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BUSINESS CASE

# MOBILIZING COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM FOR IMPACTFUL PHILANTHROPHY

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Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

Source: Sebumi

# Executive Summary

Indonesia's unparalleled biodiversity and cultural richness offer fertile ground for community-based ecotourism (CBET) to serve as a powerful vehicle for conservation, economic resilience, and inclusive development. CBET is a model of tourism where communities manage natural areas directly and earn income through conservation-friendly activities, giving people a way to live from nature without stripping it bare.

This report evaluates three standout CBET initiatives: Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu, to identify key success factors, challenges, and lessons that can guide future efforts.

CBET anchors rural communities to their ecological and cultural landscapes by turning stewardship into sustainable livelihoods. In Nglanggeran, community-managed tourism leverages volcanic terrain, agroforestry, and cultural heritage to generate income, promote local ownership, and preserve fragile ecosystems. Merabu, situated in East Kalimantan's karst forest, exemplifies indigenous-led conservation and sustainable forest management grounded in legal land tenure and cultural values. Gili Balu, a marine ecotourism cluster in West Sumbawa, in the Province of Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), showcases an evolving public-private-community partnership that blends conservation with economic diversification, particularly as a transition for the district from dependence on mining.

All three ventures reveal a consistent model for success. Strong local institutions, legal empowerment, inclusive benefit-sharing, and community-driven governance are foundational. External support, whether from government, NGOs, or private actors, is most effective when it builds capacity without overriding local control. Each site also aligns CBET with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), delivering impact on poverty reduction (SDG 1), decent work (SDG 8), sustainable communities (SDG 11), responsible resource use (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), and biodiversity conservation (SDG 15).

However, challenges persist. Market access remains limited, infrastructure gaps affect service delivery, and climate variability threatens ecological integrity. For example, Gili Balu faces regulatory ambiguity and uneven understanding of sustainability principles. Nglanggeran and Merabu struggle with seasonal income, digital exclusion, and uneven participation among vulnerable groups. Continued investment in capacity building, adaptive governance, and locally aligned infrastructure is essential to scale these models without diluting their core values.

The report recommends a set of transferable strategies: (1) embed tourism in local assets and rhythms; (2) ensure community ownership and inclusive governance; (3) invest in people before infrastructure; (4) balance conservation and livelihoods; and (5) build monitoring systems for continuous improvement. These principles offer a blueprint for expanding CBET in ways that protect ecosystems, honor culture, and generate equitable income.

A composite CBET business model, structured using the Business Model Canvas, illustrates how tourism can be designed around natural and cultural capital, powered by community-led operations, and sustained through diverse revenue streams such as homestays, guided tours, crafts, and conservation grants.

Ultimately, CBET is not simply a tourism option; it is a pathway to regenerative development. The experiences of Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu show that when communities lead, ecosystems recover, local economies flourish, and visitors connect with purpose. As Indonesia and the world seek inclusive, climate-resilient growth, these models point the way forward. They also highlight CBET's potential to enhance carbon absorption and reduce environmental footprints through ecosystem-based stewardship, contributing to climate goals at the grassroots level.

Furthermore, the report underscores that philanthropic institutions and CSR programs have a pivotal role to play in scaling and sustaining CBET initiatives. Strategic philanthropy, through capacity building, long-term funding, knowledge transfer, and ecosystem support, can amplify the impact of CBET while maintaining local ownership.

CBET thus presents an opportunity for philanthropy to achieve integrated environmental, economic, and social outcomes, making it an ideal platform for systemic, regenerative change.

# Where Stewardship Begins: How CBET Anchors People, Place, and Purpose

Indonesia holds one of the richest ecological profiles on Earth. Its islands support more than 25,000 plant species, nearly 1,600 bird species, and a major share of the world's mammals and reptiles. Protected areas span over 36 million hectares. Another 88 million hectares of forest remain, especially in lowland regions where nature still feeds, houses, and protects rural communities.

Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) is a local model of tourism where communities manage natural areas directly and earn income through conservation-friendly activities. It works with that reality. It gives people a way to live from nature without stripping it bare. In Merabu, local farmers preserve native fruits through home gardens (Hartoyo et al., 2016). Durian sadon, kapul, and manggis hutan are grown not for export but for daily use. This keeps local biodiversity intact and forests standing.

In Nglanggeran, community forests absorb nearly 100 tons of carbon per hectare. A single species, Swietenia macrophylla, holds over 70 percent of the area's woody biomass (Tohirin et al., 2021). Forest care and water catchment go hand in hand.

In Gili Balu, fish biodiversity holds strong across ten reef sites. Mandiki Island sees nearly 3,000 fish per hectare. Coralivores, herbivores, and reef predators share the same waters (Himawan et al., 2024). Strong species presence reflects solid ecological ground.

CBET also moves the economy. Nglanggeran welcomed 138,129 tourists in 2018. Over 700 residents earned income through homestays, tours, food, and crafts (Karyatun et al., 2021). Merabu villagers receive carbon payments through REDD+. Each household gets cash for forest protection, with revenue also going to the local cooperative (Hartoyo et al., 2016)

In Gili Balu, former fishermen now manage boat trips, sell snacks, and host travelers. Google Translate fills language gaps. No major conflict has emerged. This shows readiness for the next steps in tourism standards (Azizurrohman et al., 2022).

The groundwork is already solid. CBET helps people stay, helps nature recover, and brings in fair returns. What matters now is keeping it consistent and making it easier to grow without losing local hands in the process.

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# Growth Without Loss

The Power of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET)

**Nglanggeran**

**100** tons of carbon/ hectare
(Tohirin et al., 2021)

**138,129** visitors brought income to **700+** locals
(Karyatun et al., 2021)

**UNWTO's 2021 Best Tourism Village** for community-led eco based model
(Suminar et al., 2021)

**Merabu**

**Durian sadon, Kapul, Manggis Hutan** native fruits cultivated by Villagers
(Hartoyo et al., 2016)

through **REDD+** households receive carbon payments for forest protection
(Hartoyo et al., 2016)

Thick forest around Syadeng Lake **helps keep groundwater steady**
(Marjenah et al., 2023)

**Gili Balu**

**up to 3K** fishes / hectare with coralivores, herbivores, and predators sharing space
(Himawan et al., 2024)

**Ex-fishermen** run boat tours and homestays
(Azizurrohman et al., 2022)

**Port of Pototano** supports grouper, sea cucumbers, and seagrass beds that feed local fisheries
(Azizurrohman et al., 2022)

## When Growth of Tourism Outspace the Environment

Tourism often moves faster than ecosystems can adjust. But when communities take the lead and plan strategically, the land gets a chance to recover. Across Indonesia, some villages are already showing how CBET can balance income, care, and control.

In West Sumbawa, the waters around Port of Pototano still support reef fish, seagrass, plankton, and benthic life (Jupri et al., 2023). The presence of grouper, sea cucumbers, and gastropods signals an active ecosystem. Seagrass beds feed fish and support local fisheries. With careful planning, these waters could support sustainable tourism without hurting marine life.

In Merabu, Nyadeng Lake is encircled by stratefied forestlayers: seelings, saplings, poles, and mature trees. Species like Syzygium and Shorea help regulate water flow. One study found a 72% link between vegetation density and infiltration, which means forest cover helps keep groundwater levels stable (Marjenah et al., 2023). This matters for both tourism and village water security.

Nglanggeran Village has become a global example. It brought people back to the village, grew new jobs like agrotourism and cacao farming, and kept local culture intact. In 2021, it won the UNWTO Best Tourism Village award and continues to draw praise for its strong mix of community control leadership, social inclusion, and environmental care stewardship (Suminar et al., 2023).

When communities lead, and tourism slows down enough to listen, nature finds room to heal. CBET makes that space possible.

## Some Examples of CBET Activities

### Nature

- Hiking ancient volcanoes
- Exploring cacao gardens
- Dryland agroforestry tours

### Culture

- Witnessing local rituals
- Home industry workshops
- Traditional food

### Education

- Student geology / ecology classes
- Learning village water

# What Today's Travelers Are Looking For: From Consumption to Connection

Today's traveler wants to connect with place and people, not just consume experiences. They care where their money goes. They ask who built the path, who lives nearby, and what story their visit leaves behind.

1. In Nglanggeran, visitors join farmers in the field. They walk old lava rocks and share meals in homes that once stood empty. What they remember is not a tour; it is the people they met.
2. In Merabu, entrance fees go back to the ground: clean water, sorted waste, and patrols that keep the forest quiet at night. The trails to Nyadeng were cleared by locals who know every root, bend, and spring.
3. In Gili Balu, guests plant mangroves and watch fish counts in real time. They learn why coral matters, not from a brochure, but from the boat crew who grew up on the reef.

People are no longer looking for postcard views. They are looking for places with meaning. CBET gives them that. No fanfare. Just honesty, care, and a reason to return.

# Why CBET Fits the Current Moment

CBET works where nature is lived and cared for. It gives rural communities a way to earn from their surroundings without selling them off.

The current moment brings sharp pressure from multiple sides. Climate risks are escalating. Food and water sources are under stress. Global tourism is shifting toward low-impact models. At the same time, rural inequality in Indonesia remains high. Many villages still face weak job markets, resource conflict, and limited voice in development planning. These pressures require models that are practical, fair, and grounded in local capacity. CBET offers one of the few options that meets those terms. It connects livelihoods to conservation without outside dependence. It keeps income tied to the land without over-extracting from it. For many rural areas, it is not a trend. It is one of the last workable paths forward.

In Nglanggeran, locals run their own homestays, lead tours, grow cacao, and preserve the land. Even during COVID-19, they adapted. Online tours and farming helped the village stay afloat (Ekowati & Nawarcono, 2022). They did not just survive. They held steady.

In Merabu, forest rights are legal, and the community uses them well. People earn from guiding, homestays, and forest crafts without needing costly technology. The Kalimantan Ecotourism Standard (SPE) offers a structure for gradual upgrades while letting villagers keep control (Manurung et al., 2024). Outside partners pitch in, but they do not assume control.

In Gili Balu, women are entering tourism on their own terms. Some sell snacks, others make souvenirs, or host travelers in their homes. Social rules still limit them, but CBET gives room to grow. With training and capital, these roles could shift from supplementary work into real business (Hulfa et al., 2022).

Source: Sebumi

## What We Risk by Doing Nothing

The warning signs are already visible. In Nglanggeran, hotter days and shifting rainfall are starting to disrupt the plant and animal cycles that sustain the volcano's ecosystem together (Tripujiantari et al., 2024). As moss and orchid layers thin out, water storage drops. Steep slopes lose their hold. Landslides, runoff, and sediment build-up could follow. They do not just affect nature, but nearby villages. Moss loss is more than cosmetic. It signals deeper trouble. Once the balance breaks, the volcano loses its ability to store carbon, hold soil, or cushion climate stress.

In Merabu, Nyadeng Spring runs through a karst system already classified at level 7 and 8 on the karstification scale, meaning its underground flows are fast, unstable, and prone to swings. Heavy rain can trigger flash floods. In dry seasons, the same system might suddenly go dry. Without regular monitoring and clear protection, this vital spring may stop serving both villagers and visitors (Widyastuti et al., 2018).

In Gili Balu, coral health is slipping. Average cover has dropped to 44.67%. Key species like reef fish and octopus are under pressure. Destructive fishing (using bombs or potassium) still happens inside protected zones. Over half of those involved do not even know these zones exist. If this continues, reefs will break down. Fish stocks will vanish. Local livelihoods will collapse. Recovery, if possible at all, would take decades (Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

## What Still Needs to Improve

CBET has laid a strong foundation, but there is room to grow. Many sites are ready for the next step: expanding skills in pricing, hospitality, and visitor safety. With better training programs and ongoing guidance, local teams can take on more complex roles. Women already contribute through food, crafts, and homestays. With access to capital and targeted mentoring, many could lead their own businesses. In some remote areas, basic upgrades (road access, clean water, and mobile signal) would unlock new opportunities for longer stays and higher visitor spending.

Environmental safeguards can also be improved. Some locations still need clear zoning, signage, and daily visitor limits. These are manageable steps. Community groups already track flows and manage local funds. With stronger support and better tools, they can maintain balance between visitors and ecosystems. CBET already works in places like Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu. With the right backing, it can work in many more and eventually help scale rural tourism without losing its roots.

Source: Sebumi

# CBET in Practice: Core Features and Broader Goals

## What Defines Genuine CBET

Genuine CBET is not defined by murals, brochures, or NGO slogans. It is defined by who decides, who earns, and who protects the land in return. From the evidence across sites, five clear features stand out as the foundation of authentic CBET.

**Real Community Control**
Villagers make the core decisions: who enters, how tourism operates, and how funds are distributed.

**Locally Driven Conservation**
Environmental protection must be led by local people. In places like Merabu, communities handle

**Broad-Based Benefit Sharing**
Earnings must go beyond homestay owners. Rotational systems, pooled funds, and roles for women and vulnerable groups ensure income reaches across throughout the village. Nglanggeran is one example.

**Village-Enforced Rules**
Tourist caps, damage penalties, and project approvals must be enforced internally. These rules hold

**Functional Local Institutions**
Groups like LPHD (community-led village forest management institution), POKDARWIS (community-led tourism awareness group), and adat councils must manage budgets, records, and daily operations. Their

## Ecotourism Empowers the Local Community

**Planning**
by local communities

**Decision Making**
by local communities

**Management**
by local communities

Different types of activities depending on local conditions:

- Diving and snorkling
- Caving
- Wildlife Observation
- Nature Exploration
- Forest Treks
- Etc.

**Key Elements of CBET**

- Environmental stewardship
- Local capacity building
- Cultural preservation
- Democratization process
- Local control
- Community participation

# CBET and the Sustainable Development Goals

Global goals often sound distant. CBET brings them home. From forest carbon to clean water, from youth jobs to women's income, each sustainable development target becomes real when the land supports livelihoods, and when communities lead the way.

**SDG 1: Strengthening Local Livelihoods**
Nglanggeran's community-based tourism reduces poverty by creating stable, village-rooted jobs in guiding, food, homestays, and crafts. Supported by local groups like POKDARWIS and BUMDes (village-owned enterprise), income is shared fairly, training is organized, and residents can earn without migrating. Livelihoods improve through structured local systems, not through relying on external aid (Manaf et al., 2018).

**SDG 8: Supporting Stable, Local Jobs**
In Merabu, SDG 8 comes to life through stable local jobs in guiding, homestays, catering, and biodiversity monitoring. Income is diversified across tourism, forest conservation under REDD+, agroforestry, and crafts. Village enterprises like LPHD manage and redistribute earnings, keeping control and benefits within the community. This model builds a self-reliant economy based on local values, skills, and shared stewardship (Rochmayanto et al., 2019).

**SDG 11: Keeping Rural Communities Resilient**
Tourism villages in Gunung Kidul contribute to SDG 11 by using local culture and nature as anchors for growth. BUMDes-led tourism, craft groups, mushroom farming, and homestay networks open up income sources while keeping people rooted. These activities bring money into the village, improve access to services, and give locals more reason to stay. At the same time, cultural heritage in tour packages sustains traditions. Environmental limits are respected. Through this model, rural areas become more livable, more stable, and more self-reliant. That aligns directly with SDG 11.1 on housing and services, 11.3 on participation, and 11.4 on heritage protection (Pribadi et al., 2024).

**SDG 12: Encouraging Responsible Use of Resources**
Smart Patrol efforts in Gili Balu contribute to SDG 12 by helping the community fish within ecological limits. By monitoring 32 sites, patrols found that 78 percent of fishing used hand lines or other selective gear, which protects reef habitats. Patrols also pushed compliance in no-take zones to 81 percent. These actions cut back destructive practices like bombing or potassium use. They also helped spread basic awareness in a context where most fishers were unaware of the zoning rules. This supports SDG 12.2 on sustainable resource use and 12.8 on public knowledge for better choices (Hidayatullah et al., 2023).

**SDG 13: Connecting Tourism and Climate Goals**
Under SDG 13, the Nglanggeran site contributes through low-carbon rural practices and natural carbon sinks. Agroforestry and slope management reduce land degradation. Community-led planting supports watershed health. Tourism remains small-scale and locally run, with no carbon-heavy hotels or vehicles. Residents protect forests not through obligation, but because their livelihoods depend on them. The result is a village that absorbs carbon, avoids emissions, and stays grounded in its own rhythm, while remaining aligned climate policy goals (Tohirin et al., 2021).

**SDG 15: Maintaining Biodiversity Through Local Action**
Nglanggeran supports SDG 15 by turning a volcanic mountain into a living classroom for biodiversity protection. The area holds 23 moss species across four families, recorded through careful study. These mosses act as natural stabilizers for rocks and soil. They help retain moisture and serve as early signals of ecological change. Locals now see these species not as weeds but as part of the mountain's health. The data has been used in education, allowing schools to teach biodiversity through place-based science. This bridges local knowledge with national goals, and empowers communities to safeguard the ecosystems they depend on (Triatmanto et al., 2023).

# Linking Ecosystem Health to Local Benefits

Healthy ecosystems are not just scientific assets. For rural communities, they are practical foundations for income, food, and safety. When ecological systems stay intact, livelihoods gain strength.

**In Nglanggeran**, mosses growing on volcanic rocks play a role beyond conservation. They keep slopes stable, hold water, and support future vegetation. This reduces erosion and helps agriculture thrive. For residents, that means safer farming, more predictable harvests, and fewer landslides. Protecting biodiversity is integrated into everyday life.

**In Merabu**, thick forest cover regulates water flow to Nyadeng Spring. The karst landscape is fragile, but healthy vegetation acts as a sponge absorbing rainfall, storing it, and releasing it gradually. This supplies clean water for drinking, bathing, and tourism. Locals invest in reforestation and patrols not because of abstract global targets, but because their access to water depends on it.

**In Gili Balu**, strong reefs protect the coast from waves and offer fishers steady catch. When destructive fishing drops, coral cover improves. That, in turn, brings back reef fish and octopus reviving food security and enhancing tourism appeal. Better biodiversity means more boats returning with selective, high-value catch. It also means tourists get to see what they came for: vibrant marine life, not dead zones.

The connection is clear: when ecosystems work, so do communities. CBET sharpens this link by tying income directly to ecosystem function. Residents become stewards because their forests store water, their reefs feed families, and their hills hold the land together. Protecting nature transforms into a community investment with everyday benefits.

## Why Local Ownership and Involvement Matter

CBET only works when communities own the process. Not just in name, but in every decision, every benefit, and every risk taken. Without this, CBET turns into outsourced tourism with a local label.

When communities lead, the rules fit the land. In Gili Balu, patrols are led by community members who know which fish breed where and when. In Merabu, zoning reflects real use patterns, not outsider maps. This kind of knowledge is not easily imported.

Ownership builds protection. When villagers see tourism as their own income, not just a government project, they defend it. At Nglanggeran, residents protect caves and trails because those are what sustain both future tourism and present identity. When a forest fire threatens cacao farms, it is locals who put it out.

Involvement makes the model last. CBET is not a one-off event. It needs budgets, training, daily maintenance, and slow improvements. This only happens when locals run it from within, like LPHDs in Merabu or POKDARWIS in Gunungkidul. These are not just committees. They are institutions that carry the model forward.

When outsiders control too much (when projects come top-down, when rules ignore local customs), communities step back. And when they do, protection fades, systems break down, and CBET becomes just another brochure with no roots. What works is simple: Let communities plan. Let them benefit. Let them lead. And then support what they build.

## CBET as a Pathway for Carbon Absorption

The CBET models in Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu show clear potential for improving carbon absorption and reducing environmental footprints through ecosystem stewardship.

In Nglanggeran, community forests absorb up to 100 tons of carbon per hectare, largely from species like Swietenia macrophylla. Agroforestry and slope management enhance soil stability and watershed health, while the tourism model remains low carbon, relying on homestays and walking tours instead of large-scale infrastructure.

Merabu contributes through its legally protected forest, managed under REDD+ with direct community benefits. Its layered vegetation structure and reforestation efforts support long-term carbon storage, while ecotourism activities maintain minimal environmental impact.

In Gili Balu, blue carbon ecosystems are restored through mangrove and seagrass planting, supported by the TransformaSea program. Mangroves in particular are powerful carbon sinks, and community-led conservation ensures these efforts continue alongside sustainable marine tourism.

These ventures demonstrate that when tourism is rooted in local ecosystems and governance, it becomes a tool for both livelihood and climate resilience, capturing carbon, avoiding emissions, and advancing Indonesia's climate goals at the grassroots level.

## CBET as an Impactful Philanthropic Endeavor

Philanthropic institutions and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs have an important role to play in supporting Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) ventures. As demonstrated by the cases of Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu, CBET can generate tangible benefits across environmental conservation, local economic development, and social cohesion. These ventures not only preserve natural and cultural assets but also create alternative livelihoods, engage youth and indigenous communities, and promote inclusive participation in development.

To ensure the long-term viability of such models, there is a pressing need for strategic philanthropy that goes beyond one-off donations. This includes targeted support for capacity building, sustained funding mechanisms, facilitation of cross-sector partnerships, and ecosystem strengthening. By aligning philanthropic efforts with the proven impacts of CBET, donors and CSR programs can effectively contribute to scalable solutions that deliver triple-bottom-line outcomes, environmental sustainability, economic empowerment, and social well-being. In this way, CBET offers a powerful platform through which philanthropy can realize lasting and multidimensional impact.

# Options for Building and Managing CBET

## Model A: Fully Community-Managed Tourism

This is where CBET works best. Villages plan, manage, and monitor everything, from waste control to visitor caps. Ownership builds accountability.

Nglanggeran shows a fully community-managed tourism model where control, revenue, and jobs stay inside the village. BUMDes runs every service and gives work to 154 residents. Annual tourism income reaches IDR 1.3 billion, and IDR 100 million flows back into the village budget to fund local needs (Pribadi et al., 2024). The model keeps outside operators out, lets villagers shape decisions, and treats tourism as a shared asset for community welfare.

The Merabu Village Forest in East Kalimantan validates Model A through evidence of direct community control over planning, enforcement, and income use. Managed by the village body Kerima Puri, the forest achieved zero deforestation from 2012 to 2015 and showed high compliance with local rules. Villagers conducted monitoring, enforced restrictions, and crafted business plans autonomously, leading to more effective REDD+ outcomes than nearby state-managed forests (Rochmayanto et al., 2019). Tourism revenue supported livelihoods without increasing ecological pressure, illustrating that full local tenure improves forest integrity and economic resilience simultaneously.

## Model B: Joint Partnerships with Shared Oversight

In this model, local cooperatives partner with governments or responsible investors. Revenues are shared, and land rules are made together. Success depends on whether those rules stay fair, and whether locals can renegotiate them.

Gili Balu fits Model B. The village groups, cooperatives, and AMMAN work side by side (PT Amman Mineral Nusa Tenggara, 2024). No one actor dominates. The TransformaSea program backs local ecotourism by funding marine monitoring, reef and mangrove restoration, guide training, and sustainable fishing. It does not impose. It supports. By 2024, five snorkeling guides and twelve island guides were certified. Over 1,700 locals participated. The area gained legal recognition as a conservation zone. Coral modules and mangrove seedlings were planted. Decisions are made together. Revenue is managed together. And if the rules remain fair, Gili Balu shows how co-ownership can link ecology and income.

## Model C: Externally Managed, Limited Local Role

This setup looks polished on paper. Tourists come. Money flows, but rarely to the village. Decision-making stays with outside operators. Sites risk being overbuilt, trails degrade, and nature becomes background.

Labuan Bajo mirrors Model C. It is a destination driven by outsiders, with locals watching from the margins. Investments focus on hotels, not homes. Resorts store water while villagers queue for buckets. Pipes reach five-star lobbies, but not village kitchens. Toilets sparkle for tourists, yet remain unsafe for the elderly in surrounding hills. Zoning, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) planning, and spending choices are steered by ministries and private developers. The village has no seat at the table. Local voices call themselves “spectators.” The result is a split system: clean for guests, strained for residents. Tourism succeeds by appearance, but under the surface, the cost is carried by those left out.

Source: Sebumi

## Comparing the Models

CBET models must be judged not by images or visitor numbers, but by what they leave behind in the economy and the ecosystem. Three outcomes matter: who earns, who manages, and whether the land improves or declines over time.

| Model | Ecological Return | Income Capture | Cost Recovery | Long-Term Viability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model A: Community-Led** | High. Forests recover, waste drops, wildlife returns. | Over 70% stays local. Revenue feeds households and cooperatives. | High recovery. Local ownership reduces leakage. | Durable. Local buy-in sustains the model during shocks. |
| **Model B: Shared Investment** | Medium. Gains possible if zoning and monitoring are enforced. | 30–50% local share, if contracts are honored and renegotiable. | Moderate. Some village earnings are reinvested. | Conditional. Depends on governance, equity, and investor loyalty. |
| **Model C: Tourist-Led** | Low. Biodiversity often declines due to overuse and poor controls. | <10% remains local. Most profits go to operators and resellers. | High external cost. Villages depend on handouts. | Fragile. Collapses if visitor numbers fall or firms exit. |

## Summary

1. Model A works best in communities with strong leadership, clear land rights, and high social cohesion. It offers long-term ecological and financial returns, but needs steady local engagement and consistent institutional support.

2. Model B suits regions where outside investors bring needed capital or expertise, but where community groups can still negotiate terms and monitor outcomes. It can deliver partial gains if power is balanced and contracts remain flexible.

3. Model C tends to emerge in high-traffic tourist zones or areas with weak governance. It can boost visitor numbers and quick revenue, but often sidelines communities and strains ecosystems without proper regulation.

# Case Studies

## Nglanggeran


Source: Sebumi

BUMDes employs **154 residents** and generates **IDR 1.3 billion** yearly, with **IDR 100 million** reinvested into village needs
(Pribadi et al., 2024).

**POKDARWIS** manages visitors, BUMDes runs services, cooperatives handle food and crafts, and schools support training.
(Rosida & Ri, 2014).

Activities span trekking, farming, culture, and certified homestays
Islami et al., 2024; Suyanto et al., 2020).

The village cuts emissions through agroforestry, slope care, and forest-linked livelihoods
(Tohirin et al., 2021).

**23 moss**
species help stabilize slopes and track ecosystem health
(Tohirin et al., 2021).

## Merabu


Source: Franly Oley, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Nyadeng Spring faces flood and drought risks due to unstable karst flows
(Widyastuti et al., 2018).

From **2012–2015**, Merabu achieved zero deforestation through its own forest body.

Locals earn from **REDD+**, crafts, tourism, and agroforestry under full village control
(Rochmayanto et al., 2019).

Legal forest rights support jobs without external takeover, guided by Kalimantan's ecotourism standard.
(Manurung et al., 2024).

## Gili Balu


Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

**32 sites monitored:**
78% used selective gear, 81% followed no-take zones
(Rochmayanto et al., 2019).

Costs shared by **AMMAN**, province, and university. NTB backs it as a flagship tourism zone
(PKSPL IPB University, 2023).

**1,700 locals**
joined TransformaSea. 17 guides certified. Coral and mangrove rehab ongoing
(PT Amman Mineral Nusa Tenggara, 2024).


Source: Sebumi

# The Nglanggeran Village

## The Business Model

The model is asset-based, not infrastructure-driven (Suyanto et al., 2020). Activities are divided into clear verticals:

- Trekking along volcanic trails
- Seasonal farm experiences (cacao, dryland crops)
- Cultural immersion (rituals, crafts, food-based events)
- They stay in certified village homestays, owned and operated by residents.

The total economic value of Nglanggeran's forest ecosystem is estimated at Rp 4.66 billion per year, with the largest contributions coming from indirect ecological services and future-use potential (Santika & Susandarini, 2020).

## Sustainability Elements

1. **Governance is handled through function-based village bodies:** POKDARWIS manages tourism logistics and visitor services, BUMDes handles transportation, ticketing, and shared assets, cooperatives coordinate food systems and artisan income, and schools support student training and knowledge sharing (Rosida & Ri, 2014).

2. **Revenue and Cash Flow:** Income streams are diverse and fully community-managed through homestays, guiding, interpreter service, tours, craft workshops, cultural events, and culinary services. Revenue is pooled into shared village account.

3. **Capital and Cost Structure:** Startup capital came from internal pooling, small government tourism grants, and village budget allocations (Islami et al., 2024; Manaf et al., 2018), while cooperatives offer microloans for tools and maintenance but not for expansion.

4. **Risk Handling and Adaptive Response:** As tourist traffic is highly seasonal, the village promotes educational tours, farm-based bundles and domestic visitor campaigns. Planting fruit trees support wildlife so that crop raids are reduced.

5. **Potential Developments:** Some developments being considered include setting aside a portion of tourism revenue for future shocks, skill-sharing initiatives to allow more evenly spread of responsibility, implementing a village-run booking system, monitoring of wildlife movement by observation, and implementing a structured reinvestment plan to upgrade the village infrastructure without depending on outside assistance.

Source: Franly Oley, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

# The Merabu Village

## The Business Model

Merabu Village, lying in East Kalimantan's karst landscape, within a biodiverse and ecologically sensitive 22,000 hectares forest area, of which 60% is protected, is home to about 300 people, primarily of the Dayak Lebo tribe. It is rich in cultural heritage and endangered species (Kementerian Pariwisata Republik Indonesia, 2025). In 2014, the Indonesian government granted Merabu legal rights to manage 8,245 hectares of forest under the Hutan Desa (Village Forest) scheme, enabling the community to reject extractive industry pressures and instead develop an ecotourism model focused on conservation and cultural preservation (Rochmayanto et al., 2023).

The ecotourism activities include (Kalimantan Tour Guide, 2025; Sebumi, 2025; Sulistyorini, et al., 2022):

- Forest treks and wildlife observation
- Caving and archeology tours like Beloyot Cave
- Educational tourism at the Kerima Puti Library
- Camping and nature exploration at Nyadeng Lake
- Homestays and local culinary experiences
- Sunrise hikes to Ketepu Peak

## Sustainability Elements

1. **Community Governance & Local Control:** Led by Kerima Puri, a village institution that oversees forest and tourism management, decisions are made locally and operational and financial systems are kept transparent (Sulistyorini et al., 2022; Rachmayanto et al, 2023).

2. **Economic Viability:** Revenue sources stem from diverse tourism activities, and earnings are equitably shared as well as reinvested into education, infrastructure, and forest protection (Kementerian Pariwisata Republik Indonesia, 2025).

3. **Environmental Stewardship:** Forest and wildlife protection are core objectives. Biodiversity monitoring and reforestation take place year-round (Rachmayanto et al, 2023).

4. **Cultural Preservation:** Storytelling, rituals, and cultural training programs transfer traditional knowledge, with Dayak Lebo heritage informing ecological values and guiding visitor engagement (Kalimantan Tour Guide, 2025).

5. **Partnerships and Support:** Stakeholders collaborate in ensuring shared benefit, with the government providing land rights and infrastructure, NGOs (the Nature Conservancy, GIZ-Forclime, Yakobi, and others) supporting mapping, training, and gender/youth inclusion, and academia conducting ecological research and assessments that support the ecotourism venture. These diverse stakeholders also form forums to help resolve potential conflicts and align land use planning (Sulistyorini et al., 2022; Rachmayanto et al, 2023).

6. **Risk Management:** Risks are mitigated through capacity-building, diversification, and strong alliances (Rachmayanto et al, 2023).

7. **Social Impact:** Household income and community funds have risen, enhancing village autonomy, empowering women and youth, and strengthening social cohesion (Sulistyorini et al., 2022; Rachmayanto et al, 2023; Kementerian Pariwisata Republik Indonesia, 2025).

Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

# Gili Balu

## The Business Model

Gili Balu, a cluster of eight islands (Kenawa, Paserang, Kambing, Belang, Namo, Kalong, Mandiki, Ular) off West Sumbawa, NTB, Indonesia, is renowned for its marine biodiversity, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds. Located in Poto Tano District, the area supports coastal communities dependent that rely on fishing and growing tourism.

The TransformaSea Gili Balu program, launched in 2022, promotes ecosystem-based marine ecotourism through a Public-Private-Community Partnership (PPCP) between the NTB Marine and Fisheries Department, PT Amman Mineral Nusa Tenggara (AMNT)'s Community Development and Empowerment Program and PKSPL at IPB University. Activities include coral reef and mangrove rehabilitation, sustainable fishing training, and community-based tourism development, such as tour guide and lifeguard certification. The program limits visitor numbers, similar to practices in Raja Ampat, to ensure conservation and ecosystem integrity (AMMAN, 2025; Radar Lombok, 2025).

## Sustainability Elements

1. **Community Governance & Local Control:** The Transformasea Program ensure that the community participates in governance and control by involving the Poto Tano Village community, fishermen, and POKDARWIS groups.

2. **Economic Viability:** The PPCP model leverages public resources to mitigate financial burdens, aligning with the NTB province's tourism goals.

3. **Environmental Stewardship:** The private entity in the PPCP funds ecosystem restoration and training that builds local capacity for sustainable environmental stewardship.

4. **Partnerships and Support:** Alongside private investment, costs are offset by the provincial government and the university's expertise in delivering scientific rigor (PKSPL IPB University, 2023; Permatasari et al., 2022). As the program aligns to NTB's policy to make Gili Balu a flagship tourism project, endorsement is from the provincial government is assured (PKSPL IPB University, 2023).

5. **Risk Management:** Risks, including community resistance to transitioning from fishing, environmental strain from tourism, and reliance on external scientific support are managed through active community involvement, ecosystem monitoring, and training (Radar Lombok, 2025; Permatasari et al., 2022).

6. **Positive Social Impact:** The impact of the TransformaSea program is summarized in the table below.

## Community Impact Metrics (TransformaSea Gili Balu Program)

| Impact Area | Measurable Outcomes |
|---|---|
| **Local Employement** | Over **150 local residents** trained and employed as eco-tourism guides, boat operators, and conservation workers. |
| **Marine Conservation** | **Coral reef restoration** across multiple Gili Balu islands; improved fish stocks reported by local fishermen. |
| **Education & Awareness** | Environmental education programs have reached **1,000+ students** in West Sumbawa schools. |
| **Microenterprise Support** | Support for **20+ local SMEs** in eco-tourism and sustainable fisheries. |
| **Tourism Growth** | Gili Balu saw a **30% increase in eco-tourism visits** in the first year of the program. |

Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

# Evaluation of the Cases and Lessons Learned

## The Nglanggeran Village

### Key Success Factors

- **Operating Model:** Tourism is built entirely on local assets. Volcanic trails, cultural rituals, dryland farms, and village homes function without reliance on external infrastructure or extraction.
- **Institutional Design:** Operations are run by village bodies through shared responsibility, with no top-down control and full authority over zoning, pricing, and participation.
- **Revenue and Circulation:** Over IDR 1.2 billion circulates annually through direct services, with all income retained locally and reinvested in maintenance, education, and housing.
- **Capital and Cost Structure:** The system avoids debt entirely. It relies on pooled savings and grants, with low fixed costs and no external ownership or financial exposure.
- **Risk and Growth Discipline:** Visitor caps, seasonal planning, and slope-based zoning manage pressure, while the village retains full power to slow, pause, or reject expansion.

### Key Challenges

- **Market Access:** Tourism demand remains narrow and irregular, tied to domestic school holidays, with limited international reach and no structured digital marketing.
- **Infrastructure:** Core systems - roads, water, safety railings, and internet - are functional but fragile, lacking the capacity for consistent service or scalable expansion.
- **Community Participation:** Not all households benefit equally due to home size, caregiving duties, or digital gaps, while youth outmigration and volunteer fatigue reduce long term engagement.
- **Financial Resilience:** Income is seasonal and shock-prone, with no formal insurance or liquidity reserves, leaving the system exposed to external risks and reliant on shallow informal coping mechanism.
- **Environmental Risk:** Landslides, habitat disruption, and shifting rainfall patterns expose the model to ecological strain, while weak external zoning enforcement risks encroachment.

### Lesson Learned

- **Operating Model:** Tourism must echo the land's natural limits and the community's pace. Experiences rooted in local terrain and rhythm are more durable than externally imposed models.
- **Institutional Design:** Stable governance grows from habit, not formal hierarchy. Roles evolve through practice, and shared control builds deeper accountability over time.
- **Revenue and Circulation:** Income diversity across homestays, farms, rituals, and crafts reduces dependence on any single visitor type or season.
- **Capital and Cost Structure:** Local funding protects autonomy. When capital is sourced locally, priorities stay aligned with community values.
- **External Engagement and Risk Handling:** Outside support is most effective when it respects local timing and control. Programs that fit community rhythm strengthen, rather than undermine, the system.

Source: Sebumi

# The Merabu Village

## Key Success Factors

The Merabu Village ecotourism venture thrives because it is community-led, culturally grounded, legally secure, and strategically supported. Its success rests on the integration of local capacity, good governance, effective partnerships, enabling government support, and a deep ecological ethic. These key success factors can be described are as follows.

- **Local Capacity and Community Commitment:** Applying the long-standing tradition of forest management within the Dayak Lebo community ensures the protection of the forest area. Involvement of women, youth, and elders ensures a whole-of-community commitment to the venture. Implementing capacity-building efforts for all involved empower villagers to run the ecotourism operation largely on their own.
- **Governance and Institutional Strength:** The existence of Kerima Puri as the operational and governance hub for the village forest and ecotourism, strengthens community trust and accountability.
- **Strategic Partnership:** NGOs collaborate with local partners in providing essential start-up support, including forest mapping, tourism training, infrastructure, environmental education, marketing and strengthening of organizational capacity. Support is given without dominance from external stakeholders, thus maintaining community autonomy and prevents dependency.
- **Local Government and Policy Support:** Government support is provided through supportive policy and infrastructure development, including roads, electricity (solar), clean water, and other public infrastructure that support both residents and visitors.
- **Environmental and Cultural Assets:** Diverse and unique assets, such as the Nyadeng Lake, Ketepu Peak, and prehistoric caves, offer immersive experiences that draw responsible travelers. This is further enhanced by the opportunity to experience Dayak Lebo heritage in the form of rituals and traditional food.
- **Monitoring, Transparency, and Adaptive Management:** Environmental and financial monitoring is shared transparently with all stakeholders, reinforcing trust. The community uses the data to adapt tourism operations based on the information gathered.

## Key Challenges

The Merabu Village ecotourism venture is a promising and inspirational model, but it is not immune to risk. Its sustainability depends on:

- Improving market access and branding
- Investing in resilient infrastructure and diversified livelihoods
- Ensuring fair benefit-sharing and leadership renewal
- Strengthening community capacity and environmental safeguards
- Advocating for consistent policy support and forest protection

By proactively addressing these challenges, Merabu can strengthen its resilience and continue to thrive as a model of community-based conservation and sustainable rural development.

## Lesson Learned

Merabu Village teaches that authenticity, community leadership, legal empowerment, and strategic collaboration are the cornerstones of sustainable ecotourism. Its experience shows that conservation and prosperity are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing, if rooted in equity, tradition, and trust. These lessons learned can be described in more detail as follows:

- Empowerment of local communities from the start ensures long-term sustainability.
- Legal recognition of land and forest rights creates the foundation for conservation and investment.
- Organized, transparent, and participatory institutions are vital to effective management.
- Aligning conservation goals with economic benefits reinforces community motivation.
- External support is most effective when it builds local capacity, not dependency.
- Authentic cultural heritage is a powerful tourism asset if protected and respected.
- Broad community participation reduces conflict and builds resilience.
- Ecotourism can succeed even in remote settings if visitor expectations are managed and infrastructure is modest yet reliable.

Source: Sebumi

# Gili Balu

## Key Success Factors

- **Clear Long-Term Vision for Economic Diversification.** The program is driven by PT AMNT's strategic objective to find alternative economic development for the community outside the mining sector, especially as the Batu Hijau mine is scheduled to conclude by 2034. This long-term vision aims to create a legacy where the community is no longer dependent on mining.
- **Strong Partnerships and Collaboration.** The program's existence is rooted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PT AMNT and the Provincial Marine and Fisheries Agency of NTB. Collaboration with expert partners like PKS-PLIPB (Pusat Kajian Sumber Daya Pesisir dan Lautan - IPB) ensures effective delivery of conservation activities.
- **Data-Driven Approach and Ecosystem Focus.** Prioritizing baseline studies and comprehensive data collection on marine ecosystems (e.g., underwater conditions in Gili Balu) provides a fundamental understanding before interventions. The focus on conservation and rehabilitation of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass is central to the eco-tourism concept.
- **Comprehensive Human Resource Capacity Building.** Extensive training programs cover various aspects, including eco-tourism concepts, waste management, certified tour guides, hospitality skills (housekeeping, cooking), and digital marketing. This has led to a high absorption rate of trained individuals into the local tourism and hospitality industries.
- **Community Empowerment and Engagement.** The program fosters the formation and strengthening of local community groups (Kelompok Masyarakat Pengawas (POKMASWAS), Kelompok Sadar Wisata (POKDARWIS), Kelompok Pengolah dan Pemasar (POKLASAR) Ikan), who collaboratively manage the Gili Balu tourism area. This community involvement leads to a sense of ownership and stronger stewardship of the ecosystem, exemplified by anecdotal evidence of increasing fish populations.
- **Improved Conservation Effectiveness (Evika Scores).** The effectiveness evaluation value (Evika) for the Gili Balu conservation area showed significant improvement, rising from approximately 48.50% in 2023 to 74.85% in 2024 following targeted interventions and data-informed decision-making. This aligns with similar successes in other Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Management Project - Coral Triangle Initiative (COREMAP-CTI) program locations in NTB.
- **Strategic Location.** Gili Balu, as the "gateway" to Sumbawa, offers a strategic location for tourism development that benefits the wider region.

## Key Challenges

- **Low Understanding of Sustainable Tourism Concepts.** A significant challenge is the limited understanding of eco-tourism principles among the local population (only 10% are familiar with the concept) and, at times, local government officials who prioritize physical infrastructure over sustainable practices.
- **Balancing Conservation with Economic Needs.** There's a constant tension between maintaining the natural carrying capacity of the ecosystem (limiting tourist numbers) and the local community's need for immediate income and livelihood.
- **Inadequate Government Support and Regulation.** Lack of robust regulatory frameworks and insufficient financial support from local government hinder program progress. Tourism budgets are often minimal and consumed by operational costs like salaries. There's also a perceived lack of seriousness in supporting tourism-related UMKM.
- **Premature Retribution and Misaligned Expectations.** The regional public service agency (BLUD) collecting retribution from boatmen (tourism boat operators) is seen as premature, as these businesses are still in their nascent stages. Additionally, local government stakeholders sometimes expect the company to assume responsibilities outside its function, such as sea patrols or law enforcement against illegal activities, which fall under government authority.
- **Human Resource and Operational Gaps.** Despite training, challenges remain in ensuring boatmen and tourism operators fully adhere to sustainable management guidelines. There's a lack of supporting infrastructure for safety (e.g., lifeguards) and difficulty in securing continuous operational funding for such initiatives through government channels.
- **Lack of Integrated Tourism Ecosystem.** The absence of fully formed and supportive tourism associations like the Association of The Indonesian Tours and Travel-Agencies (ASITA) makes it challenging to create a cohesive tourism ecosystem.

Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

## Lesson Learned

- **Prioritize Fundamental Development Over Physical Infrastructure.** Investing in human resource development and establishing sound governance and understanding among stakeholders is crucial before focusing heavily on physical infrastructure. Past experiences show that physical infrastructure without community capacity building often leads to abandoned facilities.
- **Continuous Awareness and Education are Essential.** Ongoing awareness campaigns and capacity building are vital to internalize the distinct concept of eco-tourism versus mass tourism among both communities and local government officials.
- **Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation are Key for Impact Assessment.** Having robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks at both project and departmental levels (including calculating Social Return on Investment - SROI) helps in tracking progress, measuring impact, and informing future interventions.
- **Internal Environmental Initiatives Can Seed Broader Social Impact Programs.** The program's origin from AMMAN's internal environmental monitoring efforts in Gili Balu demonstrates how corporate environmental stewardship can naturally lead to broader social impact and community development initiatives.
- **Strategic Investment Beyond Regulatory Mandates Creates Positive Legacy.** Allocating resources to areas like Gili Balu, even if outside the company's direct "ring 1" operational obligation, showcases a commitment to regional development and legacy building beyond mere compliance, leading to broader positive impacts and a strengthened social license to operate.
- **Community-Led Conservation Enhances Effectiveness.** Empowering and training local communities to protect their marine resources (e.g., against illegal fishing) directly contributes to ecosystem health and sustainability, as seen with the increase in fish population in the operational areas.
- **Holistic Stakeholder Collaboration is Imperative.** For successful sustainable tourism, it's essential to involve and align all stakeholders, including ferry operators, to ensure their activities do not harm the environment, even if they are not direct partners in the program.

# Transferable Strategies

Based on the evaluation of the community-based ecotourism ventures in Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu, common strategies that can guide similar initiatives elsewhere can be summarized as follows:

- Anchor Tourism in Local Assets and Culture: All three ventures have succeeded by leveraging their unique natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- Ensure Community Ownership and Inclusive Governance: Governance structures should prioritize shared responsibility, transparency, and community decision-making to foster ownership and accountability.
- Build Capacity Through Continuous Training and Education: Long-term education and skill-building should be prioritized so community members remain equipped to run and sustain the venture.
- Emphasize Sustainable Financing and Economic Circulation: Locally controlled ownership models that reinvest earnings in local priorities and maintain community control over finances provide lasting viability.
- Foster Partnerships That Respect Local Autonomy: External support should build capacity, not dependency, and should strengthen rather than override community leadership.
- Adapt Infrastructure Development to Real Needs: Initial focus should prioritize governance, training, and community readiness before investing in large-scale infrastructure.
- Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt Continuously: Regular monitoring and evaluation systems should be integrated within operations to ensure accountability,

These strategies, when adapted to local contexts, offer a practical foundation for launching or revitalizing community-based ecotourism initiatives with a focus on sustainability, equity, and resilience.

# A Replicable CBET Business Model

## The Model

Using the Business Model Canvas Framework and based on the lessons learned from the Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu ventures, a composite Business Model for Community-Based Ecotourism is illustrated below.

## Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) Business Model

### Infrastructure

#### Key Partners

- Local government (policy, infrastructure support)
- NGOs (training, mapping, environmental education)
- Universities/research centers (monitoring & capacity building)
- Corporate CSR programs (e.g., funding, technical assistance)
- Community-based groups (POKDARWIS, forest users, etc.)

#### Key Activities

- Develop and maintain ecotourism sites (natural & cultural)
- Train local hosts, guides, artisans
- Manage visitor flow and safety
- Monitor environmental and financial performance
- Marketing and promotion (incl. digital platforms)

#### Key Resources

- Natural and cultural heritage assets (forests, reefs, rituals)
- Community skills and traditions
- Homestays and basic infrastructure
- Community institutions (governance, savings groups)
- Conservation and ecotourism knowledge

### Offering

#### Value Proposition

- Authentic nature-based and cultural experiences
- Locally hosted, community-run tourism
- Environmental conservation that is integrated with livelihoods
- Safe, immersive, educational travel
- Economic benefits that remained with the community

### Customers

#### Customer Relationships

- Personalized and guided experiences
- Transparent storytelling (of heritage and impact)
- Community interaction and hospitality
- Feedback loops for adaptive improvement

#### Channels

- Online booking platforms
- Social media, blogs, YouTube storytelling
- Local tour operators
- Word-of-mouth and networks (e.g. university ties, NGO partners)

#### Customer Segments

- Domestic ecotourists and student travelers
- International eco-conscious tourists
- Adventure and cultural travelers
- Educational institutions and researchers

### Finances

#### Cost Structure

- Training and capacity building in hospitality, entrepreneurship, finance etc.
- Maintenance of ecotourism sites and trails
- Environmental monitoring and safety systems
- Marketing and communication
- Local governance (meetings, coordination)

#### Revenue Streams

- Accommodation (homestays, lodges)
- Guided tours and nature treks
- Cultural performances, food experiences
- Sales of local crafts and produce
- Grants and corporate support (startup or conservation-based)
- Carbon reduction opportunities

## Based on the above Business Model Canvas, key aspects of the model can be summarized as follows:

### Value Proposition

- Authentic
- Sustainable
- Locally run tourism

### Key Partners

- NGOs
- Local government
- Universities
- CSR

### Revenue Streams

- Homestays
- Eco-tours
- Cultural events
- Grants

### Cost Structure

- Capacity building
- Maintenance
- Environmental monitoring

Source: Gilibalu TransformaSea

# Conclusion

The evaluation of community-based ecotourism (CBET) ventures in Nglanggeran, Merabu, and Gili Balu reveals that when designed and managed with integrity, CBET offers a viable model for inclusive, sustainable development rooted in local leadership. These ventures demonstrate that environmental protection, economic vitality, and cultural resilience are not mutually exclusive; they reinforce one another when communities are empowered to lead.

Across all three sites, a shared pattern emerges. CBET flourishes when it is built on authentic community ownership, supported by inclusive institutions, and anchored in the cultural and ecological strengths of the area. In Nglanggeran, local stewardship has revived dryland agriculture and protected volcanic landscapes while generating stable income through agro-tourism and geo-tourism. In Merabu, customary Dayak knowledge and legally secured forest rights have combined to create a powerful model of forest-based livelihoods and heritage preservation. In Gili Balu, partnerships between the private sector, government, and local groups have mobilized a community once dependent on fishing into stewards of marine ecosystems.

These cases also underscore the importance of continuous capacity building, responsive governance, and measured scaling. Each community succeeded not by chasing mass tourism, but by shaping tourism to match their environment and social fabric. Efforts to reinvest in local infrastructure, enforce visitor limits, and track ecological changes all serve to protect both livelihoods and landscapes over time.

At the same time, challenges remain. Uneven benefit sharing, infrastructure deficits, market access, and climate vulnerabilities continue to test the resilience of these models. In Gili Balu, for example, regulatory ambiguity and limited ecosystem literacy present risks of overuse and unintended exclusion. In Nglanggeran and Merabu, seasonal volatility and limited digital integration hinder long-term income security. Addressing these issues will require sustained policy support, adaptive funding mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder collaboration that respects local leadership.

Importantly, CBET also presents real opportunities to enhance carbon absorption and reduce environmental footprints. CBET, when rooted in ecosystem-based planning, can actively contribute to Indonesia's carbon goals and climate resilience.

In this context, philanthropic institutions and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs have an essential role to play in supporting and sustaining CBET. These ventures align with core philanthropic priorities by delivering integrated environmental, social, and economic impact, making them ideal platforms for strategic, long-term investment.

To scale and deepen the effectiveness of CBET models, philanthropy must evolve beyond episodic grants and toward strategic engagement. This includes capacity building, patient capital, network facilitation, knowledge transfer, and ecosystem support, all of which are necessary to sustain CBET initiatives while preserving community ownership and ecological integrity. By engaging with CBET, philanthropy gains a tangible and proven mechanism through which to advance climate goals, biodiversity conservation, local economic empowerment, and inclusive participation, contributing directly to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CBET, therefore, is not only a tourism strategy; it is a vehicle for systemic, regenerative change.

The broader lesson is clear: CBET is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a replicable strategy when rooted in equity, ecology, and trust. The ventures profiled here offer more than tourism products; they serve as living laboratories for sustainable development. They show how rural communities, when given agency and resources, can become effective custodians of biodiversity, culture, and prosperity.

As Indonesia and other nations confront urgent environmental and economic challenges, CBET provides a tested, locally adaptable pathway toward achieving the SDGs. It reconnects people with the land, builds livelihoods from stewardship, and transforms tourism into a tool for regeneration. With the right philanthropic and institutional support, these community-driven models can grow, inspire, and lead the way toward a more inclusive and resilient future.

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## FILANTROPI INDONESIA

Perhimpunan Filantropi Indonesia (PFI) is a non-profit and independent organization established to advance the philanthropic sector in Indonesia. Our strategic mission is to increase the number and quality of philanthropy in Indonesia as a means to strengthen the role of civil society in the country in social, humanitarian and environmental development through strengthening institutional infrastructure and developing space for philanthropy and the non-profit sector. As a Philanthropy Hub, PFI is the central platform for philanthropists and credible thought leaders to encourage strengthening the philanthropy ecosystem in Indonesia to achieve sustainable development in Indonesia.

## SEBUMI

Sebumi is Indonesia's first sustainable lifestyle social enterprise, empowering people to make conscious choices for sustainability. Based on a love for nature, Sebumi promotes a shift from an ego-centric mindset to an eco-centric awareness for the well-being of the ecosystem. Its products and services are designed to foster meaningful connections with oneself, others, and nature. Sebumi envisions a world where caring for and sharing with the Earth becomes a tangible mission in everyday life.

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The IPMI Case Center, established in February 2016, represents the distinguishing character of the IPMI Institute, the pioneer in adopting the case method approach in Indonesia. Benchmarking itself to cases from the Harvard Business School, the center aspires to produce a continual flow of new and relevant cases of such caliber, made possible through its various strategic partnerships with a wide array of leading organizations on topics currently critical to the business world as well as to the future leaders in IPMI's various management programs.


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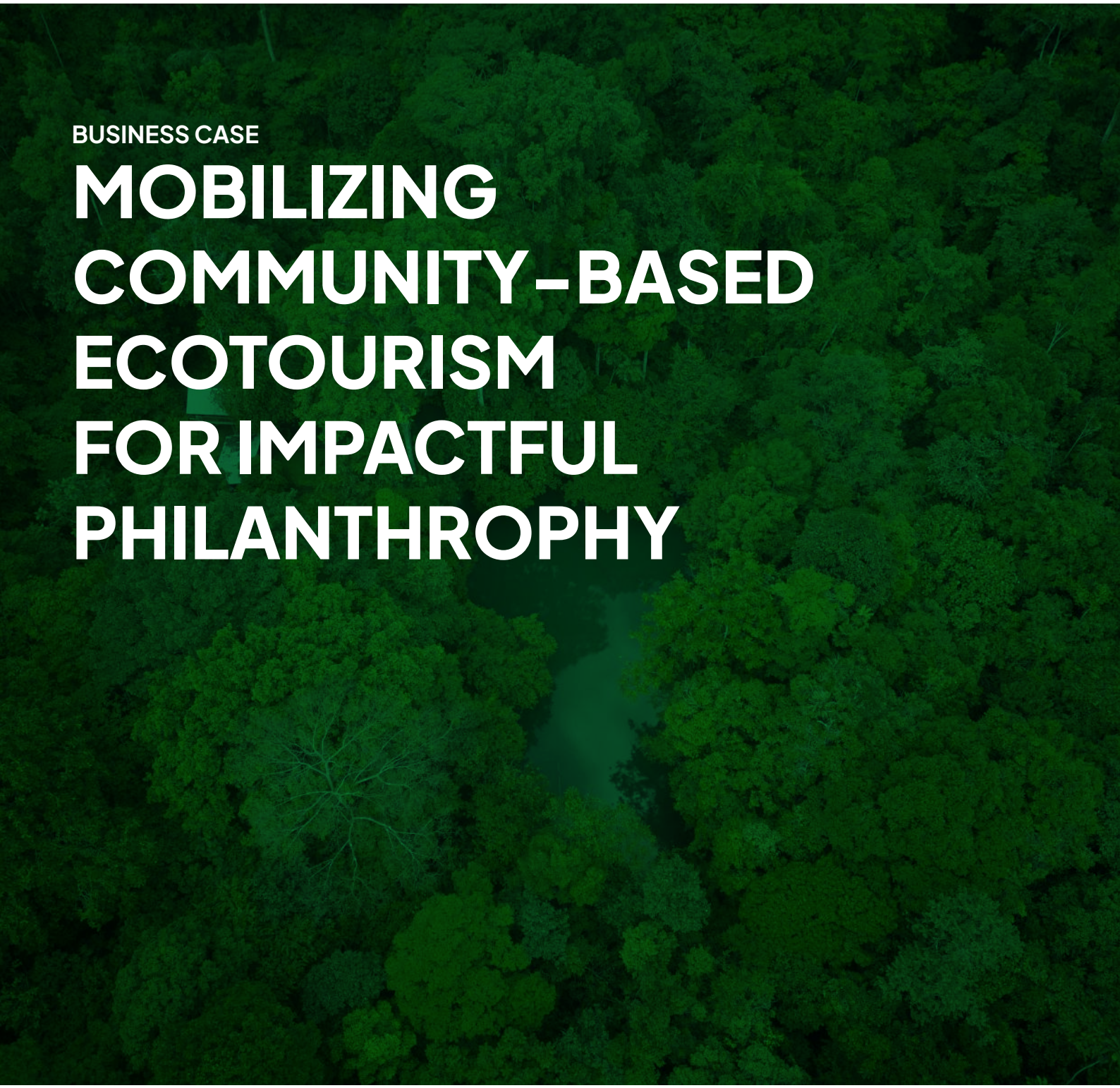
BUSINESS CASE

# MOBILIZING COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM FOR IMPACTFUL PHILANTHROPHY

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