

# Public Libraries as Incubators for Social Inclusion and Entrepreneurship for Achieving SDGs

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## Public Libraries as Incubators for Social Inclusion and Entrepreneurship for Achieving SDGs

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**Abstract:** This research explores the role of public libraries as incubators of social inclusion and entrepreneurship in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The transformation of libraries from mere literacy centers to dynamic and inclusive community spaces opens new opportunities for community empowerment. Library libraries can reduce social and economic disparities by providing equitable access to information, skills training programs, and entrepreneurship support.

This study employs a qualitative and case study approach, focusing on public libraries in Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, that have implemented social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with librarians, program participants, and relevant stakeholders, as well as direct observation and program document analysis.

The results show that libraries functioning as entrepreneurship incubators can effectively provide platforms for business training, technology access, and network development. These programs enhance individual's skills and knowledge and drive local economic growth by creating new businesses and increasing employment opportunities. Additionally, library social inclusion initiatives boost community participation and engagement, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce inequality.

The research concludes that public libraries in Karanganyar Regency have significant potential as agents of social change by integrating social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs. To optimize this role, adequate policy support, enhanced librarian competencies, and collaboration with various stakeholders are necessary. Thus, libraries can significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs, particularly in quality education, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, and partnerships for the goals.

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## Introduction

Public libraries have long been known as centers of literacy and knowledge, but their role in modern society continues to evolve. Today, libraries not only function as places to read and study but also as inclusive community spaces and centers of economic empowerment. In this context, making libraries an incubator for social inclusion and entrepreneurship becomes very relevant, especially in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Public libraries now function as more than just providers of books and information. They have transformed into community activity centers that provide access and services for all, regardless of social, economic, or cultural background. This role becomes increasingly important in the digital era, where access to information and technology can create significant gaps. By providing equal and inclusive access, libraries help reduce these disparities and encourage active participation by all members of society.

Public libraries have long been recognized as important and trusted sources of information, resources, and community services. (Stanifer et al., 2024) Public libraries are educational institutions that contribute to a country's economic productivity through literacy, numeracy, general education, and computer and technology-related services and programs. (Liu et al., 2023). However, in an ever-changing context and increasingly complex challenges, libraries are faced with demands to continuously adapt and expand their role as agents of social inclusion, especially in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is a global plan to fight poverty, uphold equality and justice, and achieve sustainable development for all countries. (Ma & Ko, 2022).

SDGs are a global and national commitment to improve society, including 17 international goals and targets for 2030, which were declared by both developed and developing countries at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 (Bappenas, n.d.). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address broader issues related to economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Their targets include ending poverty and hunger, improving well-being, health, education, gender equality, access to affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, sustainable and safe communities, climate action, and biodiversity conservation. (Kumari & Singh, 2023). The SDGs stand out for being the first endeavor to truly integrate the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – into a unified framework. (Bogers et al., 2022). The SDGs provide a global framework for creating a more just, inclusive, sustainable world. Among the 17 goals, social inclusion is a top priority, ensuring that all individuals, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, have equal access to the resources and opportunities needed to improve their quality of life.





Figure 1. Icon SDGs (The Global Goals [www.globalgoals.org](http://www.globalgoals.org) )

Of the 17 achievements, most are programs that libraries throughout Indonesia promote. The program is known as Social Inclusion-Based Library Transformation. The concept of social inclusion first emerged in the 1970s in France as a response to the welfare crisis in European countries. This concept then spread throughout Europe throughout the 1980s and 1990s. On March 6-12, 1995, a World Summit For Social Development High-Level Conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, later known as the Copenhagen Declaration On Social Development. At this meeting in Copenhagen, world leaders promised to tackle poverty and promote a stable, safe, and fair society as the primary goal of development.

After being applied to libraries, this term became a national development agenda called Social Inclusion-Based Library Transformation in the library sector. The Ministry of National Development Planning/Bapenas also ratified this policy in 2018. In 2019, Bapenas gave libraries a target to carry out social inclusion-based activities in 300 locations with a budget of 145 billion rupiah plus DAK of 300 billion. All types of libraries need to be socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable to be available for future generations. (Khalid et al., 2021)

Public libraries have been acknowledged for their vital role as reliable providers of information, resources, and community support. They serve as accessible hubs for various communities, and their significance is increasingly acknowledged in the health sector. Public health professionals are beginning to see public libraries as valuable allies in addressing community health issues (Stanifer et al., 2024). Public libraries are not just spaces for providing services, sociality, interaction, and social infrastructure but also play an essential role in the atmosphere of a city (Peterson, 2023). Public libraries are developing makerspace services, where libraries provide tools, training, programs, and space for the community to share tools and ideas, be creative, and build skills ((Crawford Barniskis, 2023). Public libraries have adopted innovative services that increase the value of services by promoting new ideas, technologies, and resources (Syn et al., 2023). In this context, libraries are essential in achieving the SDGs, especially in supporting social inclusion. Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are outlined in "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Translating the SDGs into regional policy strategies and initiatives is now increasingly urgent. It requires governance mechanisms at the local level based on shared understanding and shared frameworks among local authorities (Yamasaki & Yamada, 2022). However, libraries face several challenges that must be overcome in implementing social inclusion programs, especially in vulnerable and marginalized communities. These challenges include physical and digital accessibility, diversity of collections, staff training, financial support, and strong partnerships with various stakeholders.

This research will analyze partnerships between libraries, government, non-government organizations, and the private sector to promote social inclusion and achieve SDGs through library programs. By understanding the challenges faced and seeing the potential for partnerships in overcoming these challenges, we hope this research can provide valuable insights and significantly contribute to global efforts to create more inclusive, just, and sustainable societies.





Through a holistic and integrated approach, this research will explore how partnerships between libraries, government, non-government organizations, and the private sector can be vital to increasing the effectiveness of library social inclusion programs. This research aims to find out how these partnerships can provide the resources, knowledge, networks, and support needed to overcome challenges and create a sustainable positive impact for the communities served by libraries. The Library Bill of Rights has affirmed a commitment to diversification and inclusiveness of its organizations, services, and collections. (Naulay, 2023) They were so implementing social inclusion programs in public libraries. To understand the fundamental role and impact of the Library Social Inclusion Program in achieving the SDGs, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study of its effectiveness and relevance. Therefore, this paper will explore how public libraries contribute to achieving the SDGs through social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs.

Through this investigation, it is hoped that we can gain deeper insight into how the Library Social Inclusion Program can be an effective tool in responding to sustainable development challenges at the local level, as well as formulating recommendations and strategic steps to increase its positive impact on society.

It is hoped that this research will not only provide a better understanding of the complexities and challenges in promoting social inclusion through libraries but will also produce practical recommendations for enhancing the role of libraries as powerful agents of social change. By strengthening partnerships and adopting an integrated, collaborative approach, we believe libraries can be a significant catalyst in achieving the SDGs and creating a more inclusive and sustainable world for all.

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#### **Research Method**

This research aims to explore the role of public libraries as incubators of social inclusion and entrepreneurship in supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a qualitative research approach with descriptive research methods. The research subjects were PIC program librarians and the Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives Service community members. Data collection through interviews, observations, and document studies or collecting data from related documents such as activity reports, policy documents, or related literature to understand the background and framework of the library's social inclusion program and its relationship with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman approach is a systematic process for organizing, understanding, and interpreting qualitative data.

#### **Result and Discussion**

The implementation of social inclusion programs at the Library and Archives of Karanganyar Regency in Central Java exemplifies a concerted effort to transform libraries into vibrant community hubs that promote equitable access to information, education, and economic opportunities. These programs are designed to reach out to diverse segments of the population, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, ensuring that everyone can benefit from the library's resources and services.



One of the cornerstone initiatives is the literacy and education program, which includes digital literacy workshops, reading sessions for children, and adult education classes. The digital literacy workshops aim to equip community members with essential skills to navigate the digital world, thereby bridging the digital divide. These workshops cover basic computer skills, internet usage, and social media literacy, targeting older adults and those with limited access to technology. For children, interactive reading sessions and storytelling events are organized to foster a love for reading and to enhance their cognitive and language skills. Adult education classes focus on providing basic education and skill development for those who may have missed out on formal schooling.

The library has also prioritized services for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged families. For the elderly, the library provides tailored programs that include book delivery services, large print books, and audiobooks, ensuring that they remain engaged and informed. For individuals with disabilities, the library has implemented accessibility features such as ramps, tactile paths, and dedicated computer stations with assistive technologies. Additionally, the library collaborates with local NGOs and community organizations to offer support services and resources tailored to the needs of these groups.

To extend its reach to remote and underserved areas, the Karanganyar Library operates mobile library services. These mobile units travel to rural villages, providing access to books, educational materials, and digital resources. The mobile library service is particularly crucial in areas where access to educational facilities and libraries is limited. By bringing the library to these communities, the mobile units help to promote literacy and lifelong learning, while also serving as a community gathering point.

The library's role extends beyond providing access to information; it also actively engages in community empowerment. This includes organizing workshops and training sessions on various topics such as entrepreneurship, financial literacy, health awareness, and vocational skills. These initiatives are designed to equip community members with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their livelihoods and achieve economic independence. For example, entrepreneurship training might cover business planning, marketing strategies, and financial management, providing participants with the tools to start and grow their own businesses.

The successful implementation of these social inclusion programs relies heavily on collaboration and partnerships. The library works closely with local government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and community groups to design and deliver programs that meet the specific needs of the community. These partnerships enable the library to leverage additional resources, expertise, and networks, thereby enhancing the reach and impact of its programs.

The Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives have made various efforts to transform into a community center that is inclusive and effective for all levels of society. Social inclusion is a very relevant concept in this context, where libraries play a role as facilitators of access to information and services for vulnerable groups and the wider community. The following discusses how the Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives implement social inclusion through various programs and initiatives. These include (1) Literacy and Education Programs and (2) Services for Vulnerable Groups. (3.) Community Activities and Community Empowerment (4) Economic Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship



The Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives have taken essential steps to promote social inclusion through various programs and services focusing on literacy, education, and community empowerment. Despite the challenges, these efforts show the great potential of libraries as agents of social and economic change that can contribute significantly to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Social inclusion is an effort to ensure that all individuals, including those who are often marginalized, have equal opportunities to participate in various aspects of life. Public libraries can become centers of social inclusion by providing programs and services specifically designed for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, minorities, the elderly, and low-income communities. Digital literacy training, life skills workshops, and social clubs can increase social engagement and cohesion.

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In the context of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a deep understanding of the impact and contribution of the Library Social Inclusion Program is essential. Through careful research and evaluation, various vital findings have been revealed regarding the effectiveness and relevance of this program in supporting the achievement of SDGs in Karanganyar Regency. In this section, the researcher will present the main findings identified through an in-depth analysis of the Library's Social Inclusion Program. These findings show the program's real impact and highlight critical aspects influencing its success in supporting the sustainable development agenda.

After identifying relevant findings, the next step is to investigate the implications and consequences of these findings for the Library Social Inclusion Program in Karanganyar Regency. This discussion section will explore how these findings can be understood in the broader context of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through a detailed discussion, various factors that influence the effectiveness of the program will be analyzed, as well as potential improvements or enhancements that can be proposed based on the findings that have been found. Apart from that, the practical implications of these findings for ongoing policies and programs will also be discussed, as well as strategic steps that can be taken to strengthen the contribution of the Library Social Inclusion Program in supporting the sustainable development agenda in Karanganyar Regency.

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It is hoped that the discussion of these findings will provide a more comprehensive and detailed view of the role and potential of the Library Social Inclusion Program in achieving the SDGs, as well as explore various opportunities and challenges that need to be overcome to increase the impact of this program more effectively and sustainably. Thus, it is hoped that this discussion can contribute to policy planning and implementation at the local level and encourage innovation and improvement to achieve the desired sustainable development goals. The following are the findings obtained by researchers based on data analysis:



Table 1:

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Contribution of the Library Social Inclusion Program to the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Karanganyar Regency Public Library and Archives

No	SDG	Indicator
1	Access to Education (SDG 4):	The library social inclusion program in Karanganyar Regency increases access to education by providing educational resources that are easily accessible to people from various backgrounds. Libraries are a place to learn for all groups, including children, teenagers, and adults who do not have access to formal educational resources. Initiatives such as literacy programs help increase literacy levels in society, which is an essential step toward achieving SDG 4.
2	Economic Empowerment (SDG 1, 8, 10):	Library social inclusion programs also contribute to economic empowerment by providing information and skills training access. Through various programs and seminars, the library provides the knowledge and skills necessary to increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the community.
3	Health and Wellness (SDG 3, 10):	The role of libraries in providing health and wellness information helps people make better decisions regarding their lifestyle and health. Social inclusion programs can include health services such as health seminars, counseling, and health information exhibitions.
4	Poverty Alleviation (SDG 1):	By providing access to educational resources and economic information, libraries' social inclusion programs help reduce knowledge and opportunity gaps, an essential step in poverty alleviation.
5	Environmental Protection (SDG 13, 15):	Libraries can increase environmental awareness by providing information about environmentally friendly practices and the importance of nature conservation. Social inclusion programs can also include activities focusing on environmental conservation, such as book exchanges, reforestation, and environmental campaigns.

Based on the findings above, it can be clarified through discussion of the analysis carried out by researchers on field data as follows:





Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the main agenda for many countries, including Karanganyar Regency. To realize this goal, the Library Social Inclusion Program implemented by the Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives Service is one of the initiatives attracting attention. In this context, exploring the impact and contribution of the Library Social Inclusion Program towards achieving the SDGs is essential. Therefore, an in-depth and comprehensive discussion is needed to understand how this program can effectively support sustainable development goals at the local level.

This discussion will examine essential findings regarding the program's impact and an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the effectiveness and sustainability of the Library Social Inclusion Program in achieving the SDGs will be conducted. Apart from that, strategic steps that can be taken to increase the contribution of this program in supporting the sustainable development agenda in Karanganyar Regency will also be discussed. In the context of the discussion, findings will be explored in more depth to illustrate the contribution of the Library Social Inclusion Program to achieving each relevant SDG target. Through in-depth analysis, we will discuss how this program has increased access to information and education, strengthened community participation, and encouraged equality and social justice in Karanganyar Regency.

In addition, strategic steps that can be taken to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the Library Social Inclusion Program in supporting the achievement of the SDGs will be discussed. This includes increasing collaboration with various stakeholders, strengthening the capacity of staff and volunteers, and empowering local communities as an integral part of the program planning, implementation, and evaluation process.

This discussion will also identify the challenges faced in implementing the Library Social Inclusion Program, as well as solutions that can be implemented to overcome these obstacles. Thus, this discussion is hoped to provide in-depth and inspiring insight for stakeholders in developing and strengthening library social inclusion programs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Karanganyar Regency.

Through this discussion, it is hoped that a better understanding of the critical role of libraries in achieving the SDGs can be gained, as well as the identification of solutions that can be implemented to strengthen the contribution of libraries' social inclusion programs in realizing the vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

1. Collaboration with External Parties: The Karanganyar District Library and Archives Service can increase the impact of social inclusion programs by establishing partnerships with non-governmental organizations, universities, and companies to support various initiatives, including providing skills training and health services.
2. Use of Technology: Technology integration in library social inclusion programs can expand the reach and accessibility of educational and information resources for the community, especially in hard-to-reach areas.
3. Evaluation and Monitoring: It is essential to continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of library social inclusion programs to ensure that sustainable development goals are achieved optimally. This can be done through surveys, case studies, and direct monitoring of program participants.
4. Advocacy and Counseling: The Karanganyar District Library and Archives Service can also play an essential role in advocating the importance of social inclusion in achieving the SDGs through outreach and public awareness campaigns.



5. Strengthening Library Infrastructure: Investments in library infrastructure, such as expanding reading rooms, increasing book collections, and improving accessibility, will increase the library's capacity to provide social inclusion services.

By continuing to develop and strengthen library social inclusion programs, the Karanganyar District Library and Archives Service can become a potent agent in achieving sustainable development goals at the local level. In discussing this research, we delve into how the role of libraries as incubators of social inclusion and entrepreneurship in the Karanganyar District Library and Archives has impacted the community and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through a qualitative method, this study allows us to explore the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders in depth. As a result, we can see the positive impact generated by various social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs implemented by the library.

Discussion of the challenges faced also takes center stage. Resource constraints, especially regarding budget and personnel, are among the main obstacles to running these programs optimally. However, the discussion also highlights efforts to overcome these challenges, including garnering support from the government and collaborating with various external partners.

The importance of active participation from the community is also a highlight in this discussion. Although social inclusion programs are aimed at all layers of society, the challenge of increasing active participation remains an issue to be addressed. However, the discussion shows that through inclusive and sustainable approaches, the library can continue to be a community hub that embraces everyone.

In concluding the discussion, it is essential to acknowledge that libraries, as incubators of social inclusion and entrepreneurship, play a crucial role in supporting sustainable development. Despite facing various challenges, the positive impact generated by these programs cannot be underestimated. With a firm commitment and close collaboration among all stakeholders, the library can continue to be a driver of sustainable social and economic change, making a significant contribution to the community in the Karanganyar District and the overall achievement of the SDGs.

## Conclusion

In the context of the Karanganyar Regency Library and Archives as an incubator for social inclusion and entrepreneurship, it can be concluded that the role of libraries as agents of change in society is very significant. Library programs and initiatives have positively impacted society, especially in increasing literacy, empowering the economy, and expanding access to information. However, challenges such as limited resources and community participation still need to be overcome. The critical role of libraries in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be underestimated. Through social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs, libraries have contributed to several SDG goals, such as quality education, decent work, economic growth, and reducing inequality. This shows that libraries have great potential as strategic partners in sustainable development.

In the future, there needs to be more significant support from the government, strong collaboration with various parties, and innovation in program approaches. With these steps, libraries can continue to be a driving force for sustainable social and economic change,



strengthen social inclusion, and encourage the progress of the people of Karanganyar Regency towards a better future.

### Recommendation

Several research recommendations can be explored to further understand libraries' role as social inclusion and entrepreneurship hubs. Firstly, conducting in-depth impact evaluation studies could measure the long-term effects of social inclusion and entrepreneurship programs in libraries. Longitudinal studies could effectively track participants' socioeconomic progress over time, thereby providing insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs. Furthermore, comparative analyses among libraries across different regions could offer a better understanding of best practices and encountered obstacles. This approach could unveil contextual factors influencing program effectiveness and provide valuable lessons for program implementation elsewhere. Lastly, innovative research in program evaluation, such as utilizing digital technologies or participatory research methods, could help enrich the understanding of program effectiveness and offer fresh perspectives. By embracing these research recommendations, we can deepen our knowledge of how libraries can serve as effective agents of change in supporting social inclusion and entrepreneurship, thus significantly contributing to community development. Recommendations describe things that will be done related to the following research idea. Barriers or problems that can influence the results of the research are also presented in this section.

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