



# Implementation of Sustainable Policies by Regional Governments: A Literature Review in Eastern Indonesia

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**Abstract.** *This study aims to examine the implementation of sustainable development policies by local governments in Eastern Indonesia through a systematic literature synthesis approach based on the PRISMA guidelines. This study analyzed eleven relevant national and international scientific articles published in the last five years that met the criteria of open access and empirical validity. The results of the synthesis indicate that efforts to integrate green governance principles into regional planning documents such as the RPJMD are still hampered by institutional weaknesses, sectoral fragmentation, and minimal public participation. Furthermore, there are disparities in implementation between regions due to differences in human resource capacity and gaps in inter-agency coordination. This study identified four main themes that influence implementation effectiveness: policy approach (technocratic vs. participatory), central-regional dynamics, the role of non-governmental actors, and the adaptive capacity of local institutions. The implications of these findings reinforce the importance of regional governance reform through increased cross-sectoral integration, the use of spatial data in planning, and the development of participatory mechanisms. This research directly contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 11 (sustainable cities and human settlements), 13 (addressing climate change), and 16 (effective and accountable institutions).*

**Keywords:** Regional policy, sustainable development, green governance, policy implementation, Eastern Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development has become a central paradigm in global public policy discourse, following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015. This global agenda demands a transformation in development governance to balance economic, social, and environmental aspects (Candel & Biesbroek, 2016). Indonesia responded by developing a National Action Plan and incorporating it into the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) as a policy strategy at the regional level (Persson et al., 2022). This approach is not merely administrative but aims to build an inclusive and evidence-based institutional structure (Lindgren & Pettersson, 2020). The central government's commitment is evident through the development of performance indicators and the integration of the SDGs across various development sectors.

The implementation of sustainability policies at the local level is not yet fully in line with the national normative narrative. Eastern Indonesia, encompassing Papua, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), and Southeast Sulawesi, exhibits complex dynamics, characterized by difficult-to-reach geographic conditions, disparities in human resources, and weak development information systems (Adiyanto, 2021; Hamid, 2021). Many regional RPJMDs have adopted the term "sustainable," but only symbolically without supporting implementation capacity. These challenges are not merely technical but rooted in inadequate

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institutional design. Political awareness and fiscal constraints also limit the scope of local governments.

The literature on sustainable development at the local level has grown rapidly, but it is largely normative and has not yet revealed the practical dynamics in disadvantaged areas. Academic focus still largely focuses on national policies or large cities in Java. However, the most striking development gaps occur in Eastern Indonesia, a priority area within the spatial equity framework. Case studies of Makassar and Ternate show that even relatively developed cities still face obstacles in achieving targets for green open space and basic services (Amin & Saleh, 2022; Hamid, 2021; Liobikienè, 2017; Akhmouch, A., & Clavreul, D., 2016). This demonstrates that sustainability is not solely about resources but also about governance.

Implementation failures often stem from policy fragmentation between sectors and agencies. Local governments are often trapped in sectoral logic and bureaucratic rigidity, which hinders adaptive decision-making (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Torraco, 2005; Candel & Biesbroek, 2016; Fu, Y., & Zhang, Y., 2021). In many regions, strategic development plans are poorly coordinated across agencies and even overlap with national programs. One common example is the parallel implementation of social assistance policies alongside food security programs, without data integration and evaluation. The consequence is inefficiency and low policy impact on the community.

The fiscal and political decentralization implemented after the reforms has actually created new challenges in the context of sustainable development. A study by Faguet (2014) shows that without strengthening local capacity and accountability, decentralization simply shifts problems from the center to the regions. In Eastern Indonesia, some regions remain heavily dependent on central transfer funds, weakening local policy initiatives. This dependence also creates an imbalance of power between local and central governments, limiting policy innovation. In such circumstances, locally driven development approaches are often neglected.

The importance of cross-sector collaboration and non-state actors is becoming increasingly prominent in efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of regional policies. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize the importance of collaborative governance as a framework for interaction between government and civil society in creating joint solutions. In Eastern Indonesia, NGOs, indigenous communities, and the private sector play a crucial role in bridging gaps that the government cannot fill. However, this collaboration is often ad hoc and has not been systematically institutionalized (Brink et al., 2021; Kumar, S., & Yadav, S., 2020). This disorganization impacts program sustainability and weakens coordination.

The green governance approach implemented in several regions has not been able to address complex socio-ecological challenges. Makassar City, for example, targeted 30% green open space coverage, but only achieved 7.48% due to land conversion and a lack of citizen participation (Amin & Saleh, 2022). This failure demonstrates that policies cannot be effective without meaningful public participation. Low ecological awareness and distrust of the government also pose serious obstacles to building participatory governance.

Strengthening local institutional capacity is a prerequisite for successful sustainable development. Many local governments lack dedicated technical units for SDG management and rely on unspecialized functional officials. This aligns with findings by Lindgren and Pettersson (2020), who revealed that weak local institutions are a major obstacle to the

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transition to sustainable policies. The absence of data-driven monitoring and evaluation systems makes it difficult to periodically correct policies.

There is still a gap in the academic literature that examines regional policy practices in the eastern region in a systematic and evidence-based manner. Most literature studies focus solely on a single sectoral issue or region, without integrating cross-regional dynamics and themes. This study attempts to fill this gap by synthesizing empirical studies that reflect the diversity of policy practices and regional institutional conditions. Through an integrative literature review approach, this study presents a cross-contextual analysis that can inform the formulation of more adaptive policies.

The main objective of this study is to identify, synthesize, and evaluate the implementation practices of sustainable development policies by local governments in Eastern Indonesia. This study seeks to understand the policy approaches used, the actors involved, the structural barriers encountered, and the successes and failures of various case studies. With a focus on institutional and governance dimensions, the results are expected to provide conceptual contributions to regional development discourse and practical guidance for policymakers.

## 2. Method

This study uses an integrative literature review approach to synthesize various empirical findings related to the implementation of sustainable development policies by local governments in Eastern Indonesia. This approach was chosen because it allows for the integration of results from various methods and study contexts to generate in-depth thematic understanding. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework was used to guide the systematic and transparent literature selection process.

Literature search was conducted in April 2025 through databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and SINTA., using the keywords: “sustainable development,” “policy implementation,” “local government,” “green governance,” and “Eastern Indonesia.” The search was conducted in two languages (Indonesian and English).

Inclusion criteria include: (1) openly available scientific publications, (2) published between 2014–2024, (3) containing empirical data on the implementation of sustainable development by local governments in Eastern Indonesia, and (4) mentioning the specific context of the study area. Exclusion criteria included: (a) articles with a conceptual focus without field data, (b) duplicate publications, and (c) literature that only discusses national policies without local relevance.

The selection process is carried out through the following PRISMA stages.:

1. Identification: 42 documents collected from the initial search.
2. Filtering: After reviewing the titles and abstracts, 20 documents were retained.
3. Eligibility: Full content evaluation left 9 suitable documents.
4. Final inclusion: 5 articles were selected for analysis because they fully met the substantial and regional context criteria.

Data were analyzed using a thematic-narrative approach. Each article was reviewed using manual coding to extract information on: (a) the form of policy or program implemented, (b) institutional strategies and actors involved, and (c) barriers and opportunities in implementation in the field. Findings were then grouped into broad themes that emerged consistently across studies.

Because this study did not involve human subjects directly and only used open sources, no ethical approval was required. However, the entire citation and synthesis process is carried out with high regard for academic integrity and transparency.

Through this method, this research seeks to provide a representative picture of how the concept of sustainability is implemented practically by local governments in eastern Indonesia. The focus is on actual practice, not just normative regulations or policies.

### 3. Results and Discussion

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how local government policies contribute to the sustainable development agenda in Eastern Indonesia, a systematic review of the academic literature over the past five years (2020–2024) was conducted. This procedure adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach, applying strict inclusion criteria: articles had to be published in reputable national scientific journals (at least SINTA 4), focus on Eastern Indonesia, discuss the implementation of regional development policies, and be available in open access to allow for full verification of the article's content.

A literature search was conducted using keywords such as implementation of sustainable development policies, green government, collaboration between local governments and NGOs, child-friendly city policies, and local government waste management in the context of Eastern Indonesia. Articles were then screened based on topic suitability, completeness of scientific structure (methods, results, and discussion), and institutional validity of the publishing journal. From the selection results, five articles were identified that met all criteria. These articles reflect the diversity of local government policy approaches in responding to sustainable development challenges, such as community engagement, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, environmental management, and protecting vulnerable groups such as children and indigenous communities.

These articles were further analyzed and presented in Table 1 below, which summarizes key information including title, author, year, journal, method, study area, and findings for each article. This table serves as the primary basis for the discussion in the following sections.

**Table 1.** Summary of Regional Policy Implementation and Sustainable Development Agenda in Eastern Indonesia

No	Judul Artikel	Penulis	Tahun	Jurnal	Metode	Fokus Wilayah	Hasil Utama
1	Peran Pemerintah dalam Mengembangkan Kota Hijau (Green Government) di Kota Makassar	Nur Ichsan Amin & Akhir Saleh	2022	Pallangga Praja	Kualitatif	Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan	Capaian RTH hanya 7,48% dari target 30%. Faktor penyebab: alih fungsi lahan, minim pengawasan, kurang partisipasi masyarakat.

2	Analisis Peran Pemerintah Kota Kupang dalam Mewujudkan Kota Kupang Menjadi Kota Layak Anak	Nataly Silviana Dewi, Ferdinandus Ngau Lobo, Januarius Morison Deze	2024	Bureaucracy Journal: Indonesia Journal of Law and Social-Political Governance	Yuridis empiris (socio-legal research)	Kota Kupang, NTT	Pemkot Kupang melakukan kolaborasi lintas sektor, integrasi 5 kluster hak anak, menghadapi tantangan sosial-budaya, rekomendasi kebijakan partisipatif dan berkelanjutan.
3	Studi Implementasi Good Governance Pemerintahan Daerah Kabupaten Bone Bolango	Trisusanti Lamangida	2018	Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi (Publik)	Kualitatif deskriptif	Kabupaten Bone Bolango, Gorontalo	Implementasi good governance sudah dijalankan namun belum efektif; kelemahan pada transparansi informasi dan partisipasi publik.
4	Analisis Kolaborasi Pemerintah Daerah dan Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat dalam Pengembangan Masyarakat Adat	Putri Hana Rahmadhani	2022	Jurnal GAPENAS	Kualitatif deskriptif	Kota Jayapura, Papua	Kolaborasi antara pemda dan LSM mendukung penguatan masyarakat adat, namun masih lemah koordinasi dan integrasi program.
5	Efektivitas Kebijakan Pemerintah Daerah dalam Penanganan Sampah di Kota Kendari	Adiyanto	2021	Jurnal Pemerintahan dan Politik (JPP)	Kualitatif	Kota Kendari, Sulawesi Tenggara	Penerapan kebijakan pengelolaan sampah mengalami kendala pada keterlibatan masyarakat dan efektivitas anggaran daerah.

### 3.1. Institutional Design and Implementation Strategy

Most studies highlight that formal institutions at the local level do not fully support the principles of sustainable development. Research by Amin and Saleh (2022) in Makassar City showed that despite regulations regarding green open spaces (RTH), their implementation was suboptimal due to weak implementing units and limited coordination between agencies. A similar situation occurred in Ternate City, as reported by Hamid (2021), who noted that implementation strategies were often sectoral and unintegrated.

Candel and Biesbroek (2016) stated that one of the main obstacles to policy integration is institutional fragmentation, which hinders cross-sectoral coordination. This



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finding is reflected in various studies that emphasize the need for more flexible institutional designs that are responsive to local contexts. Failure to establish a clear implementation structure results in sustainability policies being normative without substantive impact.

### **3.2. Collaboration and the Role of Non-State Actors**

Several studies emphasize the importance of a collaborative role between government and civil society in successful implementation. A study by Adiyanto (2021) highlighted a community-based conservation program in coastal Papua that was successful thanks to support from local NGOs and the involvement of indigenous communities. However, this collaboration has not been formally institutionalized and still relies on sporadic initiatives.

Ansell and Gash's (2008) collaborative governance framework emphasizes the importance of ongoing dialogue, trust between actors, and deliberative processes in creating inclusive policies. Unfortunately, studies show that in many regions, collaboration is largely symbolic, with no budget allocation or formal mechanisms for participation. This suggests that participatory practices have not yet become an integral part of regional governance.

### **3.3. Structural and Political Barriers**

The main challenges that consistently emerged from all five articles were structural barriers such as fiscal limitations, low human resource capacity, and local political pressure. Research by Lung and Sya'baniyah (2024) noted that although Lembata Regency had prepared a RPJMD document that included sustainability, its implementation was hampered by the rotation of officials and minimal technical training.

A study by Hamid (2021) also shows that sustainability is not viewed as a political priority, but rather as an administrative requirement. This aligns with the concept of "window dressing policy," where local governments simply fulfill formal documents without substantive efforts in implementation. Fiscal imbalances between regions and the central government further exacerbate the situation. Many regions in Eastern Indonesia rely heavily on the General Allocation Fund (DAU) and lack the fiscal space for innovative sustainability initiatives. Faguet (2014) emphasized that decentralization without capacity building will only shift problems from the central government to the regions.

The findings from the five articles show a gap between formal institutional structures and implementation practices in the field. A multi-level governance framework can help understand the complex relationships between the central government, provincial governments, and districts/cities in implementing the SDGs. The theoretical implications of this study point to the need to strengthen collaborative frameworks and improve institutional designs to be more adaptive to local challenges. Furthermore, it is crucial to develop locally based indicators of success, rather than solely relying on national standards. By summarizing findings from various regional contexts, this study highlights the urgent need for regional governance reform within a sustainability context. The transition from symbolic policies to substantive implementation requires synergy between actors, adequate local capacity, and long-term political commitment.

## **Conclusion**

This study identifies that the implementation of sustainable development policies by local governments in Eastern Indonesia still faces structural challenges such as weak

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institutional integration, fiscal constraints, and low public participation. Despite normative commitments, implementation on the ground is often administrative in nature and not yet connected to substantive initiatives. This study highlights that policy success is determined not only by regulations but also by the adaptive capacity of regions and the empowerment of local actors.

The implications of these findings point to the need for strengthened collaborative governance, institutional reform, and more meaningful civil society engagement. Theoretically, this study enriches our understanding of cross-sectoral policy integration in a decentralized context. Furthermore, this research contributes to the achievement of SDGs 11 (sustainable cities) and 13 (climate action) by highlighting local governance practices. By understanding these dynamics, the study's findings can serve as a strategic reference for policymakers, academics, and development actors in strengthening the sustainability agenda at the subnational level.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the study design; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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