



## Strengthening Participatory Oversight in the Stages of Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency

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### ABSTRACT

*This community service activity aims to strengthen participatory oversight in the stages of the simultaneous regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency. The background of the activity stems from the need to encourage the implementation of participatory oversight that is adaptive to social, political, and cultural dynamics at the local level. This Community Service method is implemented using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that positions the community as both the subject and agent of change through knowledge sharing, creating a space for dialogue, critical reflection, and collective action in strengthening participatory oversight of regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency, by involving a number of election supervisors throughout Kampar Kiri Hulu District. The results of the community service activities showed an increased understanding of participatory supervision and an increased awareness of the importance of cross-actor collaboration, especially between supervisors and community members. This activity continuously contributed to fostering understanding and awareness that enriched participants' insights in designing adaptive and contextual supervision strategies in order to establish an inclusive participatory supervision culture in the simultaneous regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency in 2024.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

The simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) held on November 27, 2024, represent a crucial moment in strengthening local democracy in Indonesia. They serve not only as political contests at the local level but also as a collective learning space for the community to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation in realizing popular sovereignty and strengthening local democracy. In this context, participatory oversight is a critical concern for the successful implementation of regional head elections by enhancing the quality of public participation in elections.

Participatory oversight is essential for democratic governance. In the context of regional elections, strong support from official institutions such as the Election Supervisory Agency



(Bawaslu), from the central government down to the sub-district level, is crucial to further legitimize the participatory oversight process, not only on election day but throughout the entire election process. At this point, higher levels of citizen political participation will undoubtedly strengthen the legitimacy of the elected government.

Theoretically, political participation is understood as the involvement of citizens, both individually and collectively, in various political activities (Budiardjo, 2014). Participation is not only manifested in the form of voting but also in the supervision of the election process. The regulatory framework in Indonesia has also emphasized the importance of participatory oversight. Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and its amendments have positioned the public as a key subject in oversight. Through these regulations, the public is given the opportunity to report violations, monitor the practice of money politics, and ensure the neutrality of election administrators. According to Ratnia et al (2018), this phenomenon includes the implementation of election supervision that is not independent and favors one candidate/political party participating in the election, resulting in discriminatory treatment of candidates/political parties participating in the election due to violations.

Political participation refers to the activities of the wider community in politics (Uhlener, 2015). There are numerous variations, ranging from exercising the right to vote to criticizing government policies. Public participation, both in political processes such as elections and in monitoring the course of democracy, strengthens the integrity of the political process the legitimacy of government (Napitupulu, 2024). In the context of election supervision, political participation, such as participatory oversight by the community, can have a crucial effect in directly controlling the implementation of elections and elections (Sutarno, 2022, Rosidin, 2024).

This aligns with political realities, which show a significant increase in public political interest (Sastrawati, 2019). However, doubts about the integrity of the election administration process, whether based on facts or mere perception, have the potential to undermine public confidence in the legitimacy of the democratic process (Karp et al., 2018). When the public doubts the honesty and fairness of the election process, the election results may be perceived as not reflecting the will of the people. Recognizing this, the concept of participatory oversight emerged as an approach to strengthening election integrity. Election Supervisory Agency (BAWASLU) Regulation Number 2 of 2023 states that participatory oversight is a mandate implemented by Bawaslu, at the central, provincial, district/city, and sub-district levels, with the aim of encouraging active public involvement in overseeing the election process and stages.

As one of the regions holding simultaneous regional head elections, Kampar Kiri Hulu District is a sub-district in Kampar Regency, the majority of whose villages are still remote. This condition creates the potential for election violations that are difficult to detect due to difficult access to information, internet networks, and limited reach of election supervision. These geographical conditions and limited infrastructure significantly impact the accessibility and readiness of the community in welcoming the simultaneous regional head elections (PILKADA). Emerging local dynamics, such as low political literacy, the potential for vote buying, and weak public understanding of the oversight mechanisms in the general election stages, pose challenges in realizing and promoting participatory supervision. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to encourage communities to play an active role in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections by preparing village supervisors for local elections.

Given these conditions, this community service activity represents a concrete contribution from academics and practitioners to support the implementation of higher-quality elections. Through a participatory and collaborative approach, this activity aims to raise awareness, strengthen oversight networks at the local level, and encourage increased citizen participation



and oversight in the implementation of regional head elections, particularly in isolated areas such as several villages in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency.

## **B. METHODS**

This community service was implemented using a participatory action research approach that positions the community as both the subject and the agent of change, so that the process is not only oriented towards knowledge transfer, but also towards creating a space for dialogue, critical reflection, and collective action that can strengthen local capacity (Afandi et al., 2022). The activity was carried out in October 2024. The focus of the activity was directed at participatory supervision in the regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency, by involving a number of village-level election supervisors as participants. The stages of the activity were carried out cyclically and reflectively, including initial identification of the participants' understanding conditions (to know), mapping problems with the local election supervisory committee, formulating problem-solving strategies, implementing actions through knowledge sharing and simulations of supervisory practices, and reflection to build critical awareness and collective commitment to participatory supervision in the stages of the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Participatory oversight strengthening activities were conducted through knowledge sharing and discussions on the substance of participatory oversight with participants representing village/sub-district supervisors throughout Kampar Kiri Hulu district. This was done after the community service team and the head of the local sub-district election supervisory committee (Panwascam) had coordinated to map out issues and topics that needed to be discussed together. An agreement was reached to create an interactive forum for capacity building.

In Participants in this forum deepened their conceptual understanding of the principles of oversight and were encouraged to reflect on the social, political and cultural factors that affect the effectiveness of participatory oversight in the field. The interactive discussions made it possible to exchange empirical experiences and to realize a synthesis between theory and practice.

The approach created room for participants to reflect on their experiences in the local context and link these to the discussion material. In addition, the analysis of the social, political, and cultural dynamics reflected the understanding that the effectiveness of oversight is inseparable from the conditions of the local community. The effectiveness of oversight mechanisms is critically dependent on factors such as the level of citizen participation, patterns of power relations and prevailing cultural values in the community. The interactive discussions also helped participants to identify creative practices to encourage participatory oversight. By sharing empirical experiences it contributes to collective insights and the synthesis is not only conceptual but also applicable.

The activity also highlighted the need for cross-actor collaboration especially between supervisors and civil local society in an effort to build a more transparent, accountable and sustainable oversight system. The key to strengthening the effectiveness of participatory oversight is cross-actor collaboration. Subdistrict and village election supervisory committees must not work in isolation but must engage in dialogue and collaboration with civil local society, traditional leaders, community organizations, and youth and women's groups. This

synergy allows for the development of a wider oversight network to proactively and collectively identify and mitigate potential violations.



Figure 1. Sharing knowledge with supervisors of simultaneous regional elections throughout Kampar Kiri Hulu sub-district

Source: Documentation of community service activities, 2024

This networking consciousness is important to strengthen the synergy between oversight bodies and civil society, ensuring that oversight is not only formal and procedural, but that it is rooted in the daily practices of citizens. This forum creates opportunities for the emergence of more adaptive, creative and joint strategies that are more appropriate to the local context, through the forum that allows for dialogue and exchange of experiences, which is a significant contribution in upholding the integrity of elections, especially in the Kampar Kiri Hulu sub-district.

This partnership allows civil society not only to be an object but also an active subject in the oversight process. Their involvement broadens their perspectives, as direct experience at the community level provides faster and more accurate information than formal mechanisms. This also adds to the legitimacy of election supervisors in the eyes of the public. The public perceives openness and partnership as well as trust in the supervisory institution increases.





Figure 2. Group photo of the service team and supervisors of the simultaneous regional elections throughout Kampar Kiri Hulu District.

Source: Documentation of community service activities, 2024

In the end, this forum is expected to improve the supervisors' ability to formulate supervisory strategies that are flexible, contextual and community-empowerment-oriented. Integrating theory, field experience and local dynamics understanding, participatory supervision can become a powerful tool for prevention of violations and improvement of the integrity of local election stages.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Overall, this community service activity was quite successful in improving the participants' understanding of the importance of election oversight and in awareness of the crucial need for collaboration between supervisors and the community. The discussions helped participants better understand how to design effective oversight strategies tailored to field conditions. They also built confidence in the importance of community participation in making sure elections are free and fair. Active citizen participation in oversight can help to make electoral processes and stages more transparent and open, thus fostering a more inclusive culture of joint oversight. The initiative ultimately promoted a shared sense of responsibility for the quality of local democracy, particularly for the village-level election supervisors in the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections in Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency.

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