

A Resource-Based and Local Wisdom-Based Approach to MBG Program Governance as a Strategy for Community Empowerment at the Local Level

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ABSTRACT: The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) is a government priority program aimed at improving the nutritional status of the community while promoting local economic empowerment. However, the MBG's governance structure, which tends to be centralized (top-down), poses challenges in optimizing the utilization of local resources and local wisdom at the implementation level. This study aims to examine patterns of resource utilization and local knowledge in the MBG's governance through partnerships between Nutrition Service Units (SPPG) and MSME actors in Makassar City. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design across ten SPPGs in Makassar City. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, including SPPG heads/managers and local business partners in the program's supply chain. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, with data validity ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results indicate that the actors' involvement is divided into three complementary roles: MSMEs as food suppliers, SPPG personnel as processors, and SPPG heads as quality controllers who actively source suppliers from traditional markets. This partnership has had positive impacts, including stable product demand, market certainty, and expanded business networks for MSMEs, although they still face challenges such as capital constraints, fluctuations in raw material prices, and supply delays. The study concludes that the success of integrating local resources and local wisdom into the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals program in Makassar City depends on strengthening organic partnerships at the SPPG level through mentoring, training, and consistent payment guarantees to local business partners.

KEYWORDS: Free Nutritious Meals, local resources, local wisdom, economic empowerment, SPPG.

INTRODUCTION

High quality human resources are a key factor in driving regional development. The quality of human resources is crucial for a region in determining the direction of development and its potential for growth and progress (Wahid, Nawir & Farhan, 2024). Competent human resources have the capability to work more effectively, efficiently, and to their full potential, leading to high overall regional productivity (Nugroho & Paradifa, 2020). In Indonesia, human resource development is particularly important at the local level, as disparities in access to economic development opportunities between urban and rural areas remain one of the primary issues hindering improvements in the quality of human resources in Indonesia (Maharani, Putri, Kurniawati, Perkasa, Rifa'i, 2025). The Indonesian government is one of the key actors capable of addressing these challenges.

The government has made human resource development a key pillar in addressing the demographic dividend a condition in which the working-age population outnumbers the non-working-age population. Improving the quality of human resources has been designated as a priority agenda in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) (Maghfiroh, Pratiwi, Nugroho, Abiyu, & Farliana, 2026). Through its Balanced Nutrition Guidelines, the Indonesian government emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs for macronutrients including carbohydrates, proteins, and fats as well as micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals, in accordance with the recommended portions and frequencies based on age groups (Riyadi, 2020).

One of the policy instruments launched by the government to address these needs is the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG), a flagship initiative of the Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka administration aimed at improving the population's nutritional status while supporting long term investment in human capital development (Ratih & Maria, 2026). In addition to nutritional benefits, the free meal program has the potential to boost demand for local food products, strengthen the position of micro and small businesses, and stimulate the local economy if the local supply chain can be optimally integrated (Ratih & Maria, 2026). This aligns with findings that the sustainability of the Free Meal Program (MBG) as an instrument for local economic

empowerment heavily depends on the performance of the Nutrition Fulfilment Service Units (SPPG) in driving the surrounding economic ecosystem from farmers and livestock breeders to small-scale catering businesses (Saepuloh & Hilmi, 2026). Similarly, other studies indicate that the MBG program has been proven to boost demand for local agricultural commodities and create a multiplier effect that strengthens community economic activity, although its success remains highly dependent on the stability of the local food supply, clear standard operating procedures, and the commitment of implementers at the school and local government levels (Hasani, Akuba, Wahab, Monoarfa, Ahmad, Pantoioyo, 2026).

Nevertheless, the governance of the MBG program continues to face a number of fundamental challenges. The program is managed through a highly centralized (top-down) approach and relies on the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) and its service units, so that in its first year of implementation, the program focused more on expanding coverage in urban areas without adequate health and nutrition standards, as reflected in recurring cases of food poisoning and the discovery of ultra-processed food products (Berlianto, Aaron & Indrayadi, 2026). A comparison with the experiences of other countries, such as Brazil, India, China, and Japan, shows that an overly centralized governance structure is not a commonly adopted model because it is prone to weak oversight and implementation on the ground; thus, the key to the success of a nationwide nutritious food program lies in a clear governance design that involves local actors, including parents, schools, and local resources (Berlianto, Aaron & Indrayadi, 2026). Similar challenges also arise in the form of fragmented authority among institutions, limited infrastructure, and variations in capacity across regions, which ultimately require stronger coordination between the central and local governments so that the MBG can truly become an instrument for local economic empowerment, rather than merely a food distribution program (Agustini & Mulyani, 2025).

These conditions highlight the need for a shift in the MBG governance approach from a centralized model toward one that is more grounded in local resources and local wisdom. Local wisdom itself is understood as a cultural heritage that encompasses knowledge, values, technologies, practices, and skills passed down from generation to generation within a community, and has proven effective as a foundation for managing both natural resources and the economy in various regions for example, in the management of natural resources for rural economic development in Sesaot Village, West Nusa Tenggara (Fatriстыa & Sarjan, 2024). A similar pattern is evident in community empowerment practices rooted in local wisdom through the “lubuk larangan” tradition in Padangsidempuan City, which harnesses the potential of local water resources and positions the community as the primary actors in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of empowerment programs (Ritonga & Hasibuan, 2021). Local wisdom values such as gotong royong and musyawarah essentially serve as sources of social legitimacy that shape the community’s way of life, influence decision-making patterns, and strengthen solidarity in community-based development, so that the community is no longer positioned merely as beneficiaries but as custodians of local knowledge capable of managing their resources independently (Novianti, Romli, Mawardi & Nasution, 2025).

Considering the potential of the MBG as an instrument to drive the economy and improve community nutrition on one hand, and the issue of governance that remains centralized on the other, an MBG program governance approach is needed that integrates the utilization of local resources and local wisdom as a community empowerment strategy at the local level. Such an approach is expected not only to strengthen the program’s effectiveness and sustainability in meeting nutritional needs but also to position communities as active participants in managing their own local resources, in line with the principles of participatory and sustainable development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design, which aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in a real-life context, including its characteristics, steps, and advantages in exploring complex social realities (Elva & Murhayati, 2025). The case study design was chosen for its flexibility in examining the relationships between variables in depth while taking contextual factors into account, although it has limitations in terms of generalizability and reliability compared to quantitative research (Siregar & Murhayati, 2024).

Research subjects were determined using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique in which researchers intentionally select informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Subhaktiyasa, 2024). The adequacy of the number of informants in qualitative research is not based on numerical sample size but rather relies on the principle of data saturation, meaning data collection is halted when the information obtained no longer yields new findings (Subhaktiyasa, 2024). Based on these considerations, research informants at each of the ten SPPGs in Makassar were selected from individuals directly involved in

the operations and local economic empowerment surrounding these service units, such as the heads or managers of the SPPGs, nutrition staff, and local business partners in the program's supply chain.

Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation, as all three are crucial for obtaining in-depth information regarding the social phenomena under study; their selection must be tailored to the research focus, field conditions, and the relationship between the researcher and the subjects (Putri & Murhayati, 2025). In-depth interviews were conducted with informants at each SPPG to explore perceptions and practices regarding the utilization of resources and local knowledge in program implementation, while observations were used to directly observe the SPPG's operational activities and its interactions with the local economic ecosystem, and documentation was used to supplement primary data through relevant records and archives (Putri & Murhayati, 2025).

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which consists of three simultaneous stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, with the aim of understanding the deeper meaning of the phenomena under study in accordance with the participants' contexts and perspectives (Rahmani, Murhayati, & Kholis, 2025). To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employed several strategies, including extending the observation period, conducting continuous observation, and data triangulation to test the validity of information obtained from various informants and sources at the ten SPPGs (Sa'adah, Rahmayati, & Prasetyo, 2022). Triangulation was conducted both in terms of data sources by comparing information from various informants at each SPPG and in terms of data collection techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation so that findings regarding the utilization of local resources and local wisdom in the governance of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Makassar City could be obtained accurately and reliably.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Research Informants

This study involved ten informants representing three categories of actors directly involved in the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program ecosystem at the Nutrition Service Unit (SPPG) in Makassar City, namely: (1) micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) acting as food suppliers; (2) SPPG staff responsible for food processing and serving; and (3) the head of the SPPG, who serves as the operational decision-maker at the service unit level. The characteristics of the informants are presented in the following table.

Forms of Stakeholder Involvement and SPPG-MSME Partnership Mechanisms

Table 1. Informant Data

No	Informant Code	Role	Interview Date	Percentage
1	Informant 1	MSME Operator (1)	July 15, 2026	10%
2	Informant 2	MSME Operator (2)	July 14, 2026	10%
3	Informant 3	SPPG Staff (1)	July 2, 2026	10%
4	Informant 4	SPPG Staff (2)	July 2, 2026	10%
5	Informant 5	SPPG Staff (3)	July 15, 2026	10%
6	Informant 6	SPPG Staff (4)	July 13, 2026	10%
7	Informant 7	SPPG Staff (5)	July 13, 2026	10%
8	Informant 8	SPPG Staff (6)	July 13, 2026	10%
9	Informant 9	SPPG Chief (1)	July 13, 2026	10%
10	Informant 10	SPPG Chief (2)	July 14, 2026	10%
Total		10		100%

Table 2. Demographic Data of Informants

Informant Category	Number	Percentage
MSMEs	2	20%
SPPG Staff	6	60%
SPPG Chief	2	20%
Total	10	100%
Workplace	Number	Percentage
SPPG Ballang Baru	1	10%
SPPG Mamajang	2	20%
SPPG Bangkala Benteng	2	20%
SPPG Banta-bantaeng	2	20%
SPPG Mariso	1	10%
SPPG Tamangapa	1	10%
SPPG Tamalate	1	10%
Total	10	100%
Length of Employment	Number	Percentage
2 Months	2	20%
5 Months	1	10%
6 Months	2	20%
7 Months	1	10%
9 Months	1	10%
10 Months	1	10%
12 Months	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Interview Results

Table 3. Interview Results

No. Theme	Key Findings	Interview Quotes
1 Forms of Stakeholder Involvement and SPPG-MSME Partnership Mechanisms	The involvement of SPPG actors is multifaceted, encompassing nutrition planning, procurement, production, and distribution safety. MSME actors are involved as food suppliers according to the agreed-upon schedule, quantity, and quality standards. The partnership operates through a process of ingredients needed, the quantities, the delivery schedule, and the quality	"I'm involved in developing meal menus for children, calculating nutritional needs, and ensuring that the nutritional value is appropriate for the children's age and developmental stage." (<i>Informant 6</i>) "I'm actively involved as the Processing Coordinator at the Balang Baru SPPG. My main duties focus on the cooking and food preparation processes to meet the nutritional requirements of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG)." (<i>Informant 7</i>) "I'm involved as a food supplier for the MBG kitchen. I usually provide vegetables, eggs, and several other staple ingredients as requested. I also ensure that the ingredients delivered are fresh and of high quality." (<i>Informant 1</i>) "We receive a list of food ingredient needs, then deliver them according to the specified quality standards, quantities, and timelines." (<i>Informant 2</i>) "Usually, the SPPG contacts us first to register businesses that can serve as suppliers. After that, we are provided with information regarding the types of ingredients needed, the quantities, the delivery schedule, and the quality

No. Theme	Key Findings	Interview Quotes
2 Economic Impact Benefits MBG	supplier registration, communication of the ingredients on a regular basis.	<i>“Once everything is in order, we begin delivering of the ingredients on a regular basis.” (Informant 1)</i>
	needs, regular deliveries, and verification at the receiving point.	<i>“Usually, the SPPG management already has a list of MSME suppliers ranging from vegetable farmers and egg producers to local rice suppliers. They deliver the goods directly to the security post; I check the completeness of the shipment and the waybill, and only then are the goods brought into the kitchen.” (Informant 5)</i>
	Program increases the income of MSMEs because the demand for food ingredients has become regular and stable.	<i>“From an economic perspective, their income has increased significantly compared to before due to the very high demand for raw materials. In terms of business development, they are supplying more raw materials than before, so their businesses are automatically growing.” (Informant 8)</i>
	and The	<i>“In addition to a steady income, their businesses have become more organized because they are required to deliver ingredients that are clean, fresh, and meet nutritional standards. Local MSMEs are also learning to maintain the quality of their products; they no longer just sell anything.” (Informant 5)</i>
3 Challenges in Implementing Partnerships		<i>“The impact on MSMEs is definitely an increase in income because we require them to be suppliers in quantities that are by no means small.” (Informant 10)</i>
		<i>“It might help the economy and increase the income of MSMEs because we buy ingredients directly from MSME suppliers or local food business operators.” (Informant 4)</i>
	Fluctuations and the budget. In addition, there are challenges when multiple menu items increases in raw simultaneously use the same raw materials (for example, expensive or material prices are the imported fruits).	<i>“The main obstacle lies in raw materials, which are sometimes hard to obtain, expensive, or experience sudden price hikes, making them less compatible with the budget.” (Informant 6)</i>
	main obstacles because they do not align with the agreed-upon prices.	<i>“The challenge usually arises when the price of staple ingredients rises, while the agreed-upon price remains unchanged. Sometimes demand is high enough that we have to increase inventory and staff to ensure all orders are fulfilled on time.” (Informant 1)</i>
4 Empowerment Models Based on		<i>“The main challenge for MSMEs is a surge in demand for raw materials that they cannot meet according to MBG’s requirements.” (Informant 8)</i>
	Limited capital and production capacity often overwhelms business owners, which sometimes make it difficult for MSMEs to consistently fulfill large orders.	<i>“A common challenge arises when MSMEs receive very large orders. Limited production equipment often overwhelms business owners, which sometimes leads to delays in the distribution of food raw materials.” (Informant 7)</i>
		<i>“The most common issues are capital and delivery schedules. Sometimes the prices of raw materials fluctuate, or they have limited capital to stock up on large quantities. Sometimes deliveries are delayed due to a shortage of vehicles or traffic jams.” (Informant 5)</i>
	Long-term partnerships accompanied by regular mentoring, and training, with an emphasis on the use of local food ingredients	<i>“Effective empowerment is achieved through long-term partnerships, regular mentoring, and training, with an emphasis on the use of local food ingredients</i>

No. Theme	Key Findings	Interview Quotes
Local WisdomKearifan Lokal	mentoring and training are considered a sustainable empowerment model.	<i>so that the surrounding community can reap the economic benefits.” (Informant 2)</i> <i>“The most effective form of empowerment is the sustained involvement of MSMEs through a clear and mutually beneficial cooperation system.” (Informant 4)</i> <i>“The best empowerment model prioritizes local products, sustainable cooperation agreements, and regular mentoring.” (Informant 3)</i>

Forms of Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Mechanisms for SPPG-UMKM

The interview results show that stakeholder involvement in the MBG Program at the ten SPPGs is divided into three complementary roles. MSMEs serve as suppliers of fresh food (vegetables, eggs, and other staple foods); SPPG staff act as processors and guardians of nutritional portion standards; and SPPG heads serve as quality controllers and supplier recruiters. The partnership mechanism operates through the registration of prospective suppliers, the establishment of quality and volume standards, the scheduling of deliveries, and the routine daily delivery of ingredients. An interesting finding is that supplier screening is not always a passive process of waiting for registrations; rather, it is actively carried out by the SPPG head by going directly to traditional markets to offer partnerships, accompanied by a mechanism for terminating the partnership if the supplied ingredients do not meet freshness standards.

This partnership model reinforces the view that the MBG has the potential to boost demand for local food products and strengthen the position of micro and small businesses if its supply chain is optimally integrated with the economic ecosystem surrounding the SPPG (Ratih & Maria, 2026). The SPPG head’s initiative to directly recruit suppliers from traditional markets also demonstrates that the sustainability of MBG as an instrument for local economic empowerment heavily depends on the SPPG’s performance in driving the surrounding economic ecosystem from vendors and farmers to small-scale catering businesses (Saepuloh & Hilmi, 2026). This practice indicates efforts toward a more participatory governance model at the grassroots level, consistent with findings that the success of national-scale nutritious food programs lies in governance designs that involve local actors, rather than relying solely on a centralized approach (Berlianto, Aaron & Indrayadi, 2026).

Economic Impacts and Benefits for Local Business Owners

All informants agreed that the MBG Program has a positive impact on the sustainability of MSMEs around the SPPG. This impact is primarily felt through stable product demand resulting from regular weekly orders, which encourages business owners to be more confident in increasing their inventory volumes. The benefits gained by MSMEs are not limited to increased income or revenue but also include market certainty, expanded business networks, and enhanced capacity to maintain product quality and ensure timely deliveries. From the SPPG’s perspective, long-term partnerships help create a mutually supportive economic ecosystem between raw material suppliers and kitchen operators.

These findings align with studies showing that the MBG has been proven to drive demand for local agricultural commodities and create a multiplier effect that strengthens community economic activity (Agustini & Mulyani, 2025). The benefits of market certainty and strengthened business relationships reported by informants also underscore that the sustainability of MBG as an instrument for local economic empowerment depends on the extent to which SPPGs can sustainably mobilize small businesses in their vicinity, rather than merely facilitating short-term transactions (Saepuloh & Hilmi, 2026).

Challenges in Partnership Implementation

Behind these positive impacts, this study also identified a number of challenges faced by business owners and SPPG managers. For MSMEs, the main obstacles include limited capital to fulfill large-scale orders, fluctuations in raw material prices that do not align with agreed-upon prices, and limited production equipment and labor when order volumes surge sharply which, in turn, can potentially lead to delays in the delivery of raw materials. Meanwhile, from the perspective of SPPG managers, the challenges that arise are more related to the occasional late arrival of food supplies, although this occurs relatively infrequently.

These challenges underscore that the success of the MBG as an instrument for local economic empowerment remains heavily dependent on the stability of the local food supply, the clarity of standard operating procedures, and the commitment of implementers at the service unit level (Agustini & Mulyani, 2025). The support provided by the government and managers such as outreach, mentoring, and information on quality standards is considered by informants to be insufficient, particularly regarding product quality training and access to capital; therefore, strengthening these two aspects is an urgent need to ensure that the partnership can operate on a more equal footing and sustainably.

Empowerment Models Based on Local Wisdom and Their Implications

Informants emphasized that the most effective empowerment model is a long-term partnership accompanied by regular guidance and training, while prioritizing the use of food products from local farmers, livestock breeders, fishermen, and MSMEs so that the economic benefits of the program are directly felt by the communities surrounding the SPPG. This model is described as proceeding in tandem that is, meeting students' nutritional needs occurs simultaneously with strengthening the economies of local businesses, rather than as two separate agendas.

This empowerment model reflects the application of local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation and solidarity, which positions the community not merely as passive beneficiaries but as owners of knowledge and resources capable of managing them independently (Novianti, Romli, Mawardi & Nasution, 2025). This practice aligns with the local wisdom based empowerment model that has proven effective in managing resources for community economic development in various other regions across Indonesia (Fatristya & Sarjan, 2024), while also affirming that communities can serve as the primary agents in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of empowerment programs based on local resources (Ritonga & Hasibuan, 2021). Thus, the success of integrating local resources and wisdom into the governance of the MBG in Makassar City depends heavily on the extent to which the partnership models that have organically formed at the SPPG level can be strengthened through mentoring, training, and consistent payment guarantees to local business partners.

DISCUSSION

The above findings indicate that the MBG Program at the SPPG in Makassar City does not merely function as a food distribution mechanism, but has also begun to serve as a driver of the local economy, in line with the finding that the sustainability of the MBG as an instrument for local economic empowerment depends on the SPPG's performance in revitalizing the surrounding economic ecosystem, ranging from farmers and livestock breeders to small-scale catering businesses (Saepuloh & Hilmi, 2026). The partnership models identified in this study, ranging from supplier registration and standard-setting to routine deliveries reinforce the notion that the MBG has the potential to boost demand for local food products and strengthen the position of micro and small businesses if its supply chain is optimally integrated (Ratih & Maria, 2026).

However, findings regarding constraints such as fluctuations in raw material prices, limited capital, and supply delays indicate that the multiplier effect of this program remains vulnerable to the stability of local food supplies and the clarity of standard operating procedures, as warned in previous studies (Agustini & Mulyani, 2025). The SPPG Head's initiative to go directly to traditional markets to recruit suppliers indicates efforts at the local level to adapt to the limitations of top-down governance, while also opening space for more participatory involvement of local actors, in line with the finding that the key to the success of a nationwide nutritious food program lies in a governance design that involves local actors, including local resources (Berlianto, Aaron & Indrayadi 2026).

The empowerment model proposed by the informants namely, long-term partnerships that prioritize food products from local farmers, livestock breeders, fishermen, and MSMEs reflects the application of local wisdom values such as mutual cooperation and solidarity, which position the community not as passive beneficiaries but as owners of knowledge and resources capable of managing them independently (Novianti, Romli, Mawardi & Nasution, 2025). Thus, the success of integrating local resources and wisdom into the governance of the MBG in Makassar City is largely determined by the extent to which the partnership models that have organically formed at the SPPG level can be strengthened through mentoring, training, and consistent payment guarantees as repeatedly emphasized by the informants in this study.

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