

LOCALIZING WITHOUT COMPLYING? SDGS, NORM INTERPRETATION, AND THE DECENTRING OF GLOBAL TARGETS AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL IN INDONESIA

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69552/mumtaz.v6i2.3945>

Received: June 27, 2026	Revised: August 20, 2026	Accepted: August 27, 2026	Published: September, 2026
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Abstract

This article examines how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interpreted and implemented at the village level in Indonesia. While the SDGs are designed as a universal, target-based global policy framework, their implementation varies significantly across local contexts. Drawing on qualitative case studies of 'Kampung SDGs' and 'Pesantren SDGs' in East Java, this study explores how global norms are localized through social, cultural, and institutional processes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with government officials, village facilitators, civil society actors, religious leaders, document analysis, and field observations. The results reveal that the SDGs are well-internalized as genuine developmental values and are hardly achieved in terms of their original technical specification. Instead, local subjects reinterpret the SDGs in terms of their moral, religious, and cultural values, and this leads to the decentring of global targets and indicators. Because of policy vagueness and state capacity deficits at the local level, the interpretation of policy implementation lies not only in the local government apparatus but also in other non-state subjects. This paper confirms and contributes to the discussion on norm diffusion, norm localization, and its implementation, and shows that the internalization of a policy does not always require its technical implementation.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Norm Localization; Norm Interpretation; Policy Implementation; Village Governance.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) diinterpretasikan dan diimplementasikan di tingkat desa di Indonesia. Meskipun



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SDGs dirancang sebagai kerangka kebijakan global berbasis target yang universal, implementasinya sangat bervariasi di berbagai konteks lokal. Dengan mengacu pada studi kasus kualitatif 'Kampung SDGs' dan 'Pesantren SDGs' di Jawa Timur, studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana norma-norma global dilokalkan melalui proses sosial, budaya, dan kelembagaan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pejabat pemerintah, fasilitator desa, aktor masyarakat sipil, pemimpin agama, analisis dokumen, dan observasi lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa SDGs diinternalisasi dengan baik sebagai nilai-nilai pembangunan yang sejati dan hampir tidak tercapai dalam hal spesifikasi teknis aslinya. Sebaliknya, subjek lokal menafsirkan kembali SDGs dalam hal nilai-nilai moral, agama, dan budaya mereka, dan ini menyebabkan desentralisasi target dan indikator global. Karena ketidakjelasan kebijakan dan defisit kapasitas negara di tingkat lokal, interpretasi implementasi kebijakan tidak hanya terletak pada aparatur pemerintah daerah tetapi juga pada subjek non-negara lainnya. Makalah ini menegaskan dan berkontribusi pada diskusi tentang difusi norma, lokalisasi norma, dan implementasinya, serta menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi suatu kebijakan tidak selalu memerlukan implementasi teknisnya.

Kata Kunci: Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs); Lokalisasi Norma; Interpretasi Norma; Implementasi Kebijakan; Tata Kelola Desa.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the UN unveiled the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the new global development agenda to replace the MDGs. Unlike the MDGs, which were essentially aimed at developing countries, the SDGs are devised as a universal development agenda applicable to all countries, including both developed and developing nations. It is based on the universality premise that sustainable development is a collective responsibility that calls for cooperation between countries, irrespective of their economic prosperity level, as posited (Fukuda-Parr, 2019).

While existing literature on SDG localization is heavily dominated by international relations and public policy perspective, there is a significant gap in understanding this process through the lens of Islamic religious education. In Indonesia, Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), are not merely places of religious transmission but are active hubs for community development and social transformation. Yet, how pesantren and Islamic educators (kyai) pedagogically interpret, integrate, and teach global technocratic framework like the SDGs remains underexplored in the current educational discourse. The intersection of global development goals with Islamic

educational frameworks offers a unique perspective on how international agendas are internalized through religious instruction and community based learning.

Structurally, the SDGs are framed in an inclusive manner by means of 17 goals, 169 targets, and hundreds of specific, measurable, and time-bound indicators until 2030. This is technocratic and managerial logic of global development governance, focusing on performance measurement, regular reporting, and comparison between countries through ranking systems. Herein, the achievements of SDGs are often comprehended as an indication of national development success.

Indonesia is also considered among those countries that have more or less good SDG performance. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2025, Indonesia achieved with a score of 70.2 points, rising from 69.4 points in 2024, approaching again its value of 2023 with 70.16 points (SDG, 2025). It was also reported that Indonesia demonstrated better achievement on a higher percentage of targets compared to the global average. Indonesia presently achieved 62 percent of targets on the SDGs, which is considerably higher than the global average (SDG, 2025). In addition, among 244 indicators assessed, 152 indicators had been achieved, whereas only 18 percent of targets on the achievement of SDGs are on track at a worldwide status. This achievement was seen by the Indonesian government to reflect the effective integration of SDG into national development planning, portraying Indonesia's role at the forefront of worldwide SDG implementation (Bappenas, 2025b).

However, several cases reveal that the implementation of global SDG standards, policies, and goals does not follow a linear or mechanistic approach, but rather involves interpretation, reinterpretation, localization and ambiguity of objectives. Initial evidence from several villages in East Java province suggests that the localization of the SDGs is not solely dependent on the state. It appears that non-state actors, such as civil society, village facilitators, and religious leaders, have actively used the SDGs to address local needs and demands. In this regard, the SDGs are viewed not only as values within a development context but also as policy issues without specific quantitative standards, as seen in the implementation of what local actors refer to as 'Kampung SDGs' (SDGs Village) and 'Pesantren SDGs' (SDGs in Islamic Boarding Schools).

Based on this background, this article aims to explicate the contribution of Islamic education to the localization of the global sustainable development agenda. By examining the phenomena of 'Kampung SDGs' and 'Pesantren SDGs' at the village in Indonesia, this study highlights how Islamic educational frameworks serve as primary pedagogical instruments for localizing global norms. The novelty

of this research lies in its repositioning of the pesantren and its educators (kyai) not merely as passive implementers of state policy, but as active educational agents who creatively translate and redefine the SDGs into religious curricula, such as Fiqh SDGs, which resonate with grassroots communities. Consequently, this article contributes to the literature on development norms are internalized through informal religious education, community pedagogy, and the reinterpretation of maqashid al-shariah (the objectives of Islamic law).

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs have been the most ambitious and all-encompassing global policy framework in the history of international development governance. The SDGs have been understood as global norms that articulate the international community's agreement on the direction and value of sustainable development. As global norms, the SDGs have been seen as having the power to guide the understanding and definition of "good development" and "development progress" within global governance. SDGs and its universality have been seen as a significant change in the global development agenda, which has evolved from an aid-centric approach for the development of the global South to a shared global development agenda for all nations.

Nevertheless, as global norms, the SDGs remain vague and allow for multiple interpretations. Even though the norms were developed with quantitative and standardized indicators, the interpretation of the meaning of the norms and their implications remain unclear. This provides room for multiple interpretations of the norms as these global norms are implemented across different national and local contexts (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019). As the implementation of the global framework of the SDGs continues to increase, multiple research findings have established that the global norms do not operate linearly (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019; Gasper et al., 2019; Unterhalter, 2019). They rather transform when interacting with multiple contexts.

Recent scholarship refers to the SDGs as part of so-called hybrid institutional complexes-global governance arrangements that comprise formal and informal institutions, state and non-state actors, and voluntary and non-hierarchical regulatory mechanisms (Taggart & Faude, 2025). Against this conceptual background, the SDGs are not considered as a unitary and coherent regime but rather as coordination nodes that link various global policy arenas. Taggart and Faude suggest that such institutional complexity is inherently ambiguous: it enables greater participation and flexibility on the one hand, but weakens accountability and consistency in implementation on the other (Taggart & Faude, 2025). Similar lines of arguments have been pursued in research interpreting the SDGs as a tool to establish normative hegemony where consensus at the global

level is created through hybrid modes of governance that appear inclusive while continuing to reproduce unequal power relationships (Loginovic & Shields, 2025).

This literature on hybrid governance makes a large contribution to understanding global power dynamics, including the influence of corporate power and informal international institutions on the setting of the SDG agenda. However, it continues to keep a level of priority on the global architecture level. The SDGs are conceptualized as relatively stable norms and objectives, and in turn, are subject to a process of distribution to the nation and local level. There has also been a complete neglect of the literature on whether or not these norms and objectives are interpreted, negotiated, and embodied within local societies, particularly in the developing world.

Still another perspective on the SDGs is the implementation perspective. It emphasizes the problems of cross-sectoral coordination, the capabilities of the State, as well as the disconnection between global designs and national realities. With respect to the evolutionary perspective, the implementation of the SDGs is an evolutionary adaptive process, not just the achievement of quantitative results; thus, the differences can be explained as resulting from on-going policy learning (Pitteloud et al., 2025). Finally, according to Reinsberg (2025), a strong sense of ownership of the SDGs program can increase political commitment to its implementation but is often accompanied by deviations from the original technocratic design of the SDGs (Reinsberg, 2025). It creates the impression of disconnection between global designs and local relevance. Again, in this case, the SDGs have traditionally been considered as purely technical instruments, where the implementation problems have to do with the best methods to implement the SDGs, not the interpretations of the SDGs by the local actors.

Similar limitations can also be identified in studies based on collaborative governance and orchestration. On the role of informal international organizations as determinants of SDGs promotion, it has found that it is not necessarily formal authority that underpins global policy influence in international society; rather, it is around abilities to make and utilize networks and coordinate those non-state actors (Xu, 2025). This extends our knowledge of how SDGs are disseminated outside of state politics. Yet again, the focus here is more on informal international organization and non-state actors tend to be depicted as an implementer rather than as an actor that interprets meaning around SDG norms.

From the above literature, it can be noted that the SDGs as global governance, as an instrument in the field of sustainable development policies, and as interaction tools among various actors in the global arena, have received due importance in the literature. However, there is a significant conceptual gap in

understanding how the SDGs function as living global norms that gain meaning through social processes at the local level. The SDGs are often treated as given and fixed goals, while the processes of interpretation, adaptation, and even redefinition by local actors are not explored in a systematic way.

To address the gaps identified above, this article conceptualizes the SDGs not simply as a technocratic policy framework consisting of goals, targets, and indicators, but as a set of global development norms embodying cosmopolitan values. These values are inherently open to interpretation, debate, and reinterpretation as they traverse diverse social and institutional contexts. Therefore, this article does not treat SDG implementation as a linear process of global adoption followed by local compliance. Instead, it adopts an analytical framework that combines insights from global norm diffusion, norm localization, and policy implementation studies to examine how the SDGs are translated, reshaped, and practiced at the village level.

The diffusion or spreading of cosmopolitan ideas and norms have been discussed in various articles, and it was acknowledged that the adoption or acceptance of the ideas and norms is not and cannot ever be a linear process. Finnemore and Sikkink suggested that norms have a life cycle; the norms emerge, are cascaded and then internalized (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In the cascaded stage, actors in various nations or territories have to intervene and become translators and interlocutors in these ideas and norms. Finnemore and Sikkink state that the international norms have to adjust to specific social conditions to stay alive (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Although global norms are subject to some form of adaptation, interpretation, or rejection as needed, varying degrees of compatibility of these norms with local interests and structures also determine their adaptation or rejection (Acharya, 2004). Therefore, norm diffusion is better understood as a social and political process involving the negotiation of meaning, rather than simply the transfer of rules. Furthermore, the notion of norm localization emphasizes the dynamic capacity of local actors to not only accept norms from the global arena but also localize these norms to fit into existing value structures. Acharya argues that norm localization is not a negation of norms from the global arena, but rather a reconceptualization of these norms to make them more acceptable. In other words, norms from the global arena, such as the SDGs, undergo a process of glocalization, meaning a two-way interaction between global dynamics and local practices (Robertson, 1995).

The theory of glocalization highlights that global policies are never implemented uniformly. Instead, a set of norms introduced at the global level has

to go through the parentheses of grounded meaning by locals that are likely deviant. In the context of the SDGs, glocalization can be seen when global targets and indicators are reinterpreted as development values that are more contextual and meaningful for local communities.

This paper also uses implementation theory. Research on public policy has conceptualized implementation as a critical, yet uncertain stage. Classic models of implementation, which emphasize compliance to policy goals and design, often fall short in explaining variation in practice at the field level (Hill & Hupe, 2014). Matland demonstrates how the level of ambiguity and conflict present in a policy has a strong impact on the implementation patterns (Matland, 1995). The performance pressure being low due to ambiguous goals brings discretion to the implementing actors. Although the SDGs are designed with quantitative indicators, they contain, in practice, a high level of normative ambiguity, especially when applied at the local level with limited capacity. Within this context, the implementation of the SDGs can be better understood as an interpretive process where the meaning, priorities, and measures of policy success have to be defined for themselves by the local actors.

However, the above-mentioned mechanism of norm localization cannot operate effectively without a discussion of the implementation dynamics. A model proposed by Matland's research discussed the implementation of ambiguous policy. The research confirmed that high ambiguity and low levels of conflicts often resulted in divergent implementation levels and discretion by the policy (Matland, 1995). Limited capacity at the specific level results in a scenario where non-state implementation can portray a central role.

By integrating theories of global norm diffusion and policy implementation with an Islamic educational perspective, this article proposes that the localization of the SDGs is fundamentally an educational process. Rather than focusing primarily on technocratic compliance, this study assesses how the implementation of the SDGs is pedagogically transformed into moral and spiritual duties through the teachings of pesantren. This approach addresses the overarching question of how Islamic religious education effectively bridges the gap between ambitious global targets and local social realities. This model allows us to offer an answer to an overarching question of why it is that despite high social acceptability of values embedded in the Global SDGs agendas, they have begun to be implemented in an entirely different fashion from their originally conceived technocratic agenda

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology employed is qualitative methodology with a case study approach. It is in the right of choice considering that the focus of the research is on meaning and practice, and social processes involved in implementing global norms, in which quantitative measures cannot fully grasp (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The research was conducted over a period of two years, from January 2023 to December 2025. Purposive selections are used for the research cases, focusing on several villages in the regencies of Jember and Banyuwangi that exhibit the practice of SDGs implementation at the community level, including 'Kampung SDGs' and 'Pesantren SDGs' (SDGs in Islamic Boarding School). This enables the analysis on the practice of non-state actors in the process of localizing global norms.

Data was collected through exhaustive in-depth interviews. A total of 8 informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The criteria for selecting these informants included: (1) active involvement in the initiation, implementation, or facilitation of Kampung SDGs or Pesantren SDGs; (2) possessing recognized authority or a leadership role within the community (such as a kyai, government official, or NGO activist); and (3) having a comprehensive understanding of how local and Islamic values intersect with sustainable development programs. Based on these criteria, the informants consisted of 2 village facilitators, 2 civil society organization activists, and 4 religious leaders/kyai/nyai.

Besides this, an in-depth study of the various sustainable goals policies of the government at the national and local levels was conducted as an indicator of the implementation of the sustainable goals in the form of data. For credibility enhancement of the study conducted above in the form of raw data, source triangulation and method triangulation were conducted in the study. Our findings are not merely for statistical generalization; they aim to significantly enrich the theoretical understanding of SDGs glocalization and highlight the crucial role of local actors in sustainable development governance (Yin, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research findings show that at the level of national governments, the SDGs are considered a continuation of previous global agendas that are considered universal in nature. Therefore, the basis of acceptance of such a global agenda would be its universality, as opposed to its applicability to a locale or a region's contexts. The narratives from the government's side, in fact, defined the SDGs as

“the global agenda that needs to be implemented by all countries that are part of the United Nations,” according to which the SDGs are “an inclusive global agreement, which has been endorsed by all member states of the United Nations ... countries are committed to implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including in Indonesia” (Bappenas, 2017).

The view is also underlined by the statement of the Minister of National Development Planning/Head of Bappenas, Suharso Monoarfa. For instance, during the Kick-Off Meeting of the SDGs Annual Conference 2021, he expressed that “SDGs are the world agenda agreed upon by the world, and Indonesia fully commits to accomplishing it.” On the official website, within the “About Us” section, Bappenas describes the SDGs as development that ensures continuous enhancement of economic welfare and sustains social life, reflecting the real global commitment towards sustainable development (Bappenas, 2025a).

This implies that the SDGs are presented as an externally driven policy by government actors, which is derived from the definition of a policy driven by global agreements and norms. Therefore, the SDGs as a policy are accepted based on normative and administrative grounds, driven by the premise that a “good” global policy is also applicable or relevant to various contexts. This premise is seen as the beginning or the foundation of the multi-tiered process of the SDGs, facing later challenges of adaptation as they are cascaded down to the regional and village governments. Development planning guidelines devised on both a state and regional level describe considerable emphasis on creating a mapping of SGD as performance indicators, target matrices, and monitoring and evaluation approaches, an aspect that clearly mirrors the direct adoption of the official technical guidelines on the development of the SGD (Bappenas, 2024; United Nations, 2026).

Such understanding goes all the way down. At the regency level, such as in Jember for example, the SDGs are viewed as a system of targets that need to be aligned with regional development planning documents. A local official from the Jember Regency Government, Andi Purnomo, stated that Jember is ready to achieve the national SDG targets. He referred to data on the growth of the Human Development Index (HDI), innovation in accelerating the SDGs through human resource development programs such as scholarships, and the implementation of the SDGs through the alignment of global SDG goals and targets with the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the Jember Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) (Solichah, 2018).

Jember Regency Government also regularly conduct technical guidance (*Bimbingan Teknis*) on report writing based on the required format. This technical

guidance is usually coordinated by the Office of Community and Village Empowerment and focuses on updating and preparing SDGs Village data reports. The activities are intended for village governments, village SDGs working groups, as well as village enumerators and administrators in Jember. In these technical sessions, document matching and reporting compliance are generally prioritized, rather than in-depth discussion of the substance of the SDGs (PPID Jember, 2022, 2023).

At the regency and village levels, SDGs implementation shows a pattern of symbolic compliance. The SDGs are included in regional development plans (RPJMD) and Regional Action Plans (RAD), but local leaders generally see them as mandates passed down from the central government, without clear benefits or incentives for local governments (Viartasiwi, 2022). They also lack structured systems or clear methods to achieve the SDG targets. As a result, both regency and village officials tend to focus more on existing routine activities, such as preparing the Government Agency Performance Accountability System (SAKIP), Government Agency Performance Accountability Reports (LAKIP), and Accountability Statements (LKPI), rather than on achieving the SDGs themselves (Viartasiwi, 2022).

In the case of the SDGs, the focus is mainly on preparing documents that follow the required format set by the regency or central government, rather than on achieving specific SDG targets. This was confirmed in an interview with an SDGs data entry facilitator at the sub-district level in Jember Regency. He stated that SDGs data results should serve as policy support through a Regent's Decree or Regent Regulation, so that villages regularly update data and use it seriously for sustainable village development planning. He further explained:

"Data should become input from grassroots communities to help build policy models at the Regional Development Planning Agency. If data collection is not followed by concrete action, it only wastes money without any serious steps toward building prosperous and fair villages" (Interview with SDGs data facilitator at sub-district level, Jember Regency, 5 September 2025).

It was also realized and recognized in many village officials interviewed in Jember. The village head and an operator from Kalisat Village, Jember Regency, stated that limited funding and difficulties in data collection are major obstacles to SDGs implementation (Interview, 17 February 2025). However, village officials also noted that they do not feel overly burdened by the implementation of SDGs programs. One village official from Jatian Village, Pakusari, Jember, explained:

“There are no sanctions if the score is low, according to the guidance from the Ministry of Villages Regulation No. 21 of 2020 on village development guidelines. This is because village needs are not the same” (Interview, 8 November 2025).

Analysis of Village Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMDes) and Village Government Work Plans (RKPDDes) supports this finding. SDG goals are usually mentioned only in the introduction or in the annexes, without clear indicators or evaluation mechanisms. Implementation appears more as a bureaucratic routine, where village heads and village officials focus on fulfilling administrative formats for collecting SDGs-related data, rather than on pursuing the substantive targets of the SDGs. This phenomenon reflects a form of symbolic compliance, in which compliance with the SDGs is formal and document-based. In this case, the implementation of SDGs by village governments, if any, is slow and limited.

Some village officials themselves are aware of these limitations and expressed frustration because SDGs data results do not significantly influence village development planning. One village official said:

“We are already tired from collecting the data, but when it comes to village meetings or preparing the annual work plan, the data is rarely used. There is also no budget” (Interview with a village official at Gombengsari village, Kalipuro, Banyuwangi, 14 October 2025).

This shows that the ambiguous nature of the SDGs policy is not just a result of the complexity of global indicators, but also a lack of definite working mechanisms available for implementation at the village level. This is because there are not enough financial support, technical assistance, and financial latitude available for implementing such policies. Therefore, in this case, it is evident that as a result, village officials become merely implementing administrators and formal cooperating actors of non-state players.

These findings indicate that when the ambiguity of the Village SDGs policy meets the limited capacity of village governments, it does not produce broad discretion at the lower bureaucratic level. Instead, implementation discretion shifts to non-state actors who have more flexibility, networks, and resources to carry out the SDGs agenda in ways that fit local contexts. When resources are limited, SDGs are practiced mainly as moral and educational values, rather than as quantitative targets.

When it reaches the community, understanding of the SDGs is more diverse than that understood by district and village officials. The SDGs are often

understood as a complex, technical agenda that is difficult for village communities to access and understand. This creates a larger gap between the global policy picture and social realities, reinforcing a view amongst actors in village government that the SDGs are simply a bureaucratic responsibility rather than a practical tool for development.

As opposed to regency and village governments, which focus more on the administrative and compliance dimensions of the implementation process of the SDGs, non-state actors such as non-governmental groups, village facilitators, and religious groups function as "translators" of SDGs values and "makers" of local meanings. Under the interaction process, not only are the values of the SDGs transformed into an idea that is socially acceptable and locally relevant, but they are also promoted at the community level.

One religious leader, Kyai Misbah, who is concerned about the issues of SDG, expressed his concern about the poor achievement of SDGs goals due to minimal government intervention in achieving the goals as discussed above. In conclusion, Kyai Misbah asserts that to achieve the goals of SDG, there must be independent movements in society in collaboration with business actors who care about achieving the goals (Summary of interview with Kyai Misbah 25 November 2025).

Kyai and the community leaders emphasize the content of the SDGs, for example, the importance of social justice, the need for environmental sustainability, and the importance of social solidarity, by connecting the values to the life experience of the community. Fauzan, an activist for an NGO explained this approach by the following quote:

"If we talk directly about SDG targets, people get confused. So we usually explain the core ideas instead: how the village can become more fair, cleaner, and more supportive of each other. The SDGs are simply wrapped in language that people are familiar with, especially in religious terms. We also use religious references from Islam, because most people in Jember are Muslim" (Interview with Fauzan, 20 December 2024).

A religious leader who is active in village activities explained that SDG values are understood as being in line with religious principles:

"Protecting the environment is also a religious responsibility. Helping the poor is an obligation. So actually, the SDGs already exist in religious teachings; only the terms are different" (Interview with a Kyai Misbahus Salam, a prominent Religious Leader, 2024).

This finding shows that non-government actors act as a bridge between abstract development agendas and village social realities. They do not only socialize the SDGs, but also produce local meanings that allow these values to be accepted and practiced by the community.

Kiyai Misbahul Salam, Fauzan and several other activists, also published books titled *Fiqh SDGs* to help community understand SDG values (Adhim et al., 2022). In the book, they mention that SDGs have actually long been practiced in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).

"The use of the term Fiqh SDGs is intended to localize these values and make their implementation easier to accept, especially in rural communities" (Interview with Kiyai Misbahul Salam, 27 November 2023).

This initiative emerged from real problems faced by the community, such as multidimensional poverty, stunting, lack of job opportunities, inadequate housing, the need to empower housewives to earn income, flooding and downstream development issues, and unstable economic conditions after the pandemic. It also relates to everyday practices, such as simplicity in eating and stopping before being full. In practical terms, these issues need to be connected to local terminology, which requires appropriate communication tools (summary of interview with Fauzan, 15 December 2023).

Caretakers of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) explained that SDG values have long been practiced in *pesantren* life. At *Pesantren Nurul Qornain* in Balet Baru Village, Sukowono, Jember Regency, Nyai Zulfa Yazid, one of the caretakers, stated that activities and values related to the SDGs have existed there for a long time. These values are discussed in students' academic studies and practiced through daily activities, such as maintaining environmental cleanliness and saving water, which is important because thousands of students live in the *pesantren* (Interview with Nyai Zulfa Yazid, 2 December 2024).

The SDGs are not introduced as global targets and indicators, but as development values that are in tune with religious teaching and local social norms. In *Pesantren* SDGs, caretakers consistently use religious terminology in explaining the SDG agenda. One *pesantren* caretaker explained:

"We do not talk about SDG number one, two, or three. What we teach the students is responsibility as believers. Taking care of the environment is part of worship." (Interview with Kiyai Hasan, Head of *Pesantren Imaratul Mustaqimah Bajulmati Wongsorejo Banyuwangi*, 12 December 2024).

Observation has proved that the criteria for successful interventions are not based on any of the official SDGs indicators. There are no planning papers that include references to global SDG targets. Over time, the local community has oriented its views of successful intervention based on the extent to which people change or demonstrate new behaviours in environmental protection habits, continuity of social programs, and collective awareness. As a facilitator in a village noted:

“What mattered is not the amount or the numbers but if people change or not. If they care about the environment and care about each other, that is SDG for us.” (interview with Akhmad Fourzan as Professional Companion Staff of the Ministry of Village Development of Disadvantaged Regions of Jember Regency, September 5, 2025).

SDGs programs in Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs are designed and carried out by local activists, with support from various stakeholders, including private companies, donor organizations, and in some cases direct cooperation with Bappenas. An NGO activist involved in PPKSI explained:

“If we wait for the village government, nothing will move. So we act on our own, make activities to help people in Kampung SDGs and later some partners from local companies aware of the success of our programs want to involve to contribute certain fundings” (Interview, with director of JRDC 5 January 2025).

Kampung SDGs are village-level areas with special programs linked to the SDGs but without formal targets. For villagers, targets are not important because what matters is not numbers, but sufficiency in clothing, food, and housing according to their own standards. According to the director of an NGO, local needs and cultural and religious contexts make national indicators less relevant (Interview with Kyai Misbah, PBN member and Kampung SDGs founder).

Some Kampung SDGs have also achieved independence in livestock, organic fertilizer production, organic farming, and home industries based on coffee plantations, including using coffee skins and leaves for animal feed. Livestock such as free-range chickens provide manure for fertilizer, eggs and meat for nutrition, and products for sale. Villages also grow vegetables like spinach, eggplant, chili, beans, and moringa, reducing the need to buy food from markets. This creates not only food security but also food sovereignty (Interview with Kyai Ayum Jafar, 14 October 2025).

Discussion

This section discusses the research findings by placing them within theoretical debates on global norm diffusion, policy localization, and public policy implementation. The analysis shows that SDGs implementation at the village level in Indonesia cannot be fully explained by a single theoretical framework. Instead, it takes place at the intersection of global norm diffusion, social localization, and ambiguity in policy implementation.

The norm life cycle model proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) explains that international norms move through stages of emergence, cascade, and internalization, when norms are widely accepted and followed with little debate. At the global level, the SDGs appear to have reached the stage of internalization. This is shown by their universal adoption, their integration into national policies, and regular progress reporting by UN member states.

However, the findings of this study, especially from the practices of Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs, show that the internalization of SDGs norms at the village level is partial and never fully complete. SDGs are accepted as legitimate, positive, and relevant ideas for local development, but they are not implemented according to their original policy design, which is based on global targets, indicators, and technocratic frameworks. Local actors deliberately do not refer to the 17 goals, 169 targets, or official SDGs indicators when planning and evaluating their activities.

Instead, in Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs, SDGs mainly function as a normative reference and a source of symbolic legitimacy for development agendas that are seen as more relevant to community needs. Kampung dan Pesantren SDGs continue, but its logic is shaped by local values, religious norms, and practical understandings of well-being, rather than by global measurement frameworks. In this sense, SDGs are “accepted” as values and development language, but they are not “followed” as a technical policy instrument.

Conceptually speaking, the above findings lend support to the assertion that Non-Government Actors indeed act as ‘Norm Translators’ to bridge the global values of the SDGs to local realities through the ‘glocalization’ principle. The role of *kyai* is especially strategic, particularly in Kampung SDGs, such as KH Misbakhul Salam, caretaker of Raudah Darus Salam Pesantren in Sukorejo, Bangsalsari, Jember, and head of the advisory board of PPKSI. They are supported by other *kyai* from various pesantren, including KH Yazid Karimullah (Nurul Qornain Pesantren, Sukowono, Jember) and KH Afifuddin Muhajir (Asem Bagus Pesantren, Situbondo). These figures creatively adapt SDGs using religious and cultural language as the main medium of localization. This strengthens the argument that social legitimacy

and moral acceptance are more important for successful local implementation of global policies than formal compliance with indicators and administrative procedures.

In this context, the main role of religious scholar is to provide religious legitimacy for each SDG goal. This is important to give religious authority, especially for Muslims, to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Promoting the achievement of the SDGs is seen as an effort to realize *maqashid al-shari'ah* (needs that should be achieved in sustainable development) (Fauzan, 2022). In this context, it is important to refer to how needs are understood in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). The fulfilment of basic or primary needs is referred to as *dharuriyyat*, meaning essential needs that must be met, because if they are not fulfilled, they will threaten human survival, such as the need for food. Secondary needs are called *hajiyyat*, which are supporting needs that help reduce hardship, such as owning a motorcycle or a car. Tertiary needs are known as *tahsiniyat*, which refer to complementary needs related to goodness and moral refinement, such as wearing nice clothes, enjoying good food, using fragrances, observing proper manners, ethics in worship, and maintaining respectful relationships with others. In this context, the SDGs function more as a living normative framework embedded in social practice, rather than as a rigid technical planning instrument.

In addition to the *Fiqh SDGs* book, a more specific book related to the SDGs titled *Fiqh of Zakat on the SDGs* has also been published (Maksum et al., 2018). This book is a collaboration between the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS), Filantropi Indonesia, and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, with support from the Ministry of National Development Planning and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This book is expected to provide religious legitimacy for supporting the achievement of the SDGs through zakat. The big potential of zakat in Indonesia can be developed further for the achievement of the SDGs in support of productive economic activities, physical development, and community empowerment. It describes how the role of zakat functions to support the programs of the SDGs through economic and entrepreneurial activities for poverty and inequality reduction, financial and social stability, and comprehensive and equitable human development. It is expected from this *Fiqh of Zakat* that Muslim communities will understand the implementation of SDGs as a realization of Islamic values and be confident in carrying out their zakat obligations for SDGs purposes.

Against this backdrop, SDG values, rather than perceived as a universal agenda from outside, are likely to gain social legitimacy through association with cultural values and religious teachings that already exist within the local population of the villages. Evidence from interview outcomes shows that local

agents outside government, like activists from NGOs and kyai, make references to local symbols, ideas, and cultural values that define the objectives of the SDGs. SDG values, like poverty reduction, social solidarity, and environmental sustainability, are associated with local practices like gotong royong (helping one another), *sedekah* (charity work), and responsibility to nature.

This framing allows local actors to conceptualize the SDGs as part of moral and spiritual duties rather than simply complying with the demands of government policy. Other local issues that are taken up include multidimensional poverty, stunting, a shortage of job opportunities, unsatisfactory housing, housewives who can be empowered to find additional income sources, flooding and problems with downstream development, unstable conditions of the post-pandemic economy, and everyday practices of moderation in eating to avoid overindulgence. In short, Global SDG values must be related to local terminology, which logically entails the usage of clear communication tools.

Further findings show that the implementation of the SDGs is based on discourse and values, depending on processes such as learning, negotiating, and adapting through various stakeholders' interaction processes. NGOs, religious leaders, and community leaders play the role of facilitators in helping communities understand and adapt to the values of the SDGs and other relevant values. Field studies point to a two-way dialogue between SDGs and NGOs/kyai, facilitating community-led interpretation of SDG values in terms of existing local practices, traditions, and religion. As such, SDG implementation is not only seen as being interpretative but also goes beyond the simple binary of top-down vs. bottom-up mobilization. Internalization of globalized values is seen as depending on social interactions.

The understanding of SDG concepts and their dissemination through various means and actors, especially NGO activists and kyai of Islamic schools, does not end with increasing and disseminating global norms. The findings of this research indicate its development into practical action and activities through sorts of community-based initiatives and campaigns like *Pesantren* SDG and *Kampung* SDG. These initiatives emerged from the awareness that the global language, indicators, and targets of the SDGs feel too distant, abstract, and difficult to connect with the daily realities of village life. Therefore, the SDGs need to be reinterpreted into values and practices that are closer to people's everyday experiences.

Kampung SDGs was initiated by BAZNAS (Badan Amil Zakat Nasional) Pusat in Jakarta in cooperation with the Jember Research Development Centre (JRDC). The initiators were four people: Misbahus Salam, who was the head of BAZNAS Jember in 2019; Fauzan Adhim, the secretary of BAZNAS Jember; Agus Supriyanto,

the treasurer of BAZNAS Jember; and the Director of JRDC. Meanwhile, *Pesantren* SDGs were initiated independently by leaders and *kyai* in each Islamic boarding school. To ensure there was an NGO focused on Kampung SDGs, these four figures later established PPKSI (Pusat Pengembangan Kampung SDGs Indonesia or Centre for the Development of SDGs Villages in Indonesia), with Kyai Misbah as head of the advisory board and Fauzan as director.

In several interviews, these actors emphasized that the SDGs are not seen as a set of numerical targets, but as values related to sustainable living, social justice, and balance between humans and nature. The head of JRDC explained that using the term “SDGs,” even in Indonesian, is often ineffective at the community level, so it needs to be replaced with more grounded and culturally meaningful narratives. The religious leaders, especially *kyai* in *pesantrens*, also view this SDG as part of Islamic teachings of morality and ethics concerning collectively sharing public goods in a sufficient manner.

In the above context, the *Pesantren* SDGs and the *Kampung* SDGs are not run based on any specific SDG indicators or global targets. Instead, the perception of a successful SDGs project is based on a contextual interpretation that recognizes the SDGs as a way to achieve a ‘sufficient’ quality of life. Development practices within the SDGs ensure friendly farming practices to the ecosystem, animal husbandry that considers not just the meat or milk-producing segments but processed meat/milk as well, and the development of the local economy based not merely on perceived wants but actual needs.

Field observations show that SDGs activities in Kampung SDGs and *Pesantren* SDGs do not depend on village budgets. Funding comes from cooperation with the private sector, support from ministries or government agencies, and community self-funding. Village governments are mainly involved through administrative support and formal legitimacy, such as issuing recommendation letters or being symbolically present at activities.

Field data show that there are 28 Kampung SDGs in Jember Regency, 2 in Bondowoso, and one each in Situbondo, Bojonegoro, Malang, Banyuwangi, Nganjuk, Trenggalek, Mojokerto, Bangkalan, Lamongan, Pasuruan, Magetan, and Sumenep, all in East Java. Kampung SDGs have also developed outside Java, including in Nabire, Sorong, Medan, Banjarmasin, Pontianak, and Lombok.

These villages do not pursue SDG targets, but focus on improving community life. Field observations in Jember and Banyuwangi show Kampung SDGs formed by farmer groups that have produced organic fertilizer since 2013. Their products are distributed daily to Banyuwangi, Bali, and even to Kalimantan. Although these farmer groups do not know SDG details, their activities generate income that

improves village living standards and contribute to SDG goals such as poverty reduction, economic growth, and ending hunger.

These findings confirm that SDG success at the village level is not measured by formal target achievement, but by acceptance, understanding, and internalization of global values. This is reflected in the spirit of building villages through Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs. This approach provides a strong bridge to further discussion on glocalization, locally rooted cosmopolitanism, and symbolic compliance.

These findings suggest that norm internalization is not the same as compliance with policy design. In this case, internalization is better understood as normative acceptance without technocratic compliance. This challenges the implicit assumption in the Finnemore–Sikkink model that internalization marks the end of contestation over the meaning and practice of norms. Instead, this study shows that even at a stage considered internalized, global norms such as the SDGs continue to be reinterpreted and reshaped at the local level (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019).

By referring to the practices of Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs, this article argues that the internalization of global norms is gradual and continuously negotiated through social practice. Global norms can function strongly as cosmopolitan values and symbols without being implemented according to globally designed technical frameworks. These findings open space to understand internalization as a dynamic social process, rather than as the final stage of international norm diffusion.

Acharya (2004) explains norm localization as a process in which local actors actively adjust global norms to local values, practices, and identities so that these norms can be accepted and sustained. The findings of this study, especially from the practices of Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs, support this argument. At the same time, they show that SDGs localization at the village level in Indonesia goes beyond simple strategic or institutional adaptation.

The findings show that local actors do not only simplify the language of SDGs. They consciously translate SDGs into moral and religious frameworks that are already well established in the community. In Pesantren SDGs, for example, SDGs are explained through ideas such as social worship, moral responsibility, and character building. In Kampung SDGs, values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), social care, and collective responsibility become the main reference. This process shows that global SDGs norms are not only “adjusted” but are rearticulated through local language and values.

Moreover, this localization process changes the operational meaning of SDGs themselves. As shown by field findings, global targets and indicators lose their central role in village practices. Program success is not measured through standardized quantitative indicators, but through behavioural change, increased collective awareness, and consistent community participation. This shift marks a transformation of SDGs from a technocratic policy framework into a set of normative values that guide social action.

Therefore, the cases of Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs extend Acharya's concept of norm localization by showing that localization can be normatively productive. Instead of only softening or adjusting global norms to fit local contexts, village actors actively produce new meanings of SDGs. Global norms are maintained as cosmopolitan symbols and sources of legitimacy, but their substance is reconstructed through local moral, religious, and cultural frameworks.

These findings indicate that the localization of global norms such as the SDGs should not be understood only as a strategic response to external pressure. Rather, it is a creative and interpretative social process. In this context, Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs represent a form of locally rooted cosmopolitanism, where universal values of sustainable development are internalized through language and practices that are deeply embedded in local communities into the table.

Table 1. Characteristics of Localized SDGs Implementation Cases in East Java

No.	Category/Dimension	Kampung SDGs	Pesantren SDGs
1.	Identified locations	Spread across 28 points in Jember Regency, as well as Banyuwangi, Bondowoso, and outside Java	Islamic boarding schools in Jember (e.g. Pesantren Nurul Qornain) and Banyuwangi (e.g. Pesantren Imratul Mustaqimah)
2.	Initiating Actors	NGO activist (PPKSI, JRDC) and BAZNAS officers	Religious leaders (kyai and Nyai) caretakers of Islamic boarding schools
3.	Approach and Focus	Community empowerment, organic farming, independent livestock, home industries.	Daily student activities, character education, environmental cleanliness, resource conservation
4.	Norm Translation Framing	Social solidarity, <i>gotong royong</i> , food sovereignty, economic independence	Worship responsibilities, <i>maqashid al-shari'ah</i> , religious duty

5.	Funding sources	Community self-funding, corporate CSR, BAZNAS (without village government budget)	Internal resources of the pesantren and community contributions
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As summarized in Table 1, the localization of the SDGs at the village level in Indonesia manifest through two primary models are Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs. Although both models share a common departure from strict global quantitative metrics, they exhibit distinct operational characteristics, leadership structures, and strategies of norm translation.

Kampung SDGs primarily focus on broader community empowerment and socio-economic resilience. Initiated largely by civil society actors, NGO facilitators, and philanthropic institutions such as organic agriculture, livestock independence, and village based home industries. The primary framing strategy relies on shared civic and cultural values, including gotong royong (mutual cooperation), social solidarity, and food sovereignty. Notably, this initiatives operate independently of formal village government budgets, relying instead on community self-funding, philanthropic contributions, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships.

Conversely, Pesantren SDGs embody an educational and faith rooted approach to global norms. Spearheaded by traditional religious authority figures namely Kyai and Nyai. This model integrates SDGs principles directly into the daily lives, moral education, and domestic routines of boarding school students (santri). Rather than utilizing technocratic terminology, global goals are rearticulated through Islamic legal and pedagogical framework, specifically maqashid al-shari'ah (the objectives of Islamic law) and religious duties regarding environmental stewardship and resource conservation. Funding for Pesantren SDGs remains deeply self-reliant, sustained through internal institutional resources and voluntary community contributions. Together, these two cases illustrate how non state actors actively decenter formal global targets by constructing locally meaningful, value-driven development practices.

Table 2. Cross-Case Pattern Comparison of SDGs Implementation

No.	Dimension	State Actors (Local and Village Government)	Grassroots Initiatives (Kampung and Pesantren SDGs)
1.	Interpretation of SDGs	Universal mandate and global agenda to be complied with administratively	Living values aligned with local wisdom and religious teachings.

2.	Mode of Compliance	Symbolic compliance; focus on administrative formatting (RPJMDes, SAKIP)	Substantive compliance; SDGs values practiced despite ignoring global quantitative targets.
3.	Success Indicators	Target matrix alignment and reporting completeness submitted to higher bureaucracy	Behavioral changes, program sustainability, community sufficiency.
4.	Source of Legitimacy	Bureaucratic regulations, decree letters, and central government mandates	Religious rulings/teaching (fiqh SDGs) and local cultural norms
5.	Execution Capacity	Constrained by budget rules, lack of incentives, and policy ambiguity	Flexible, adaptive to local needs, supported by informal actor networks.

Comparison derived from the cross case thematic analysis of state and non-state SDGs implementation dynamics across selected sites in Indonesia. RPJMDes (Rencana Pemangunan Jangka Menengah Desa) ; SAKIP (Sistem Akuntabilitas Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah).

Table 2 illustrates a distinct cross case pattern comparison between state actors and non state actors (grassroots initiatives) Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs in interpreting and operationalizing the SDGs. This comparative matrix highlights how structural constraints and institutional motives diverge significantly across different governance actors.

For state actors at the regency and village levels, the SDGs are predominantly perceived as an externally mandated, top-down bureaucratic framework. Due to policy ambiguity, severe budgetary constraints, and a deficit in local technical capacity, local government officials adopt a mode of symbolic compliance. Rather than pursuing substantive, long-term development targets, state actors prioritize formal administrative requirements. Such as RPJMDes planning and SAKIP, this hierarchical directives rather than tangible community impact.

In contrast, grassroots non state have a pattern substantive compliance coupled with technocratic decentring. Unburdened by rigid bureaucratic procedures, actors in Kampung and Pesantren SDGs reframe global goals into living, contextualized values anchored in local cultural norms and religious doctrines. Such as Fiqh SDGs and Maqashid al-shari'ah. These non-state actors derive legitimacy not from official state decrees, but from moral, spiritual, and community authority. Furthermore, their measure of success disregards global

quantitative indicators, focusing instead on observable behavioral changes, community self-sufficiency, and sustainable social programs.

Ultimately, this cross case comparison confirms that when ambitious global agendas encounter state capacity deficits at the local level, the operational locus of discretion shifts from formal state bureaucracies to flexible non state actors who possess the social capital to translate global norms into locally meaningful practices.

Matland's (1995) policy implementation model offers an essential framework to interpret the SDG implementation dynamics in villages. According to the ambiguity/conflict model, policies characterized by both high ambiguity and low conflict may facilitate policy implementation that heavily depends upon the situational context and implementing actor discretion. Even though SDG indicators have been clearly articulated and defined globally, in village contexts, it has been noted that the policy faces the issue of ambiguity.

Contrary to Matland's original assumption, the high ambiguity opens wide discretion for the implementing bureaucrats; this study actually finds that village officials have very limited discretion. Alongside budget constraints, this limited technical capacity, and the pressures arising from performance evaluation leave very limited actual space for village governments substantively to shape SDGs implementation. In this context, village officials are mainly administrative executors and formal partners, rather than actively interpreting or steering actors of the policy.

Rather, discretion in implementation shifts to non-state actors. Here, actors such as Kampung initiators of SDGs, Pesantren managers of SDGs, civil society actors, and partners in business utilize the ambiguous policy to develop more flexible SDGs initiatives. These actors design and implement programs that suit local needs and available resources, sometimes even tapping alternative sources of financing, like business partners, as well as possible cooperation from ministries and agencies at a national level.

In this context, SDGs at the village level are closer to a symbolic policy, where the normative legitimacy and cosmopolitan values of SDGs are more important than strict compliance with standardized quantitative targets. In line with Grindle's (2017) argument, complex and ambiguous development policies tend to be implemented selectively and pragmatically when they meet limited local capacity. Variation in SDGs implementation at the village level is therefore not a deviation, but a logical consequence of an ambitious global policy design.

Therefore, the use of Matland's framework in this study must be understood contextually. Policy ambiguity in SDGs Desa does generate variation in

implementation, but discretion is not evenly distributed among implementing actors. Instead, discretion is concentrated among non-state actors who have greater flexibility and resources to act, while the state at the village level plays an administrative and symbolic role. These findings contribute to the policy implementation literature by showing that in localized global policies, ambiguity can shift the locus of discretion from the state to non-state actors.

This study therefore demonstrates that SDGs implementation at the village level in Indonesia cannot be properly grasped with only one theoretical framework, whereas SDGs function as a space of glocalization where global norms, national policies, and local practices interact, are negotiated, and are reinterpreted. Such a process involves the dynamics of international norm diffusion, normative localization by local actors, and ambiguity in the implementation of public policy.

Viewed from a norm diffusion perspective, SDGs have formally reached the internalization stage. However, evidence emanating from Kampung SDGs and Pesantren SDGs demonstrates that such internalization is symbolic and normative rather than technocratic. Global SDGs norms are accepted as cosmopolitan, legitimate development values but are not implemented according to the original global policy design based on targets and indicators. This means that norm internalization does not mark the end of meaning contestation, as often assumed in the norm life cycle model (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998); instead, it opens space for continuous local reinterpretation.

Moreover, at the same time, this study affirms and augments Acharya's (2004) (Acharya, 2004) construct of norm localization. The localization of SDG norms in village communities is, in fact, not only an adaptive or strategic practice, as illustrated in this study, but also a productive form of localization. The local actor in this localization, in Kampung SDG and Pesantren SDG, operates in a productive manner, producing new meanings of SDG norms, which in itself allows global norms to endure as living social norms, disembodied from their original technical form.

The intricacies of this process, however, do not occur in a vacuum. They are shaped by the characteristics of policy design and institutional capacity at the local level. By using Matland's (1995) (Matland, 1995) framework, this study shows that SDGs Desa represent a policy with high ambiguity and low conflict. Where this ambiguity finds limited village government capacity, it does not produce wide discretion for local bureaucrats. Instead, implementation discretion shifts to non-state actors who have greater flexibility, networks, and resources. This finding contributes to policy implementation literature by showing that ambiguity in

global policies can shift the locus of implementation from the state to non-state actors. This is the model figure of Norm Translation in Local SDGs Governance.

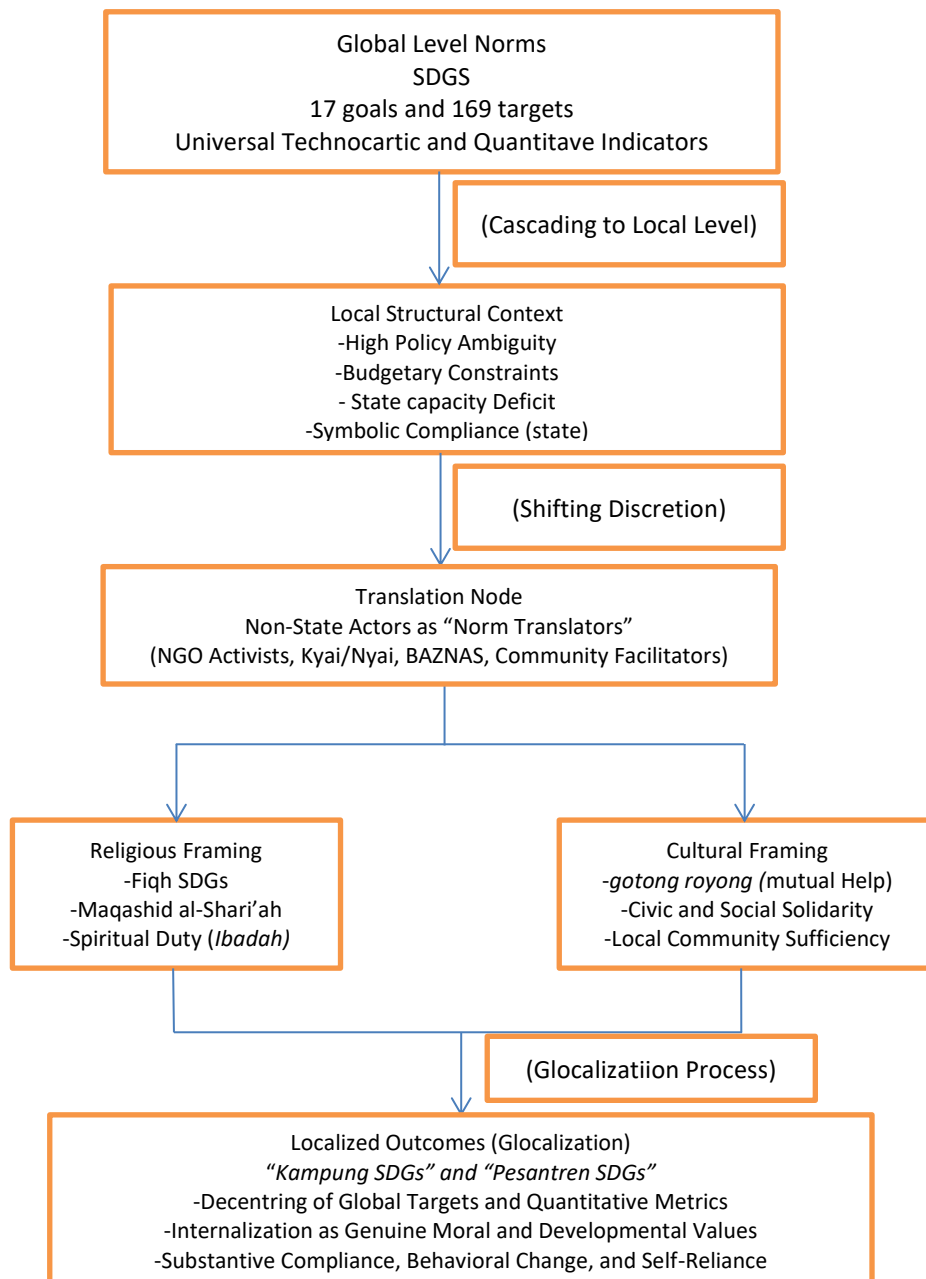


Figure 1. Norm Translation in Local SDGs Governance

The model conceptualizes the structural shift of policy discretion from state bureaucracies to non-state actors, demonstrating how global technocratic norms

undergo religious and cultural filtering to achieve localized implementation. To conceptualize the dynamic interaction between global mandates and localized practices, the model depicts the non-linear trajectory through which universal, technocratic development goals transform into culturally and religiously meaningful practices at the village level.

At the apex, global SDGs descend as standardized, target driven mandates. However, upon reaching the local level, they encounter structural bottlenecks characterized by high policy ambiguity, financial limitations, and deficits in state technical capacity. As formal state actors (village and local governments) retreat into symbolic compliance focusing strictly on administrative reporting an operational void is created.

In response, the locus of implementation discretion shifts to the Translation Node, occupied primarily by non-state actors, including NGO activists, Kyai, Nyai, and local facilitators. Acting as “norm translators,” these actors bridge the conceptual gap between global frameworks and local social realities through two primary filtering mechanism:

1. Religious Framing: Rearticulating global targets into Islamic pedagogical and legal framework, such as *Fiqh* SDGs and *maqashid al-shari’ah*, thereby converting external policy goals into moral and spiritual obligations (*ibadah*).
2. Cultural Framing: Anchoring sustainable practice in deeply rooted community values, such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), social solidarity, and practical notions of community sufficiency (*cukup*).

Consequently, the output of this translation process is the creation of localized models, namely *Kampung SDGs* and *Pesantren SDGs*. In these localized settings, global quantitative targets and indicators are effectively decentred. Rather than measuring success through standardized statistical metrics, sustainability is realized through genuine value internalization, behavioral transformation, and self-reliant community development.

Synthesizing these three theoretical frameworks suggests that there are three main theoretical implications. Firstly, the internalization of global norms should not be seen as an end product to indicate full and complete conformity to policy design. In other words, internalization should not and cannot be treated like a linear and incremental journey. Secondly, the localization of global norms is not only about interpreting and adapting global norms to suit peculiar contexts; rather, there is a strong and active chance that this localization is capable of transforming global norms. Thirdly, there is a critical and theoretical need to analyze global policies like SDGs with consideration of policy ambiguity and policy discretion.

Therefore, this article encourages an interpretative and relational approach in studying SDGs implementation and global development policies. This approach places meaning, actors, and social practices at the center of analysis to understand how global norms are internalized and practiced at the local level. In this context, SDGs are not only a set of development targets, but also a social arena where global cosmopolitan values are rearticulated through locally rooted development practices.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined how the SDGs are interpreted and implemented at the village level in Indonesia through the cases of 'Kampung SDGs' and 'Pesantren SDGs' in East Java. In response to the central research objectives to explicate the role non-state actors and Islamic educational frameworks in localizing global development agendas. This study reveals that global norms are successfully internalized not through rigid compliance with technocratic targets, but through pedagogical and cultural translation. The findings explicitly show how local subjects, particularly kyai and community activists, bridge global goals with grassroots realities by reframing the SDGs through Islamic legal concepts like *maqashid al-shari'ah* and *fiqh* SDGs, thereby decentring global quantitative indicators in favor of moral religious and social values.

This study advances policy implementation and norm diffusion theories by showing how policy ambiguity and local state capacity deficits alter traditional governance dynamics. While formal village governments retreat into symbolic administrative compliance due to budgetary and technical constraints, the locus of policy of discretion shifts decisively to non-state norm translators. This process demonstrates that global norm internalization is not a static end state of universal compliance, but a continuous, dynamic process of "glocalization" where global symbols are sustained while their practical substance is creatively reconstructed through local moral and cultural frameworks.

From a policy perspective, these findings suggest that international and national stakeholders should reconsider rigid, metric-driven evaluation systems for localized development agendas. Rather than viewing deviation from global quantitative targets as implementation failure, governance frameworks should acknowledge local flexibility and support the vital role of non-state actors and faith-based educational networks in fostering genuine community transformation. A key limitation of this study is its empirical focus on East Java; future research should explore how different socio religious structures across other regions shape the local translation of global development norms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the Center for Indonesia's SDGs Village Development (PPKSI) for providing the research clearance and for the insightful discussions throughout this study. This research was funded by my self.

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