Communicating climate change policy to people in rural area

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Abstract. Climate change is a real problem threatening all human beings in the world. Therefore, everyone has a responsibility to reduce the climate change impacts. Based on research, opinion leaders can play various important roles in the societal life. One of them is to disseminate government policies in rural area. This study focused to examine opinion leaders’ strategy to communicate climate change policy in rural area. This research employed descriptive qualitative method. The data were taken through interviews, observation and documentation. The results showed that the opinion leaders employed various formal and informal strategies to communicate climate change policy to their community. They were evidently important actors to boost the successful of climate change policy implementation. This research confirmed that opinion leaders especially in rural area posits important roles in the societal life.

1. Introduction
Climate change is an urgent global problem. This problem cannot be solved without global action [1], [2], [3]. Both international and domestic cooperation is needed to address climate change. There is no time to argue who is the most responsible to deal with this global threat because climate change is the responsibility of all of us around the world. Indonesia as the world’s largest island country has made various climate change policies ranging from national, regional, and local levels. One of the policies at the local level is the climate village program. The goal of the policy is to strengthen the adaptation and mitigation of climate change at the local level.

This policy has been implemented since 2012 and then transformed into a national movement to reduce climate change impacts. Now, many locations in Indonesia have been recognized as climate villages. Pendulan Hamlet is an example of climate villages that have implemented various adaptation and mitigation actions since the beginning of the policy until today. It means that this hamlet has performed good practices in increasing climate resilience [4]. At its peak, this hamlet won an award from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in 2016 as a climate village.

This success cannot be separated from the ability of opinion leaders in the hamlet to communicate climate change policy to villagers so they are encouraged to actively participate in implementing adaptation and mitigation actions such as yard optimization, waste bank management, save water and electricity [5], [6]. As is known, in the community especially in rural areas there is a group with the ability to persuade many people called opinion leaders. They played important role in communicating and disseminating knowledge within their area [7], [8], [9]. This research aims to describe the opinion leaders’ communication strategies to communicate the climate village as a climate change policy.
2. Materials and method
Pendulan Hamlet was chosen purposively as a case study. This research employed the descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected by interviews, observation, and document studies. The interviews were mainly conducted with the opinion leaders of Pendulan Hamlet. A total of six competent informants were chosen purposively [10]. Meanwhile, the observation and document studies were used to enrich the data. The data were analyzed by using an interactive model. Data analysis involving data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verifying [11]. The results then are presented narratively [12].

3. Results and discussion
3.1. Climate village as a climate change policy
According to the Ministry of Environment Forestry, a climate village is an action program to strengthen adaptation and mitigation of climate change at the local level to improve the understanding of climate change, to reduce climate change impacts, and to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change. This program now becomes a national movement in dealing with climate change. In addition, this program was also designed to encourage the active participation of all stakeholders and to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change and its contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions [13]. Viewed from its scope, this program can be categorized as a climate change policy. A policy that made a response to address climate change by considering the contextual situation [14], [15], [16].

3.2. Offline and online communication as strategies in communicating climate change policy
3.2.1. Offline communication. Offline communication is communication that is carried out directly both personally and in groups without an intermediary. The opinion leaders used various opportunities to carry out offline communication strategies including face-to-face communication or gethok tular, or door-to-door. They routinely visited each of the households to ensure that all of them received adequate information related to climate change issues as well as climate village as a climate change policy. Through this strategy, they can communicate more closely with villagers where they can explain more comprehensively and in detail so that villagers can understand the importance of implementing climate village programs by carrying out adaptation and mitigation actions. For the opinion leaders, this strategy is the best way to approach the villagers.

In addition, the opinion leaders also used various other meetings, such as hamlet meetings, community meetings and religious meetings. In the hamlet meetings, they persuaded the people to take adaptation and mitigation actions and explained the benefits for their own hamlet. Meanwhile, the opinion leaders also took advantage of community meetings for examples social gatherings (arisan) dan family welfare empowerment forums to strengthen the importance of implementing climate village and how to perform it. The opinion leaders also convinced the people in the religion meetings such sermons to protect the environment and reduce climate change impacts. They cited religious texts to reinforce their communication and explanation on the climate village and climate change issues. They wanted the people to know that adaptation and mitigation actions are in line with religious values.

3.2.2. Online communication. Online communication is communication performed by using internet-based information and communication technology. The opinion leaders were active in communicating and disseminating information on climate change issues and how to cope with them in order to reduce climate change impacts. They used Whatsapp as one of the instant messaging applications to communicate and disseminate climate change policy. By using Whatsapp they can share messages, photos, videos, audio, links, documents that are necessary to enrich people’s understanding and knowledge about important issues related to climate change.
Good communication strategies performed by the opinion leaders related to the climate village program have proven to be able to raise awareness and initiative of the community to participate actively. This is in line with the spirit of the climate change program that is to strengthen local community initiatives to implement adaptation and mitigation actions to reduce climate change impacts. All of the strategies above are means of the opinion leaders in communicating climate village as a climate village policy to people in Pendulan Hamlet. However, according to the key informants, gethok tular or face-to-face communication or door-to-door communication was the best communication strategy to communicate information on climate change, adaptation and mitigation actions, and climate village programs. One thing is for certain that good communication strategies can encourage the people in the village to contribute to responding the climate change. The opinion leaders play important role in communicating and informing many climate change issues.

4. Conclusion

Opinion leaders have proven to be important figures in communicating dan disseminating climate change policy to the people. They are using offline and online communication strategies such as face-to-face communication or gethok tular, hamlet meetings, community meetings, religious meetings, and instant messaging app. As part of their community, opinion leaders have a great potential to influence the community. They can encourage the community to be actively participated in implementing the climate village program as one of the climate change policies. As this study has revealed the opinion leaders’ important roles at the local level (village or rural areas), the local government is expected to maximize opinion leaders’ roles in communicating climate change policy or other government policies. Significantly, close collaboration and cooperation between them will bring kindness to the community.

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Acknowledgment
We would like to thank all informants who provided valuable information during the data collection especially Mrs. Suharjiyem. In addition, we would also like to thank Mr. Wagiharto as the Pendulan Hamlet chief for his precious help during the field research

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