



## The Socio-economic Development of Coastal Communities Based on Ecotourism in the Kendari-Toronipa Road Area

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### Abstract

This article discusses the socio-economic development of coastal communities based on ecotourism in Tapulaga Village, Soropia District, Konawe Regency. Maritime ecotourism has an important role in sustainable development by allowing the utilization of the economic potential of marine resources without damaging the environment. In addition, ecotourism can also support the preservation of biodiversity. This research uses a qualitative approach to describe and analyze the social reality of ecotourism development in Tapulaga Village. The results showed that maritime ecotourism has the potential to improve the economic welfare of local communities through involvement in the ecotourism industry, the creation of new jobs, and increased income. This not only reduces pressure on marine resources but also creates opportunities for inclusive economic development in coastal areas. Thus it can be concluded that the development of maritime ecotourism in Tapulaga Village has an important role in improving the welfare of coastal communities while supporting the preservation of the environment and natural resources. This article is expected to provide valuable insights into the potential of ecotourism as a sustainable development strategy in coastal areas.

**Keywords:** Coastal Communities, Ecotourism, Socio-Economic Development.

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### INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic development of coastal communities based on ecotourism has a very important role in the context of environmental conservation and sustainable development. Maritime ecotourism provides an opportunity for local communities to utilize the economic potential of marine resources without damaging the environment. This approach emphasizes development while still paying attention to nature conservation so that the income earned from ecotourism can be used to support conservation and environmental protection efforts. In addition, the development of maritime ecotourism also provides opportunities for biodiversity conservation. By promoting eco-friendly tourism activities, ecotourism helps in maintaining fragile marine ecosystems and supporting endangered marine species. Snorkeling, diving, or marine animal observation activities can be an educational tool for visitors, raising their awareness about the importance of caring for and preserving the marine environment.

Some relevant previous research results include (Sarinastiti & Wicaksono, 2021) on coastal ecotourism management for sustainable development.

Furthermore, (Ballad et al., 2021) on the impact of ecotourism on local community participation in coastal resource management. Further research by (Said et al., 2022) on the effects of the ecotourism program of Kawan Iskandar Malaysia on coastal communities. So important is this research to describe and analyze the social reality of ecotourism development that it is also interesting for this research to be published and disseminated.

Maritime ecotourism has the potential to improve the economic well-being of local communities, especially in coastal areas that depend on marine resources (Dey et al., 2021). By promoting sustainable marine tourism destinations, locals can engage in the ecotourism industry, creating new jobs and increasing local incomes. This not only helps in reducing pressure on utilized marine resources but also creates opportunities for inclusive economic development in coastal areas.

Tapulaga Village is the village with the best tourism potential in Soropia Sub-district. Prospects for ecotourism development in Tapulaga Village are increasingly apparent with the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road. The toll road was built



during the reign of Governor Ali MAzi and is 14.3 km long and 27 m wide. This road passes through Tapulaga Village, which has an impact on tourism development. This is evidenced by maritime-based activities equipped with tourist icon accommodation in the form of villas and other potentials that can be found along the coast in Tapulaga Village. Some of the popular villas in this village include Villa Tanjung, Villa Ayana, Villa La Familia, Villa Cahaya, and Villa Kubra.

The importance of the maritime economy in Indonesia, especially in Tapulaga Village, Soropia District - Konawe Regency, cannot be ignored. As the largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia has abundant marine resources, and the potential of the maritime economy is one of the important pillars of national economic growth. Tapulaga Village, with its favorable geographical characteristics, offers easy access to the sea, abundant marine resources, and attractive marine tourism potential.

However, efforts to develop a maritime economy in Tapulaga Village are not only about economic growth but also about preserving the environment and marine resources. The sustainability of the maritime economy must always be accompanied by sustainable management to preserve the marine resources that are the backbone of this sector (Fasoulis & Kurt, 2019; Zuo et al., 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the maritime economy, existing potentials, and problems faced in Tapulaga Village is necessary. This will inform sustainable and competitive development policies. Thus, maritime economic development in Tapulaga Village will improve the welfare of the local community, as well as strengthen the contribution of the maritime sector to regional and national economic growth as a whole.

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted in Tapulaga Village, Soropia District, Konawe Regency. This is based on the consideration that this location is a passageway area for the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road. Research methods are the foundation of any scientific research. In research development, the selection of research methods is a crucial early stage to ensure the validity and relevance of the findings. The approach

used in this research is qualitative (Gill, 2020). The qualitative approach focuses on an in-depth understanding of relevant social phenomena to answer research questions that are exploratory, complex, and involve a deep social context (Creswell, 2013; James & Chard, 2010). Qualitative approaches require the researcher's rigor and creativity in exploring the meanings and patterns present in the data and involve a deep understanding of the research subject (Bhangu et al., 2023; Busetto et al., 2020; Matta, 2022; Ningi, 2022; Roulston & Shelton, 2015). A qualitative approach produces a deep and contextualized understanding of the phenomenon under study, so it can make a valuable contribution to the development of science.

Operationally in the field, data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews are intended to gain in-depth insights from informants. Meanwhile, observation helps researchers understand the context related to the phenomenon under study. Meanwhile, document analysis involves exploring written materials, such as archives, reports, and notes relevant to the research. The qualitative approach allows flexibility in data collection so that researchers can adjust the techniques that best suit the research objectives and characteristics of the subject. After all the data is collected, then qualitative data analysis is carried out, starting with data reduction based on themes, concepts, or patterns that emerge. Furthermore, the data is presented in an easy-to-understand narrative and accompanied by a synthesis of several previous research results as a basis for conclusions (Asaka & Awarun, 2020).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Urgency of Ecotourism Development**

As the world's largest archipelago, Indonesia has an extraordinary wealth of marine resources. The potential of the maritime economy in Indonesia is one of the important assets in developing the national economy. Rich marine resources, including fish, mines, and marine tourism potential, have made the maritime sector one of the main pillars of economic growth. Tapulaga Village is one of the areas in Konawe Regency that stands out in the context of the maritime economy. Tapulaga Village is a coastal village



precisely located in Soropia District, Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi which has an area of 549 ha. The livelihood of the Tapulaga Village community is classified into the fisheries sector. Based on the condition of the area, some of the people of Tapulaga village have a livelihood as fishermen. The income of the Tapulaga village community in the Soropia sub-district is still in the middle to lower range. This village is the center of attention because it has geographical characteristics that strongly support the maritime economy. Located on the coast, Tapulaga Village has easy access to the sea and a variety of abundant marine resources. On the other hand, Tapulaga Village also has potential in the marine tourism sector that attracts tourists.

The development of an ecotourism-based maritime economy is becoming increasingly relevant to combine economic growth with the preservation of the marine environment. One important aspect of this maritime economic development is the effort to safeguard vulnerable marine ecosystems and limited marine resources. Maritime ecotourism emphasizes sustainable practices and high environmental awareness, allowing tourists to enjoy underwater beauty while contributing to nature conservation. By incorporating activities such as snorkeling, diving, and sustainable marine animal observation, ecotourism-based maritime economic development helps in mitigating negative impacts on the environment and preserving marine ecosystems.

In addition to protecting the marine environment, maritime ecotourism also provides significant economic opportunities. Attractive and sustainable marine tourism destinations can attract large numbers of visitors, create jobs for local communities, and increase local revenue. Marine tourism activities can also open up business opportunities for local communities, such as the provision of transportation, accommodation, and food services. In this way, maritime ecotourism not only supports the local economy but also encourages the development of better tourism infrastructure and services.

The development of a maritime economy based on ecotourism also plays a role in promoting environmental awareness among communities and tourists. Through education and unique experiences, maritime ecotourism helps increase understanding of the importance of conserving marine resources and the

environment. Travelers involved in maritime ecotourism are often more likely to become active supporters of marine environmental preservation and contributors to conservation efforts. As such, the development of an ecotourism-based maritime economy is not only economically beneficial but also in promoting deep environmental awareness.

#### **Multiplier Effect**

The Kendari - Toronipa toll road is the only toll road in Indonesia that does not charge tariffs, so it is expected to encourage the emergence of new economic opportunities, Ali Mazi said in a written statement received by Kompas.com on Tuesday (5/9/2023). In addition to supporting the tourism sector in Southeast Sulawesi, this toll road will also be a driver of economic growth. This is because the toll road is an infrastructure that connects the Konawe industrial area with the Kendari New Port. The toll road is 14.3 km long and 27 m wide. The road facilities also include 2.8-meter-wide traffic lanes, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and channels. One of the advantages of the road is the use of concrete construction. The presence of the Kendari-Toronipa tourist road is a breakthrough for the community, one of which facilitates community access to tourist sites in Toronipa. Ali Mazi hopes that the establishment of this road can attract tourists to visit Southeast Sulawesi to improve the community's economy (Kompas.com, 2023).

The construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road in Southeast Sulawesi is an infrastructure project that has a significant impact on improving connectivity and economic growth in the region. The project is part of the government's efforts to develop the transportation sector and improve connectivity between regions in Indonesia, especially in remote areas. The importance of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road lies in improving the accessibility and mobility of people and goods. Previously, access to Toronipa was limited and time-consuming. With the toll road, traveling between Kendari and Toronipa will become faster and more efficient. This will help facilitate the movement of people, trade, and goods, which in turn will boost economic growth in the region. Furthermore, the development of the tourism sector is also expected to get a push because the Toronipa area has attractive natural tourism potential.



The multiplier effect in the context of ecotourism development is a phenomenon where ecotourism investments and activities in coastal or marine areas generate greater economic impacts than the previous conditions. These impacts cover a wide range of aspects, from increased local income to business growth and regional economy. First, ecotourism development creates direct and indirect employment opportunities. Tourists visiting ecotourism destinations require various services such as accommodation, restaurants, transportation, tour guides, and so on. As such, these sectors expand, creating new jobs for local communities. In addition, the growth of the ecotourism sector triggers demand for other goods and services, such as agriculture, trade, and workshops, which in turn create additional employment opportunities.

Second, the development of ecotourism can increase the income of local communities. The income earned from ecotourism businesses and related services increases the purchasing power of local residents. With greater income, local people can invest their money in consumption, education, healthcare, and other local businesses. This creates a positive economic circle that can support the overall economic growth of the region. Third, the multiplier effect of marine ecotourism also includes the development of supporting infrastructure and facilities. For example, the construction of access roads, or other public facilities are important needs to support the flow of tourists. Investment in this infrastructure not only improves the connectivity of ecotourism destinations but also opens up business opportunities in the construction, lodging, and transportation sectors.

As such, ecotourism development is a driver of broader infrastructure development in coastal areas. Overall, the multiplier effect of marine ecotourism development is a concept that suggests that the economic impact of ecotourism is much broader than what is directly visible. It creates significant economic growth opportunities for local communities and coastal areas, as long as ecotourism development is carried out sustainably and pays attention to the preservation of the marine environment (Ridwan et al, 2020). Based on the results of the study, it show that the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road in Southeast Sulawesi has a significant potential impact on the development of the tourism sector in Tapulaga Village, Soropia District. The impact in this study is referred to as a multiplier effect, covering several aspects as follows:

#### *1. Accessibility Enhancement*

Toll road development can improve the economy. One of the main impacts of the toll road is improved accessibility to tourism destinations in Southeast Sulawesi. Previously, traveling to Toronipa and nearby tourist destinations was difficult and took a long time. With the toll road shortening travel time, tourists can more easily and quickly reach tourist destinations. This will increase the attractiveness of tourism destinations in the area, including exotic beaches, natural attractions, and local culture. With better access, tourists coming from outside the region or even internationally will be more interested in visiting Southeast Sulawesi. More details about the Kendari - Toronipa toll road can be seen in the following figure.





Figure 1. Kendari - Toronipa Toll Road



Source: <https://www.epengendalian-sultraprov.org/proyek-strategis/16>

## 2. *Growth of Tourism Destinations*

The growth of tourist destinations can increase the popularity and development of a location into an attractive tourist destination for visitors. This growth is not only seen from the increase in the number of tourists coming but also from various other aspects that support the tourism sector as a whole. This tourist destination develops because it is equipped with good transportation access, comfortable accommodation, and public facilities such as restaurants, entertainment venues, and information centers. The Kendari-Toronipa toll road makes it easier and more convenient for tourists to visit the location. Effective promotion also plays an important role in the growth of tourist destinations (Muminovna & Abdugapparovich, 2021). The use of social media, travel blogs, and travel review sites helps spread positive information and experiences, which in turn attracts more visitors.

The active participation of the government and local communities is essential in developing tourist destinations. Supportive government policies, such as incentives for investors and regulations that facilitate infrastructure development, can accelerate the growth of tourist destinations. In addition, the involvement of local communities in maintaining cleanliness, safety, and the uniqueness of regional culture also contributes

to the attractiveness of the destination. The growth of tourist destinations with this toll road has a significant economic impact. The increase in the number of tourists encourages the growth of the service sector, creates jobs, and increases regional income (Holik, 2016). The hospitality, restaurant, and transportation sectors benefit directly from the increased flow of tourists. This additional revenue can be used to further develop tourist infrastructure and services, creating a sustainable positive cycle.

## 3. *Economic Opportunities*

The construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road offers significant economic opportunities for the region. The Kendari-Toronipa toll road will facilitate access to various tourist destinations around Toronipa, including beautiful beaches. This improvement is predicted to attract more tourists, both domestic and international. The growth of tourism will create new jobs in the hospitality, restaurant, and tourist services sectors, as well as increase local revenue from tourism retributions and taxes.

The toll road opens up opportunities for investors to develop property projects, such as villas, shopping centers, and recreational facilities around Toronipa. These investments not only increase local revenue but also boost overall economic development. The toll road



will facilitate the distribution of fishery products from the surrounding areas to larger markets in the city. This can improve distribution efficiency, reduce transportation costs, and increase fishermen's income. Local products can reach consumers faster, thus maintaining their freshness and quality.

With the increased flow of tourists and economic activity, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) will directly benefit. Local merchants, artisans, and other small businesses can capitalize on the increased number of visitors to sell their products and services. This will help boost the local economy and strengthen the MSME sector. In addition, the toll road will reduce travel time between Kendari and Toronipa, increasing the mobility of people and goods. This will encourage more dynamic and efficient economic activity. Better connectivity can also spur the growth of surrounding areas that were previously less developed. Toll road construction also provides opportunities for property and real estate development. Property values around toll roads generally increase. Real estate developers will see opportunities to build housing, offices, and commercial centers around toll roads. The increase in property value will also provide economic benefits to local landowners.

Indirectly, the construction of this toll road can also improve the quality of life. Better access to healthcare, education, and other public facilities will drive long-term economic growth and community welfare. Thus, the economic opportunities resulting from the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road can be maximized to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth for the region.

#### *4. Tourism Infrastructure Enhancement*

The construction of toll roads can also trigger the development of tourism infrastructure. With an increase in tourist visits, there will be a demand for facilities such as villas, restaurants, shops, and better means of local transportation. This encourages entrepreneurs to invest in more modern and convenient tourism infrastructure. Over time, the development of this infrastructure will make the destination more attractive to tourists and provide better comfort.

The construction of toll roads has a significant impact on improving tourism infrastructure. One of the main benefits is improved accessibility to tourist destinations. With toll roads, travel time to tourist sites becomes shorter and more convenient, thus attracting

more tourists, both domestic and foreign. This improved access also facilitates the distribution of goods and services to tourist areas, increasing the operational efficiency of tourism businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and recreational areas (Ferretti et al., 2023). This not only increases tourist convenience but also opens up new business opportunities for local communities. Better infrastructure also encourages investment in the tourism sector, as investors are more interested in developing tourism facilities in easily accessible areas.

The increased tourist arrivals contribute to the local economy by creating jobs and increasing community income. Toll roads can also support the preservation of local culture, as tourists more easily access cultural events and festivals (Medina-Álvarez & Sánchez-Medina, 2023). Overall, toll road development strengthens the tourism ecosystem by improving connectivity, promoting economic growth, and enhancing the quality of tourism services.

#### **Environmental Sustainability Challenges**

While there are many benefits, toll road construction also has challenges related to environmental preservation. Increased tourist visits can increase pressure on the natural and cultural environment. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between sustainable tourism development and the preservation of existing nature and culture. Efforts are needed to conserve natural resources, manage waste, and promote sustainable practices in the tourism industry (Rahayu et al., 2024).

The construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road also needs to consider the environmental and social impacts that may arise. Infrastructure projects like this can affect the surrounding environment, including forests, agricultural land, and local ecosystems. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor and mitigate environmental impacts to ensure that the construction of the toll road does not damage existing ecosystems and natural heritage. In addition, it is also important to ensure that local communities are involved in the project and benefit from the expected economic growth. With wise management, the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road can provide significant economic benefits to Southeast Sulawesi while maintaining environmental balance and community welfare.



Overall, the construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road in Southeast Sulawesi has great potential to advance the tourism sector in the region. With improved accessibility, growth of tourist destinations, economic opportunities, and development of tourism infrastructure, the construction of this toll road could be an important driver in developing a sustainable tourism sector in Southeast Sulawesi. However, attention must be paid to mitigate potential negative impacts on the environment and culture, as well as to ensure that tourism growth is conducted responsibly. The construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road, while promising a range of economic and social benefits, also brings significant challenges in terms of environmental conservation. These challenges need to be properly managed so that the benefits of development are not accompanied by irreversible environmental damage.

Some of the main challenges in environmental preservation faced in the Kendari-Toronipa Toll Road Development. The first is the increased risk of soil erosion. Land clearing for construction can accelerate surface water runoff, reduce soil fertility, and cause landslides. This land damage affects not only the environment but also the surrounding communities that depend on the land for agriculture. The second is affecting water quality through increased sediment and pollutants entering rivers and lakes. Chemicals from materials and fuels used in construction can contaminate water sources. This can negatively affect aquatic life and threaten clean water sources for surrounding communities. Third is air pollution. Dust and other particles can also disrupt air quality around the construction area. After the toll road is completed, increased vehicle traffic may continue to contribute to air pollution if there is no effort to control emissions. Fourth is that garbage and construction waste can increase significantly. This waste needs to be managed properly to prevent environmental pollution. Construction waste such as concrete and other chemicals must be disposed of properly to avoid negative impacts on soil and water.

## CONCLUSION

The development of a maritime economy based on ecotourism is a promising approach to achieving sustainable economic growth while preserving the marine environment. The economic benefits generated

from maritime ecotourism have a positive impact on local and regional communities, while sustainable practices and environmental preservation help maintain vulnerable marine ecosystems. In addition, maritime ecotourism also increases environmental awareness among tourists and local communities. Effects The construction of the Kendari-Toronipa toll road can increase the flexibility of tourist destinations thus improving the economy of the community. The next effect is the growth of tourist destinations that create new tours and develop new tourism innovations. This effect provides increasingly open economic opportunities for communities around the toll road. However, the surrounding communities have challenges such as environmental preservation. Therefore, ecotourism-based maritime economic development deserves to be a priority for coastal destinations in all regions that want to achieve sustainable economic growth. Thus, ecotourism-based maritime economic development is not only about generating profits but also about maintaining ecosystem sustainability for future generations.

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