



Implementation of the Company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy on Local Community Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies in empowering local communities in Riau, focusing on planning, implementation, and evaluation mechanisms. Using a qualitative case study approach with ten informants, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that CSR programs have contributed to improving community economic and social capacity, though challenges remain in coordination, transparency, and sustainability. The study highlights the need to strengthen administrative functions so that CSR is not limited to philanthropy but supports long-term community independence. Theoretically, it enriches development administration studies, while practically offering strategic recommendations for more effective and accountable CSR policies.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the last two decades has become an important pillar in modern business practices. CSR is not only seen as a company's moral obligation to society and the environment, but also as a strategy to strengthen social legitimacy, improve reputation, and support business sustainability. Global companies are increasingly placing CSR as an integral part of their business strategies, as public awareness of pressing social, economic, and environmental issues increases (Famiola et al., 2022). Furthermore, CSR has developed into a dual instrument: as a means of increasing the competitiveness of companies while bridging the needs of the community, especially in areas directly affected by business activities.

This phenomenon is also evident in Indonesia, where the presence of large companies in resource-rich areas such as Riau brings complex social, economic, and environmental consequences. Local communities around industrial areas often face challenges in the form of environmental degradation, limited access to education, and low decent employment opportunities. In this context, CSR plays an important role as a mechanism to create a balance between corporate interests and community needs (Syawaluddin, 2023). CSR is expected not only to be a form of momentary social responsibility, but also to be able to create sustainable change through community empowerment, economic capacity building, and strengthening community social capital.

However, the reality on the ground shows that the implementation of CSR does not always go according to its ideal goals. Many CSR programs are still short-term philanthropic, such as providing material assistance, which are not yet fully able to encourage community independence (Rafsanjani & Susanti, 2023). Research (Striany, 2024) found that the main weakness of CSR implementation is the limited communication and evaluation mechanisms, so that the beneficiary community is not actively involved in every stage of the program. This is in line with international findings that lack of community participation and limited coordination across actors are often factors in the failure of CSR programs in achieving sustainable impact (Lins et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2022). This condition confirms that there is a research gap that needs to be answered, namely how CSR can be implemented in a more structured manner with the support of a strong administrative function.

In addition, another challenge that often arises is the company's dilemma in balancing economic goals with the social needs of the community. Global studies show that companies that only pursue reputational interests tend to produce superficial CSR programs, while companies that integrate local values actually manage to increase public trust and participation (Kumar et al., 2021; Hąbek & Wolniak, 2021). (Famiola et al., 2022) emphasized that in the Indonesian context, cultural and institutional factors often affect the effectiveness of CSR, so companies are required to be more adaptive and sensitive to social dynamics at the local level. Thus, the effectiveness of CSR is not only determined by the amount of funds or the scale of the program, but also by the quality of administration, ranging from participatory planning, transparent implementation, to continuous evaluation.

This research is present to analyze the implementation of the company's CSR policy towards local community empowerment in Riau Province with a focus on the administrative aspect. In particular, this study examines three main dimensions, namely the planning, implementation, and evaluation of CSR programs, with the aim of understanding how interactions between companies, communities, and other stakeholders shape the effectiveness of programs. This study also seeks to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors of CSR success so that it can provide a comprehensive picture of its contribution to increasing the socio-economic capacity of the community.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of public administration and development science by enriching CSR studies through an integrative approach that emphasizes administrative functions. This research shows that CSR is not just a philanthropic instrument, but part of development policies that must be managed systematically. Meanwhile, the practical contribution of this research lies in strategic recommendations for companies in designing more effective, accountable, and sustainable CSR programs. Thus, the results of this research are expected to be able to provide added value both academically and practically, as well as encourage companies to play a more active role in creating an independent and competitive society.

On the other hand, global dynamics also show that CSR is now seen as an important instrument in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Companies are encouraged to contribute to global development goals such as poverty alleviation, quality education, gender equality, decent work, and action on climate change. Recent studies show that companies that are able to align CSR programs with the SDGs agenda not only improve public reputation and trust, but also create long-term economic value (Khan et al., 2022; Hąbek & Wolniak, 2021). Therefore, research on the implementation of CSR at the local level, such as in the community around the industry in Riau, is increasingly relevant because it can provide an empirical picture of how the company's contribution to sustainable development can be realized in a real and measurable way.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Corporate Social Responsibility as an Instrument of Empowerment

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was initially seen as a company's moral obligation to return some profits to society. However, global developments show that CSR is now positioned as a business strategy that is able to create shared value for companies and communities. CSR is no longer just a form of compliance, but has transformed into a sustainable development instrument that connects economic, social, and environmental interests (Sari et al., 2021). Companies that successfully implement CSR usually not only improve their reputation, but also build stronger relationships with stakeholders, including local communities affected by their business activities (Nabilah, 2025).

CSR and Local Community Empowerment

One of the important dimensions of CSR is the empowerment of local communities. Effective CSR implementation must be able to increase the capacity of the community to be more independent and empowered economically and socially. (Widhagdha et al., 2020) emphasized that CSR-based community empowerment models in Indonesia are developing following local contexts and inter-stakeholder relationships. This shows that the design of CSR programs cannot be uniform, but must be adapted to the needs, culture, and potential of the local community. (Purnomo & Hermawan, 2024) provides an example that skills training and micro business support in CSR programs have been proven to be able to increase professionalism and open up new economic opportunities for recipient communities.

Community Participation in CSR Implementation

The key to the success of CSR in community empowerment lies in the extent to which community participation can be realized. (Firdaus et al., 2024) found that low levels of community participation in CSR program planning are often the cause of weak program sustainability. On the other hand, when the community is actively involved from the planning, implementation, to evaluation stages, the sense of ownership of the program becomes stronger and the results achieved tend to be more sustainable. (Gantika, 2025) also proves empirically that program intensity and community participation have a significant influence on the success of economic empowerment. This underscores the importance of a participatory approach in any CSR intervention.

Synergy between Companies, Government, and Society

The implementation of CSR cannot be separated from the role of various actors. The company as the main organizer needs regulatory support from the government and active community involvement. Research (Ilianti et al., 2024) on Bank Indonesia's CSR program shows that synergistic collaboration between actors, with the role of the government as a facilitator and the community as active beneficiaries, results in greater empowerment impact. This concept is in line with the "ACTORS" theory which emphasizes the importance of cross-stakeholder coordination so that CSR programs are more directed, transparent, and accountable.

CSR, Social Entrepreneurship, and Economic Resilience

In the context of economic empowerment, CSR is often positioned as a catalyst for social entrepreneurship. (Hapsari & Hendayana, 2024) emphasized that entrepreneurship training and network building carried out through CSR programs can increase people's financial independence. Social entrepreneurship driven by CSR plays a role not only in increasing income, but also strengthening the economic resilience of communities. Thus, CSR can serve as a relevant long-term empowerment instrument in the face of the challenges of globalization and market changes.

CSR and Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Along with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, CSR is now directed to contribute to the achievement of global development goals. CSR programs designed with reference to the SDGs are believed to be more measurable and have a more significant socio-economic impact. (Nabilah, 2025) emphasized that aligning CSR with the SDGs can increase stakeholder trust, strengthen program sustainability, and encourage long-term company performance. This also shows that CSR is no longer a short-term philanthropic activity, but a strategic investment to support inclusive development.

CSR Administration: Participation, Supervision and Evaluation

In addition to design and implementation, the administrative aspect of CSR also plays an important role. Community participation in the planning to evaluation stages ensures the relevance of the program to the real needs of the community. Modern participatory development approaches emphasize that active community participation not only increases the sense of belonging to the program, but also strengthens its sustainability (Davies et al., 2022; Delgado et al., 2023). On the other hand, the community-based monitoring mechanism functions to increase the accountability and effectiveness of the program, so that companies can ensure that the empowerment goals are truly achieved. Thus, good CSR administration must emphasize openness, collaboration, and continuous evaluation.

METHODOLOGY

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies in empowering local communities, especially in complex social, cultural, and administrative contexts. The case study is considered appropriate because this research focuses on one specific phenomenon in the Riau region, namely the implementation of CSR by companies to the community around the operating area. According to (Yin, 2020), case study design in qualitative research is very effective for understanding the dynamics of a program in a real context by considering the various actors and variables involved.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The research population includes all stakeholders related to the implementation of corporate CSR in the Riau region, including CSR managers, implementing staff, community leaders, and beneficiaries of the program. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling method, which is the selection of participants based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. A total of ten informants were selected, consisting of three CSR managers, two implementing staff, three community leaders, and two beneficiaries. This number is considered adequate

in qualitative research because the determination of the sample is based on the principle of depth of information, not statistical representation (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. The interview instrument is structured in the form of semi-structured interview guidelines, which allow flexibility in digging up the informant's answers. The questions in the interview guidelines were adapted from previous research that discussed the evaluation of CSR programs and community empowerment (Rahman et al., 2022). Observations are carried out in the field to understand the CSR implementation process directly, while documentation is used to examine program reports, company archives, and related publication data. To maintain the validity of the data, sources and methods are triangulated techniques, so that the information obtained can be verified from various perspectives (Flick, 2022).

Research Procedure

The research process is carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage is preparation, which includes identifying research locations, determining participants, and preparing interview guidelines. The second stage is data collection, where researchers conduct interviews, observations, and documentation directly in the field. The third stage is data transcription, which is converting the results of recorded interviews into written text. The fourth stage is initial analysis by coding the data. The last stage is the validation of research results through discussions with informants (member checking) and the preparation of research reports.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis, which is the process of systematically coding data to identify the main themes that emerge from interviews, observations, and documentation. Thematic analysis was chosen because it can provide a comprehensive picture of patterns, relationships, and dynamics in the implementation of CSR policies. (Braun & Clarke, 2021) affirms that thematic analysis is particularly relevant for qualitative research oriented towards understanding participants' experiences and social contexts. The analysis process is assisted by NVivo 12 Plus software, which makes it easy to organize data, code, and visualize relationships between themes. With this approach, the research results are expected to be able to answer research questions in depth, accurately, and accountably.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CSR Program Planning

The results of the study show that the CSR program planning stage in the company has been carried out by referring to the needs of the community, but it is still dominated by the company. The majority of respondents from the community admitted that they were not fully involved in the process of

identifying problems and determining program priorities. Planning is more top-down, where the agenda is determined based on company policies and management directions. However, several initiatives such as needs surveys and consultations with community leaders have begun to be implemented, but they are still limited in the scope of formalities. This makes some CSR programs less on target with the real needs of the community.

For example, the case found in the field is the existence of an educational scholarship program that is running well, but on the other hand, the community's need for job skills training and small business empowerment is still not accommodated. This shows that there is a gap between company policies and public expectations. The results of the study show that the planning stage of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program in the company has been carried out by referring to the needs of the community, but the company's dominance in the process is still very strong. The majority of respondents from the community said that they were not fully involved in the process of identifying problems and determining program priorities. Planning tends to be *top-down*, where the agenda is determined based on the company's internal policies and directions from the central management, rather than departing from the aspirations of the community directly.

However, there are efforts by companies to improve the planning process, for example through annual needs surveys and consultation forums with community leaders. However, such participation is more of a formality so that the aspirations that arise do not always translate into real programs. A community leader explained, "*We were indeed invited to deliberate with the company, but our proposal on job skills training was not taken seriously. What is realized is the scholarship program only*" (Informant T3, interview, July 15, 2025). This statement shows that although space for participation has been available, the quality of community participation in the planning stage is still limited.

The gap between corporate policies and the real needs of the community is becoming clearer when compared to the example of cases in the field. The well-run educational scholarship program is indeed appreciated by the community, but more urgent needs such as job skills training, small business development, and support for the local agricultural sector are still poorly accommodated. One of the beneficiaries said, "*We are grateful that there are scholarships for school children, but many of us need business capital and job training to be independent. That's what is still rarely given*" (Informant P2, interview, July 16, 2025).

Furthermore, one of the village officials revealed that community participation has not been a priority for the company in the early stages of planning. He said, "*From the village, we often only receive information that the program has been determined. We are rarely asked for our opinions from the beginning, even though we know the daily conditions of the residents*" (Informant A1, interview, July 15, 2025). This shows that less participatory planning risks producing programs that are unbalanced between corporate interests and community needs.

Implementation of CSR Programs

At the implementation stage, the research found that CSR programs have provided real benefits to most people. Ongoing programs, such as the provision of business capital, educational scholarships, basic infrastructure development, and job skills training, generally contribute to improving the quality of life of the community. Beneficiaries admitted that business capital assistance, although in limited amounts, can be a starting point for developing small businesses in the trade, services, and agriculture sectors.

However, there are significant weaknesses in the aspect of inter-sector coordination. Companies tend to implement programs unilaterally without optimal coordination with local governments and other social institutions. This condition causes overlapping programs, especially in the field of social assistance that has actually been provided by the government. A CSR implementing staff emphasized, "We often have difficulty coordinating with the government because their program schedules are different. Sometimes there are assistance programs that are both given, so that the recipients become double and the impact is less felt" (S1 Informant, interview, July 19, 2025).

In addition to coordination issues, transparency in program implementation is also an issue that is often complained about. Public informants said that information about the criteria for beneficiaries was not always clear, thus causing a perception of injustice. Some respondents admitted that they only knew the program when it was running, not from the socialization stage. One of the residents explained, "We only found out that there was help when the neighbors got it. There is no clear information on who can receive, so it feels uneven" (M4 informant, interview, August 19, 2025).

On the other hand, despite the limitations, some people still see positive benefits from the implementation of CSR. One of the recipients of small business assistance said, "The assistance I received was not big, but it was enough to start a food selling business. From there I can increase my family's income" (U2 informant, interview, July 20, 2025). This quote confirms that although the implementation of the program is not entirely ideal, its contribution is still felt by the beneficiaries directly.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the implementation of CSR has made a real contribution to community empowerment, but its effectiveness is still not optimal due to weak coordination across actors and limited transparency. This is in line with the gap at the planning stage, where community participation is still a formality and has not really become the basis for program preparation.

Evaluation and Monitoring of CSR Programs

The evaluation stage is an important part of the CSR program cycle, because through evaluation, it can be known the extent of the effectiveness of the program that has been carried out and how it impacts the beneficiary community. The results of the study show that the company does have a routine evaluation mechanism, such as the preparation of annual reports and internal meetings with management. However, the mechanism is still more oriented

towards fulfilling administrative obligations than as a means to improve the quality of the program in an ongoing manner.

The majority of people stated that they were rarely involved in the evaluation process, so the feedback from beneficiaries was less accommodated. Some respondents admitted that they were only asked to fill out a short questionnaire without any room for in-depth discussion about obstacles or expectations for the future. A community leader said, "*We were once asked to sign the attendance list when the program was over,*" he said for the report. *But we were never asked in detail whether the program was useful or if there was something that needed to be improved*" (Informant T4, interview, July 20, 2025). This statement shows that the evaluation carried out is still a formality and less participation-oriented.

In addition, the public considers that evaluation report results are rarely socialized openly. In fact, information disclosure can build trust and prevent suspicions related to program transparency. One of the scholarship recipients said, "*If there is a report on the results of the program, we don't know. It may be in the company's office, but in the community it has never been shared*" (Informant B1, interview, July 15, 2025). The absence of access to this information gives the impression that evaluation is more aimed at the company's internal needs than as a medium of accountability to the public.

However, some programs that were evaluated openly actually received appreciation from the public. For example, the job skills training program was closed with a reflection session with participants. One of the participants said, "*We were invited to discuss after the training, asked what was missing and what could be added. It just feels involved, even though not all programs exist like that*" (K2 Informant, interview, July 16, 2025). This quote shows that when evaluations are conducted in a participatory manner, the community can provide constructive input that helps increase the effectiveness of the program.

In general, the results of the study reveal that the evaluation of CSR programs still faces challenges in terms of participation, transparency, and follow-up on recommendations. Evaluations that have not fully involved the community cause an information gap between companies and beneficiaries. Therefore, a more inclusive evaluation mechanism is needed, where the voice of the community can be heard and the results of the evaluation are presented openly. This will increase trust, strengthen accountability, and ensure the sustainability of CSR programs in the future.

Impact on Community Empowerment

Although this study found weaknesses in the planning and evaluation aspects, the implementation of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program still shows a positive impact on community empowerment. The impact can be seen from several dimensions, especially in the economic, educational, and social fields. In the economic aspect, the beneficiary community has experienced an increase in capacity through micro business capital support provided by the company. This capital, although limited, is the starting point for some residents to start new businesses, such as small trades, culinary businesses, and services.

This shows that CSR serves as a catalyst to encourage economic activity at the community level.

One of the recipients of business assistance shared his experience, "*The capital assistance I received was not large, but it was enough to start a small stall business. From there, I can increase my family's income, although it is not yet very large*" (U3 Informant, interview, July 18, 2025). This quote shows that CSR programs have had a real impact on increasing people's incomes, although the results are still on a short-term scale.

In addition, access to education is also increasingly open through scholarship programs. Many beneficiary families feel helped because the scholarship eases the burden of education costs. A parent of the student explained, "*Without this scholarship, maybe my child would not be able to continue his education to a higher level because we have financial difficulties*" (Informant P5, interview, July 19, 2025). This confirms that CSR plays an important role in maintaining the sustainability of the education of the younger generation, although it has not fully touched on broader empowerment aspects such as job skills development.

In addition to economic and educational contributions, CSR also has an impact on strengthening social solidarity. Public facility development programs, such as village road repairs and the construction of clean water facilities, create a space for togetherness and mutual cooperation among residents. One of the community leaders said, "*When there is a road construction from the CSR program, the community works together to complete it. It makes us more compact and feels that there is attention from the company*" (T2 informant, interview, July 20, 2025). This social impact is important because it is able to strengthen the solidarity network that is the social capital of the community in facing common challenges.

However, the study also found that the long-term impact of CSR implementation is still limited. The success of the program is more seen in increasing short-term income and meeting basic needs, rather than in sustainable economic independence. In other words, CSR more often functions as a temporary assistance instrument than an empowerment strategy that is able to push people out of dependence.

Therefore, for CSR to truly become an instrument of empowerment, a paradigm shift is needed from a charitable approach to an approach based on capacity building and sustainability. Active participation of the community in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs is key so that the positive impact of CSR can continue and not stop at momentary benefits.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this study shows that the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility is still dominated by a top-down approach. In the planning stage, the company determines the agenda based on internal management needs rather than the aspirations of the community. This is consistent with the perspective of stakeholder theory which emphasizes that the limitations of stakeholder dialogue cause the social agenda to tend to favor the interests of the company alone. These findings are in line with previous studies that emphasized the importance of institutional mechanisms for CSR programs to be truly

responsive to community needs (Awa et al., 2024; Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). The consequence of this top-down practice is the emergence of program incompatibilities, for example the dominance of educational scholarships while the community's need for skills training and business capital is still unmet. The literature confirms that without substantive participation, CSR only stops at philanthropic activities that do not build local capabilities (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

In practice, the study found that CSR programs provide real benefits, such as business capital assistance, scholarships, and basic infrastructure development. These results corroborate previous findings that CSR can contribute directly to corporate legitimacy and the short-term well-being of the community (Ji et al., 2024). However, these benefits are reduced in effectiveness due to weak coordination between actors and limited transparency in the recipient selection mechanism. This condition is in accordance with the literature that shows that collaboration between companies, governments, and social institutions is essential to avoid duplication of programs and increase efficiency (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). Therefore, these field findings confirm the need for more formal coordination mechanisms so that social interventions are truly complementary.

The program evaluation stage also showed significant weaknesses. Companies tend to make evaluations limited to administrative obligations with internal reports that are rarely socialized to the public. This makes evaluation lose its transformative function as a means of accountability and program learning. Recent literature confirms that participatory evaluation can increase a sense of community ownership while producing more applicative recommendations for improvement (Okoroba & Jack, 2024; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Therefore, evaluation that involves the community in depth is key to improving the relevance and sustainability of the program in the future.

The impact of the program on community empowerment shows a double pattern. On the one hand, there is an increase in household income and better access to education as a short-term impact. However, on the other hand, sustainable economic independence is still limited because interventions are more of a momentary aid than a capacity-building strategy. This condition is similar to the findings of the literature that affirm that the success of empowerment is determined by clear stages ranging from raising awareness, strengthening capacity, to co-creating programs with the community (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Some studies even emphasize that the integration of CSR with green economy strategies and digitalization can increase the chances of achieving local economic independence (Purnamawati et al., 2023). This shows the need to shift the focus from mere material assistance to long-term programs based on capacity and market access.

The factors that affect the results of this study are quite diverse. Companies that are more oriented towards short-term imagery encourage programs that are symbolic, while companies that have strategic commitments tend to produce more sustainable interventions (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023). In addition, the quality of stakeholder dialogue, the role of local governments, and

transparent evaluation mechanisms have proven to be determinants of effectiveness. These factors also explain why in the context of this study, the benefits of the program do not develop into community independence.

The findings of this study enrich the literature by providing empirical evidence from the context of resource regions in Indonesia, especially Riau. Several previous studies have emphasized the limitations of CSR as an instrument of empowerment, but this study adds the perspective that weak coordination between actors and administrative evaluation is the main reason why short-term benefits fail to transform into independence. Therefore, practical recommendations that can be drawn are the need for participatory planning, cross-actor coordination platforms, participatory evaluation, and a focus on capacity building and business value chains.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the understanding that the effectiveness of CSR is highly dependent on the quality of relationships between stakeholders and supporting institutional mechanisms. In practical terms, this study offers a policy direction to shift CSR from a charitable model to a more transformative empowerment strategy, so that its contribution to the development of local communities can be sustainable (Okoroba & Jack, 2024; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research confirms that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a strategic role as an instrument of modern corporate administration, especially in strengthening the relationship between corporations and local communities and supporting the sustainable development agenda. The results of the study show that the implementation of CSR in Riau has made a real contribution to increasing the economic and social capacity of the community through capital assistance programs, education, and infrastructure development. However, the effectiveness of the program is still hampered by a number of administrative constraints, especially in the planning aspects of minimal participation, weak coordination across actors, and evaluation mechanisms that are not transparent and participatory.

Theoretically, this study emphasizes that the success of CSR is largely determined by the quality of management and governance, not only by the amount of resources channeled. In practical terms, the results of the study provide recommendations for companies to strengthen dialogue with the community, establish coordination with governments and local institutions, and implement participatory evaluations to increase accountability. The weakness of this study lies in the limited number of informants and the approach that is only a case study in one region, so the results cannot be generalized widely. For follow-up research, it is recommended to use a comparative approach in several locations, involving a larger number of respondents, and combining qualitative and quantitative methods to be able to describe the impact of CSR in a more comprehensive and measurable way.

FURTHER STUDY

Further studies are recommended to expand beyond a single case study by employing a comparative approach across different regions to capture diverse CSR practices and outcomes. Future research should also involve a larger number of respondents and apply mixed methods, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, in order to generate more comprehensive and measurable insights into the impact of CSR programs. Such an approach would provide stronger evidence on how management quality, governance mechanisms, and community participation influence the effectiveness of CSR in promoting sustainable development.

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