other stakeholders in designing more effective, inclusive, and sustainable outreach and empowerment programs.

METHOD

This community service project employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods to understand the implementation of outreach efforts regarding the use of the Social Welfare Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) program in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the community's perceptions and experiences with the BLT program (Moleong, 2018). The descriptive method aims to systematically describe the outreach process, the community's level of understanding, and its impact on behavioral changes in the utilization of the assistance (Sugiyono, 2019). This combination of approaches was chosen so that the analysis results could comprehensively reflect the actual conditions on the ground.

The type of activity conducted was participatory outreach, in which the author was directly involved in conveying information about the BLT Kesra to the beneficiary community. Participatory outreach has proven effective in encouraging active community involvement particularly among low-income groups in understanding and making the most of government social assistance programs (Kambali, Nasrulloh, & Ulum, 2022). Through this approach, the author serves as both an information provider and a discussion facilitator. This direct involvement is expected to enhance the community's understanding and ability to utilize the assistance appropriately and productively.

Data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation and interactive discussions with beneficiary communities, village officials, and community leaders. Secondary data comes from activity documentation, reports on the distribution of BLT in Seberang Palinggam Subdistrict, and relevant scientific literature. The use of these two types of data sources aims to provide a more comprehensive and valid picture of the program's implementation in the field. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

The overall stages of the community service activities are presented in Figure 1 to illustrate the implementation process from the initial preparation to the evaluation stage.

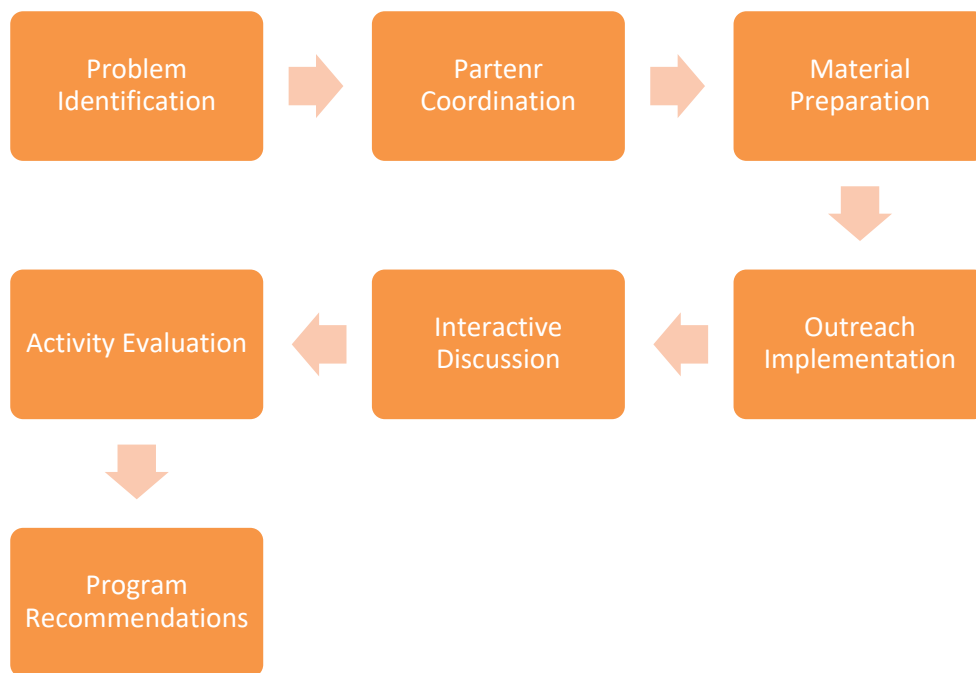


Figure 1. Workflow for Implementing Community Service Activities

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The administration of social protection programs requires coordinated implementation to ensure they are targeted effectively and reach the most vulnerable members of society. One of the government's efforts to maintain the purchasing power of the poor is through the People's Welfare Direct Cash Assistance Program (BLT Kesra), which was launched in October 2025. This program is expected to help meet the basic needs of the community amid economic pressures. However, the program's effectiveness is determined not only by the distribution of assistance but also by the public's understanding of the program's objectives and how to utilize the assistance. Therefore, effective outreach is necessary to ensure that BLT Kesra is utilized optimally to support community welfare and empowerment. This discussion examines the implementation of outreach efforts regarding the use of BLT Kesra in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang City, along with its achievements and the challenges faced.

Definition and Legal Basis of BLT Kesra

The Direct Cash Assistance for People's Welfare (BLT Kesra) is a social assistance program officially launched on October 17, 2025, by the administration of President Prabowo Subianto through the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The launch of this program stems from the government's commitment to strengthening the national social protection framework, which is considered to still have gaps in reaching the most vulnerable segments of society at the bottom of the socioeconomic structure. This program is designed as an additional social buffer to maintain the purchasing power of the poor and those vulnerable to poverty who are affected by fluctuations in the prices of basic necessities, particularly amid an economy that has not yet fully recovered from the food inflation pressures that have persisted since mid-2024 (Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

Conceptually, the BLT Kesra falls under the category of unconditional cash transfers. This intervention model positions beneficiaries as individuals with full autonomy to prioritize how the assistance is used according to their families' most pressing needs. Unlike conditional

cash transfer models such as the Family Hope Program (PKH), which require the fulfillment of certain obligations such as sending children to school or undergoing routine health checkups BLT Kesra gives recipients the flexibility to allocate funds according to the actual circumstances they face (Iuwashtangguh, 2026). This approach offers advantages in terms of speed of disbursement and flexibility of use, although it also requires stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure the funds are not used in counterproductive ways.

In the literature on social welfare and development economics, unconditional cash transfer programs have been shown to be effective in increasing consumption among poor households, reducing vulnerability to economic shocks, and encouraging investment in the education and health of children in beneficiary families (World Bank, 2018). However, scholars also emphasize that the effectiveness of such programs depends heavily on how well the beneficiary data system is managed, how accurately the assistance is targeted, and how robust the accompanying empowerment program ecosystem is (Banerjee & Duflo, 2019). Thus, the success of the BLT Kesra cannot be separated from the quality of implementation of all program components, including public outreach as the cornerstone of communication between the government and the public.

The legal basis for the BLT Kesra program rests on a number of key regulations that complement one another and form a solid normative framework. These regulations include Law No. 11 of 2009 on Social Welfare, which serves as the most fundamental legal framework for all social protection programs in Indonesia; Law No. 13 of 2011 on the Handling of the Poor, which specifically regulates intervention mechanisms for the poorest segments of society; Presidential Instruction No. 4 of 2025 on Accelerating the Eradication of Extreme Poverty, which provides an explicit mandate to all ministries and agencies to accelerate social protection programs; Minister of Social Affairs Regulation No. 3 of 2025 on the Distribution of Social Assistance Based on the DTSEN, which serves as a technical guideline for determining beneficiary targets; as well as the Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 239/HUK/2025 on the Distribution of Temporary Direct Cash Assistance for People's Welfare, which sets out the operational mechanisms for the disbursement and accountability of funds (Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

These regulations not only provide legal certainty for the program's implementation but also serve as binding technical guidelines for all stakeholders—from the Ministry of Social Affairs at the central level, through provincial governments and regency/city governments, down to the sub-district and village officials who are on the front lines of implementation. The existence of this comprehensive legal framework is a crucial prerequisite for the implementation of social assistance programs that are not only technically effective but also legally accountable and answerable to the public—who are the ultimate stakeholders in the administration of the state.

BLT Kesra within the Framework of Community Economic Empowerment

BLT Kesra cannot and should not be viewed as a single or permanent solution to the problem of structural poverty that has been deeply rooted in Indonesia's socioeconomic system for decades. This program is more appropriately viewed as a temporary safety net that provides breathing room for communities to survive in difficult economic conditions, while gradually building their capacity to rise toward self-reliance. It is important to instill this perspective from the outset so that the program does not create a culture of dependency that is counterproductive to the goal of long-term community empowerment.

Within the framework of economic empowerment, this program serves two main, complementary functions. The first function is to “supplement” or reinforce regular assistance programs such as PKH and BPNT, with BLT Kesra serving as an additional layer of protection capable of filling gaps in needs not addressed by existing programs. The second function is to serve as a new outreach tool for families who had previously been completely left out of government social protection programs, either due to data limitations or because their circumstances fell just below the eligibility threshold—a situation often undetected by conventional data collection systems (Kemiri Village Office, 2025). These two functions make BLT Kesra a component that complements and strengthens the overall national social protection architecture.

Furthermore, Setiawan and Jamaliah (2023), in their study on the evaluation of social assistance programs in Indonesia, emphasize that without comprehensive and integrated empowerment programs—such as vocational skills training, access to capital for microenterprises, and entrepreneurship mentoring—cash assistance runs a high risk of being spent solely on consumption needs without leaving a sustainable economic impact. This phenomenon is often referred to as the “consumptive effect” of social assistance programs, in which the assistance received is immediately absorbed by daily needs without leaving any economic value added that could improve the bargaining position of recipient families in the medium and long term.

Therefore, the government has a tremendous strategic opportunity to integrate the BLT Kesra with more comprehensive empowerment programs that have a long-term impact. One concrete example of such an integration effort is the Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara (PENA) Program, developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. PENA is designed to serve as a bridge connecting cash assistance with productive economic empowerment, particularly for KPM who are of working age and have the potential to develop their own businesses (Amikom Blog, 2026). Through this program, BLT Kesra recipients are encouraged to use the assistance not only as funds for consumption but also as seed capital to start or develop sustainable small businesses.

In the specific context of Seberang Palinggam Village, the potential for integration between the BLT Kesra and economic empowerment programs is very promising. The majority of the village’s residents work in the informal sector as fishermen, port workers, and small-scale traders who possess technical skills in their respective fields but are often hindered by a lack of capital to expand their businesses. With initial capital sourced from the BLT Kesra, coupled with targeted technical assistance and access to broader marketing networks, the residents of this *kelurahan* have the real capacity to scale up their businesses and ultimately break free from the cycle of poverty more permanently. This is why outreach efforts which not only convey technical information but also instill a paradigm of economic self-reliance are just as important as the distribution of aid itself.

Implementation of the BLT Kesra Outreach Program in Seberang Palinggam Village

The BLT Kesra outreach program in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang Selatan Subdistrict, Padang City was carried out using a participatory and communicative approach that treats the community not merely as recipients of information, but as active participants involved in the process of understanding and utilizing the program. This approach is in line with the principles of community empowerment, which emphasize the importance of residents’ active involvement in every stage of the program from planning and implementation to evaluation.

The Seberang Palinggam urban village itself has socioeconomic characteristics that make it one of the most relevant areas to serve as a focal point for the dissemination of social

protection programs. Based on Padang Mayor's Decree No. 163 of 2014, this urban village was designated as one of 23 slum areas in the city of Padang (Elviyanti, 2018). The physical conditions of the densely populated and cramped settlement reflect the residents' level of well-being, which generally remains in the low to lower-middle category. The majority of residents work as fishermen, port laborers, and small-scale vendors, whose incomes are irregular and highly vulnerable to seasonal economic fluctuations as well as unexpected changes in market conditions. This dual vulnerability stemming from both erratic income and limited access to basic social services makes the Seberang Palinggam Subdistrict one of the areas most in need of intensive and sustained outreach efforts to promote social protection programs.

In designing outreach activities, the implementation team carefully considers the social and cultural conditions of the local community. Outreach is not designed as a rigid, distant, one-way formal event, but rather as a warm, inclusive platform for education and empowerment that encourages active participation from all participants. Kristanto et al. (2024), in their study on the effectiveness of outreach for social assistance programs in Indonesia, emphasize that participatory outreach and mentoring are essential efforts to ensure that the public not only understands but is also able to access and make optimal use of the social assistance provided by the government. Furthermore, the study found that outreach conducted through a dialogic approach and grounded in the local context has been shown to yield higher levels of understanding and compliance compared to outreach that is purely instructive and ceremonial in nature.

Based on the previously established objectives, this outreach campaign covers five main areas of focus that are interrelated and form a coherent whole. These five focus areas include: enhancing the public's overall understanding of the BLT Kesra program; explaining the program's role and benefits in family economic life; providing guidance on the targeted and responsible use of funds; fostering awareness of BLT Kesra as a first step toward economic self-reliance; and creating a space for discussion that allows the public to voice their aspirations and ask questions directly. These five focus areas serve as a framework that structures the entire outreach campaign from start to finish.

Increasing Public Understanding of the BLT Kesra Program

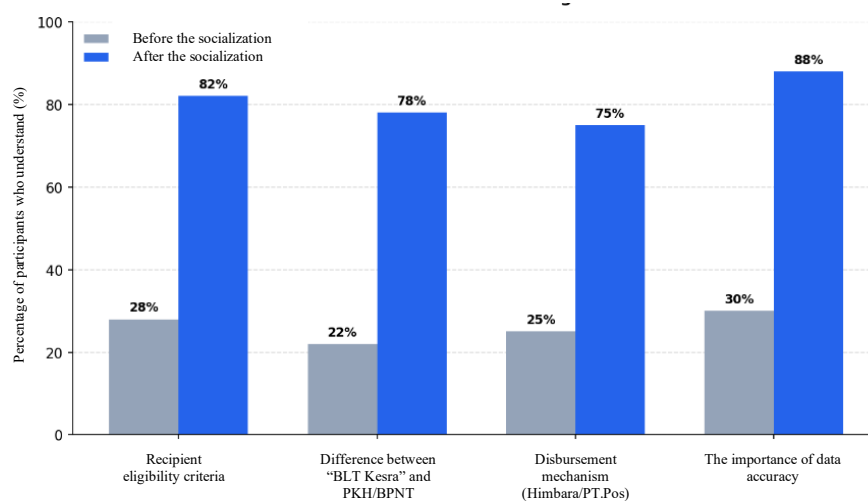


Figure 2. Improvement in Participants' Understanding of the BLT Kesra Program Before and After the Outreach Activity in Seberang Palinggam Subdistrict

One of the most critical findings identified at the start of the outreach campaign was the community's very limited initial understanding of the BLT Kesra program. This lack of understanding was not solely due to the community's low educational level, but was largely caused by the lack of structured information dissemination efforts by the sub-district government and relevant agencies prior to the outreach campaign. Many participants admitted that this was the first time they had heard a comprehensive and systematic explanation of the program, even though they had heard news about the BLT Kesra through social media and informal conversations in their communities.

This limited understanding manifests itself in several quite specific ways. First, many participants are unsure of the eligibility criteria for becoming beneficiaries, leading to the misconception that every poor person will automatically receive assistance without having to go through the data collection process. Second, most participants do not yet understand the fundamental differences between the BLT Kesra and other social assistance programs such as the PKH and BPNT, which are often conflated or even considered to be the same program. Third, the technical mechanisms for disbursing assistance whether through Himbara bank accounts or via PT Pos Indonesia are not yet adequately understood by the majority of participants, leading to confusion about the practical steps that need to be taken after being designated as beneficiaries. This situation reflects the findings of various evaluation studies that have consistently identified a lack of outreach at the sub-district or village level as one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of social assistance programs in Indonesia (Hadi et al., 2025; Kebijakan: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi, 2024).

Furthermore, the phenomenon of an "infodemic" or a flood of inaccurate information on social media has further exacerbated the public's lack of understanding. Various misleading reports about who is eligible to receive assistance, the amount of aid, and how to register have spread widely across social media platforms, causing confusion and anxiety among citizens who are truly in need of assistance. Structured, fact-based outreach serves as a crucial antidote to counter the negative effects of such inaccurate information. Iuwastangguh (2026), in his study on social assistance program literacy in Indonesia, emphasizes that a comprehensive and accurate understanding of a program is a vital foundation that protects the public from the influence of misleading information, which can lead them to make decisions that are detrimental to themselves.

After attending all the outreach sessions, community members demonstrated a significant and measurable increase in understanding across various aspects. Participants began to clearly understand that the BLT Kesra is a new program designed with characteristics and mechanisms that differ from the regular assistance they had previously received. They also began to understand that this program is temporary and cannot be relied upon as a steady source of income in the long term. Furthermore, participants began to realize how important the accuracy and completeness of the data they provided to data collection officers were, since the accuracy of data in the DTSEN system is crucial in determining who is ultimately eligible to receive benefits from this program. This measurable increase in understanding aligns with the findings of a study stating that the effectiveness of social assistance programs is greatly influenced by the intensity of outreach and the quality of support provided to beneficiaries (Journal of Innovative Multidisciplinary Studies, 2026). Better understanding also has a direct impact on reducing the potential for miscommunication, social jealousy, and horizontal conflicts that often occur in the community due to residents' lack of knowledge about the mechanisms for selecting and determining beneficiaries.

During the outreach session, participants were given practical guidance that they could immediately apply to managing their household finances. First, community members were

encouraged to prioritize meeting their families' basic needs with the funds received, including nutritious food, children's education expenses, and long-overdue medical checkups. Prioritizing these basic needs is crucial to ensure that the primary function of the assistance as a means to support a family's minimum consumption is fulfilled before funds are allocated to other purposes. Second, participants were encouraged to set aside a portion of the funds even a small amount as capital for micro-enterprises that can generate additional income for their families. Specific examples of businesses relevant to the context of Seberang Palinggam Village were provided, such as selling prepared seafood dishes, opening a small-scale household goods store, or developing handicrafts made from local raw materials that have market value. Third, the community is reminded to manage household finances wisely by avoiding impulsive spending on unproductive items, such as purchasing non-essential luxury goods or engaging in wasteful entertainment activities.

Promoting the Targeted and Responsible Use of Funds

One of the most strategic aspects and one that is most critical to the long-term success of the BLT Kesra outreach program is the provision of concrete and practical guidance on how aid funds should be used in a targeted and responsible manner. This aspect is particularly important given that one of the most recurring criticisms often directed at cash assistance programs in Indonesia is the tendency for funds to be spent on short-term consumption without leaving a meaningful economic impact on improving the conditions of recipient families in the medium and long term (Kompasiana, 2025).

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These practical guidelines are not presented as rigid, judgmental prohibitions, but rather in a spirit of empathy and respect for the beneficiaries' autonomy as adults capable of making rational decisions when provided with adequate information. This approach is crucial for preserving the dignity of beneficiaries and avoiding the stigmatization that often accompanies social assistance programs, in which recipients are viewed as incapable of making sound decisions for themselves. Setiawan and Jamaliah (2023) emphasize that social assistance programs accompanied by high-quality financial education based on respect for beneficiaries' capabilities have been shown to result in more productive patterns of aid use compared to programs that merely distribute cash without guidance.

The aspect of social responsibility was also given significant emphasis during the outreach session. Participants were reminded of the importance of honesty in reporting their family's economic conditions to data collection officers, so that assistance can be channeled to those who truly need it. Furthermore, the community was encouraged to develop a sense of collective ownership of this program, in which every community member has a moral

responsibility to help ensure that government assistance is used as effectively as possible for the common good. This emphasis on the values of honesty and responsibility is highly relevant, given that inaccuracies in beneficiary data whether caused by intentional manipulation or administrative negligence constitute one of the most chronic structural obstacles repeatedly identified in various studies on the implementation of social assistance in Indonesia (Ajun *et al.*, 2024). By involving the community as agents of social accountability, public outreach serves not only as a means of individual education but also as a mechanism for reinforcing social norms that promote honesty and transparency in the management of government assistance programs.

Raising Awareness of the BLT Kesra for Economic Self-Reliance

What most distinguishes this outreach effort from a mere presentation of technical information is the effort to instill a transformative paradigm: that the BLT Kesra is a first step toward economic self-reliance, not an end goal or a permanent, reliable source of income. Instilling this paradigm is one of the most challenging yet most important dimensions of the entire outreach effort, as it touches on psychological and cultural aspects that run much deeper than a mere technical understanding of the program's mechanisms.

In a sociological context, long-term social assistance that is not accompanied by systematic empowerment efforts has the potential to create a condition that social scientists refer to as “welfare dependency,” in which beneficiaries unconsciously lose the motivation to seek economic improvement on their own because they feel sufficiently protected by the existing social safety net. A number of studies indicate that this phenomenon of dependency, if not proactively addressed through comprehensive empowerment programs, can hinder beneficiaries' socioeconomic mobility and even exacerbate intergenerational poverty (Puryanti *et al.*, 2022). This is why a paradigm shift from a “beneficiary” mindset to that of a “prospective independent economic actor” is crucial to instill in every outreach session.

During the outreach session in Seberang Palinggam Village, this paradigm was not presented in a doctrinal or patronizing manner, but rather was developed through an empowering, dialogic approach. The facilitators encouraged participants to reflect on their own potential whether in the form of skills, social networks, or local resources that could be developed into a foundation for economic self-reliance. Real-life examples of success stories from residents of similar communities who successfully leveraged government assistance as a stepping stone to develop independent businesses were shared to inspire participants and demonstrate that economic self-reliance is not merely a slogan, but a tangible possibility that can be achieved through hard work, creativity, and the right support.

This approach aligns with the concept of community empowerment developed by various community empowerment theorists, who consistently emphasize that effective social assistance programs should not only serve as a temporary economic safety net but also as a catalyst that triggers the long-term process of enhancing community capacity, self-confidence, and economic self-reliance (Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs, 2021). In this regard, the government has a highly strategic opportunity to integrate the BLT Kesra with more comprehensive and measurable empowerment programs, such as vocational skills training tailored to local economic potential, mentoring for the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and facilitating access to business capital through affordable microcredit schemes. The PENA (Pahlawan Ekonomi Nusantara) program, developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, is a concrete example of the government's efforts to build a bridge that integrates cash assistance with productive economic empowerment (Amikom Blog, 2026). If the scope of such programs can be expanded and adapted to the specific contexts of each

region, the potential long-term impact of the BLT Kesra will far exceed its temporary, consumption-oriented function.

Implementation Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Although the outreach activities proceeded smoothly and generally received a positive response from the public, a number of substantive challenges that require serious attention were also identified during and after the activities took place. These challenges are not merely technical in nature; rather, they touch on deeper structural aspects of the overall social assistance program implementation system in Indonesia.

The first and most fundamental challenge is the issue of inaccuracies in identifying beneficiaries, which is closely linked to the quality of DTSEN data updates at the urban village level. The DTSEN data used as the basis for determining beneficiaries often does not reflect the current state of the community's socioeconomic dynamics, particularly in sub-districts experiencing relatively rapid socioeconomic changes due to various factors such as population migration, shifts in employment, or the impacts of natural disasters and economic shocks. If data are not updated regularly and systematically, the risk of "exclusion errors" where families who are actually eligible for assistance are not registered as well as "inclusion errors" where families who no longer meet the criteria are still listed as beneficiaries will remain high and reduce the overall effectiveness of the program. Active and proactive community participation in the data collection and updating process, combined with a commitment by subdistrict officials to conduct periodic and transparent field verifications, is an essential prerequisite for addressing these challenges.

The second challenge is that outreach efforts remain sporadic and unsustainable. Outreach conducted only once at the start of the program even if carried out to a high standard has inherent limitations in bringing about permanent and profound behavioral change, particularly regarding household financial management. Research in the fields of communication and behavioral change consistently shows that a single exposure to new information no matter how high-quality is rarely sufficient to change long-established behavioral patterns. Sustainable behavioral change requires repeated messaging, guidance, and consistent social support over a sufficiently long period (Kristanto *et al.*, 2024). Without structured follow-up mechanisms, there is a real risk that the understanding and commitment built through the outreach sessions will fade over time and fail to lead to the desired changes in financial management practices.

Based on the identification of these challenges, several policy recommendations can be proposed to improve the overall effectiveness of the BLT Kesra program. First, sub-district governments and relevant agencies need to conduct regular outreach sessions at a minimum, at the start of each new distribution phase to ensure that the public's understanding remains up to date and that any new questions that arise can be addressed promptly. Second, outreach efforts should be organically integrated with existing skills training and business mentoring programs, so that the impact of the BLT Kesra program can extend beyond its consumptive function and contribute to long-term economic empowerment. Third, a reporting and complaint mechanism needs to be established that is easily accessible to all segments of society, including through simple digital platforms that are user-friendly for the general public, to strengthen the program's accountability from the public's perspective. Fourth, updates to the DTSEN database must be conducted routinely and systematically, involving active citizen participation through transparent field verification mechanisms that can be monitored by the public, in order to significantly reduce the potential for targeting inaccuracies—which have long been one of the most critical structural weaknesses in the implementation of social assistance programs in Indonesia (Ajun *et al.*, 2024; Hadi *et al.*, 2025). These four recommendations are

complementary and should be implemented simultaneously as a cohesive policy package, rather than as separate and piecemeal measures.



Figure 3. Implementation of the Outreach Program

CONCLUSION

An outreach event on the use of the Direct Cash Assistance for People's Welfare (BLT Kesra) program in Seberang Palinggam Village, Padang Selatan Subdistrict, Padang City has made a significant contribution to efforts to empower underprivileged communities. The BLT Kesra program provides unconditional cash assistance of Rp300,000 per month, distributed quarterly to beneficiary families based on the National Socio-Economic Single Database (DTSEN). This program serves as economic protection for vulnerable communities while gradually promoting economic self-reliance. Outreach activities, conducted in a participatory manner and tailored to local community conditions, have successfully increased residents' understanding of the program's objectives, mechanisms, and benefits. Community members also received guidance on how to use the assistance appropriately and productively, and came to understand that the BLT Kesra program is a first step toward economic self-reliance. Furthermore, the opportunity for two-way discussion has strengthened public trust in the program and provided valuable feedback to program implementers.

The positive public response indicates that a dialogic and empowerment-based outreach approach is more effective than one-way outreach. However, the program's long-term success still faces challenges, such as suboptimal updates to the DTSEN database, a lack of follow-up support, and limited capacity among sub-district officials to handle public complaints. Therefore, outreach efforts need to be conducted periodically and integrated with skills training programs, business mentoring, participatory data updates, and easily accessible complaint mechanisms. Synergy between the BLT Kesra and economic empowerment programs is expected to achieve the program's primary objective: to assist the community not only in the short term but also to help them achieve sustainable economic self-reliance.

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