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Evidence-Based Accountability of Community Social Workers in Verifying Single Socio-Economic Data in Urban Villages

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Abstract
This community service program (PkM) aimed to strengthen the accountability of Community Social Workers (Pekerja Sosial Masyarakat, PSM) in the verification and validation (Verval) of the National Socio-Economic Single Data (Data Tunggal Ekonomi dan Sosial Nasional, DTSEN) in Nyengseret Urban Village, Astanaanyar Sub-district, Bandung City, a densely populated area dominated by the informal sector and therefore vulnerable to inclusion and exclusion errors in social assistance targeting. The program applied Action Research with a facilitation method, combined with the People-Process-Tools framework and Human-Centered Design principles. Data were gathered through participatory forum discussions, field observation, and document review. At the progress stage reported here, the program has produced a participatory forum involving residents, PSM, and urban village officials; a root-cause map across the three dimensions; and an initial design of a Visual Verval Kit and a simple digital form that have not yet been field-tested. A critical analysis of institutional documentation of the Community Social Workers Association (IPSM) of Bandung City and the Basic Technical Guidance for PSM indicates that PSM act as local social intermediaries who connect residents' realities, data verification, and social services, so their accountability cannot be reduced to administrative compliance. The article explores Data-to-Service Accountability as a conceptual lens for strengthening evidence-based Verval governance and explicitly distinguishes empirical findings, analysis, and planned follow-up. The practical contribution is a map of needs for more humane Verval instruments, while the academic contribution is a repositioning of PSM within the governance of social welfare data at the urban village level.

Keywords: *Accountability; National Socio-Economic Single Data; Human-Centered Design; Community Social Worker; Action Research.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The accuracy of social assistance targeting is determined not only by program design and database quality but also by the quality of field verification (Gülmez, 2026). At the urban village level, the verification and validation (Verval) of the National Socio-Economic Single Data (*Data Tunggal Ekonomi dan Sosial Nasional*, DTSEN) is carried out by local actors who deal directly with residents, namely Community Social Workers (*Pekerja Sosial Masyarakat*, PSM) (Irvan and Hidayat, 2026; Sinulingga et al., 2026). The accountability of Verval results therefore depends on how PSM obtain, record, and account for information about residents' conditions (Rustanto et al., 2026).

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Nyengseret Urban Village (*Kelurahan Nyengseret*), Astanaanyar Sub-district, Bandung City, is a dense urban area of 38 ha. According to the 2024 Urban Village Profile Document, its population is 11,102, whereas the official service of the Bandung City Government records 11,315 for the same area (Soeherman et al., 2023). This difference between sources is an early indication that the updating of population data at the urban village level still needs strengthening (Wicaksono et al., 2026). In terms of economic structure, residents' livelihoods are dominated by traders (2,092 people) and laborers (805 people), so most households work in the informal sector, with fluctuating income and assets that are often mixed with business capital (Hendayani et al., 2024). At the sub-district and city levels, Astanaanyar Sub-district has 70,193 inhabitants with a density of 24,288 per km^2, while Bandung City has 2,528,163 inhabitants, a Human Development Index of 83.75, and a poverty rate of 3.87 percent in March 2024 (Jalil and Sutantri, 2024).

This dominant informal sector creates a grey area in identifying residents' welfare status (Saefullah et al., 2026). The literature on the targeting of social protection programs shows that even asset-based instruments still face substantial risks of inclusion and exclusion errors, especially when household economic conditions are hard to represent statically (Bowen et al., 2020; Edwards, 2024). In Nyengseret, this condition is aggravated by high resident mobility and by informal income that is not easily verified through conventional administrative instruments.

Within the urban village governance ecosystem, the Community Social Workers Association (*Ikatan Pekerja Sosial Masyarakat*, IPSM) holds the mandate as the field implementer of data verification and validation (Verval) (Dastara et al., 2022). However, the Verval process currently in use remains top-down, relies on complicated manual instruments, and gives little consideration to residents' psychological side while sensitive information is being elicited (Dobler et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025). This condition is in line with findings in the street-level bureaucracy literature in countries with developing institutional capacity, which show that field workers often face resource and accountability gaps that encourage informal practices in carrying out their duties (Chang and Brewer, 2023; Wu et al., 2018).

Documentary primary data in the form of minutes of a meeting on DTSEN between the IPSM of Bandung City and the Head of the Bandung City Social Affairs Office on 3 September 2025 show that, institutionally, PSM and *Karang Taruna* are positioned as part of the Social Welfare Potentials and Resources (*Potensi dan Sumber Kesejahteraan Sosial*, PSKS) that can become frontline actors of verification and validation, while Sub-district Social Welfare Workers (*Tenaga Kesejahteraan Sosial Kecamatan*, TKSK) are positioned as part of the social pillars that take part in delivering social welfare (Novarina et al., 2025). This documentary finding broadens the understanding that the Verval problem in Nyengseret is not merely a technical data-collection issue in a single urban village but part of a social welfare governance ecosystem involving actors at the city, sub-district, and urban village levels (Kinder et al., 2022). The position of informal actors in social service decision-making has also been found in other developing-country contexts, where informal third-party actors help shape Verval decisions at the street level (LeRoux and Wright, 2010) (Farwa & Henman, 2023).

Drawing on the situation analysis and initial discussions with the partner, priority problems were mapped using Problem Tree Analysis, which places the validity and accountability of Verval results as the core problem, with root causes spread across the three dimensions of People, Process, and Tools, as summarized in Table 1 (Indrayanto et al., 2022).

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Table 1. Partner's Priority Problem Formulation

Aspect	Problem Formulation
Impact	Inaccurate targeting of social assistance, which triggers social jealousy among residents and declining public trust in the urban village government.
Core Problem	Low validity and accountability of DTSEN Verval results carried out by PSM.
Root Cause – Tools	Manual verification instruments based on paper forms are bureaucratic, complicated, and have few visual elements, making them hard to use for PSM members, most of whom are not academics.
Root Cause – People	Limited empathic communication skills of PSM members in eliciting sensitive information (assets and debts) from residents who are socially their neighbors or part of their own community.
Root Cause – Process	No participatory verification Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is yet available; data collection still relies on memory or assumptions rather than physical evidence (evidence-based).

Source: Results of the focus group discussion with IPSM Nyengseret management and the authors' analysis (2026)

The three root causes are interrelated and cannot be resolved separately. A simpler instrument (Tools) will not mean much without adequate communication competence (People), and conversely, good communication competence still requires clear work procedures so that verification results can be accounted for (Process). This framework is the basis for formulating the solutions presented in the Method section.

Based on the above, this article aims to: (1) report the progress-stage achievements of the community service program (PkM) in strengthening PSM accountability in DTSEN Verval in Nyengseret Urban Village; (2) explain the solution design on the People, Process, and Tools dimensions developed together with the partner; and (3) discuss the position of PSM in welfare data governance at the urban village level and explore the Data-to-Service Accountability framework as its conceptual lens. The question addressed is how the evidence-based accountability of PSM can be strengthened in the DTSEN Verval process at the urban village level. Because the activity is still ongoing, the article consistently distinguishes empirical findings, analytical results, and follow-up agendas that cannot yet be claimed as achievements.

2. METHOD

2.1 Approach and Type of Activity

This activity uses an Action Research approach with a facilitation method (Muchtar et al., 2026). In this approach, the implementation team does not position itself as an instructor who transfers knowledge in one direction but as a facilitator who accompanies the partner through iterative cycles of problem identification, joint reflection, solution development, trial, and improvement. The approach is combined with the People-Process-Tools framework to map root causes in a structured way and with Human-Centered Design principles to ensure that the resulting solutions fit the needs and ways of working of PSM in the field (Moldabaev, 2026).

This approach was chosen because the Verval problem concerns the daily work practices of PSM, which can only be understood and improved together with the practitioners themselves. The team's position as facilitator allows PSM to become owners of the solution, so that the resulting instruments and procedures are more likely to continue to be used after the accompaniment ends.

2.2 Location, Partners, and Timeframe

The activity was carried out in Nyengseret Urban Village, Astanaanyar Sub-district, Bandung City, over eight months, involving the management and members of IPSM, resident representatives, and Nyengseret Urban Village officials as the main partners. Partners were involved according to their roles in the Verval process: IPSM management and members as field implementers, residents as the parties being verified, and urban village officials as users of the verification results.

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2.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques were participatory forum discussions (Focus Group Discussion), field observation, and document review, namely the 2024 Nyengseret Urban Village Profile Document and the official service data of the Bandung City Government. As complementary documentary primary data, the team also reviewed four digital documentations of institutional activities relevant to the DTSEN Verval context: (1) minutes of the DTSEN discussion between the IPSM of Bandung City and the Head of the Bandung City Social Affairs Office; (2) documentation of the Basic Technical Guidance for PSM held by the Bandung City Social Affairs Office; and (3) and (4) documentation of the evaluation of the household kitchen waste reduction program and of the provision of Supplementary Feeding (PMT) to 25 stunted toddlers in Nyengseret Urban Village. These four documents are treated as secondary-documentary data to enrich interpretation, not as evidence of the direct involvement of the implementation team or the Nyengseret IPSM in those activities, since the available documentation does not show such direct involvement.

2.4 Solution Design

To address the three root causes, the implementation team offers solutions developed through Human-Centered Design (HCD) principles, a design approach that positions PSM as co-creators, not merely training participants. The solutions are designed in three phases aligned with the Empathize-Define-Ideate-Prototype-Test-Institutionalize cycle: (1) an inspiration phase, in the form of shadowing PSM on duty to understand the technical and emotional obstacles they face; (2) an ideation or co-design phase, in the form of jointly designing a new verification instrument; and (3) an implementation phase, in the form of piloting the prototype in one selected neighborhood unit (Rukun Warga, *RW*) before it is standardized into an urban village SOP.

On the Tools dimension, the designed solution is the Visual Verval Kit, an illustrated pocket book containing poverty indicators in visual form, together with a simple digital form. Unlike a mere visual guide, this kit is intended to function as a field decision-support tool that guides PSM through who is verified, which indicators are checked, what evidence can be used, how discrepancies are clarified, and when a case needs to be escalated to the authorities. This approach is important because the final decision on residents' welfare status remains the authority of the government, while PSM produce field information that can be accounted for.

On the People dimension, the solution is communication training directed specifically at social assessment competence, covering how to open a conversation, explain the purpose of verification, request consent, elicit sensitive information without judgment, and close the verification by giving residents an understanding of how their data will be followed up. On the Process dimension, the solution is the drafting of a participatory Verval SOP that regulates the accountability cycle comprehensively, from receiving a case indication to correction mechanisms and the protection of data confidentiality, so that it does not stop at interview procedures alone.

2.5 Facilitation Cycle and Evaluation

The Action Research facilitation cycle at the reported progress stage comprises the following. First, problem identification and joint reflection, carried out through the "Empathy Map" FGD with IPSM management to map psychological and technical challenges in the field, together with an analysis of DTSEN indicator documents; this stage has been carried out and documented through participatory forum discussions. Second, joint solution development through a co-design workshop, which has produced the design direction for the Visual Verval Kit and the digital form, although the final prototype is still being refined. Third, a field trial and simulated use of the instruments, and fourth, iterative improvement and institutionalization through ratification of the SOP by the *Lurah* (village head), both of which are scheduled for the next implementation stage and had not been carried out when this report was prepared. Process evaluation is carried out through partners' attendance and activeness during co-design, while outcome evaluation at the next stage is planned to use pre-tests and post-tests of understanding and the System Usability Scale applied to the instrument prototype.

2.6 Data Processing and Analysis

Data from the FGD, observation, and document review were processed qualitatively and descriptively. Findings were compared across sources (source triangulation), grouped into the People, Process, and Tools dimensions, and then linked to an accountability framework and the street-level bureaucracy literature to interpret the position of PSM in DTSEN Verval. Each finding was classified by its status, namely empirical

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achievement, analytical result, or follow-up agenda, so that readers can distinguish what has been done from what is still planned.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results Achieved at the Progress Stage

The participatory forum that brought together residents, IPSM management, and Nyengseret Urban Village officials is the main empirical achievement at this stage. The forum became a space where residents were not merely objects of data collection but also voiced their real experiences and problems concerning social welfare data collection. In addition, the team and IPSM management have mapped the root causes on the three dimensions of People, Process, and Tools, as described in the Introduction (Table 1), and have formulated the initial design direction of the Visual Verval Kit and a simple digital form. A summary of the achievement status at the progress stage is presented in Table 2, which explicitly distinguishes results achieved empirically from those still at the design or planning stage.

Table 2. Achievement Status at the Progress Stage of the PkM Implementation

Progress Aspect	Status at the Progress Stage	Nature of Achievement
Mapping of the socio-economic context	Dominance of the informal sector and the risk of inclusion/exclusion errors in Verval identified	Empirical – achieved
Participatory forum discussion	Held, involving residents, PSM, and urban village officials	Empirical – achieved
People-Process-Tools root cause mapping	Compiled through the Empathy Map FGD with IPSM management	Empirical – achieved
Design of the Visual Verval Kit and digital form	Design direction formulated; prototype not yet field-tested	In progress / planned
Participatory Verval SOP	Content framework conceptualized; not yet finalized or ratified	Planned
Field trial	Not yet carried out	Planned

Source: Authors' analysis based on the PkM implementation (2026)

Table 2 shows that three of the six progress aspects have become empirical achievements, namely context mapping, the participatory forum, and root cause mapping. These form a diagnostic foundation: the team and the partners now share an understanding of where Verval accountability is weak. The other three aspects, namely the instrument prototype, the SOP, and the field trial, belong to the solution stage, whose effectiveness can be assessed only after it has been tested.

The difference in the population figure of Nyengseret Urban Village between the Urban Village Profile Document (11,102) and the official service of the Bandung City Government (11,315) is an additional relevant empirical finding. Although not large in absolute terms, this difference reinforces the argument that the DTSEN Verval problem in Nyengseret is not merely about the absence of data but about the validity and continuous updating of data across sources.

3.2 The Position of Community Social Workers as Local Social Intermediaries

The documentary finding in the form of minutes of the DTSEN discussion between the IPSM of Bandung City and the Head of the Bandung City Social Affairs Office on 3 September 2025 provides a broader institutional context for the position of PSM. In that documentation, PSM and *Karang Taruna* are positioned as part of the Social Welfare Potentials and Resources (PSKS) that can become frontline Verval actors, while Sub-district Social Welfare Workers (TKSK) are positioned as part of the social pillars. This finding reinforces and extends the argument in the progress report that places IPSM as the spearhead of Verval at the local level: the position of PSM can be understood not merely as data collectors but as local social intermediaries that connect three domains, namely residents' social reality, the government data system, and social services or interventions.

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This understanding is in line with the literature on informal third-party actors in street-level social welfare decisions, which shows that such actors help shape Verval decisions even though they stand outside the formal bureaucratic structure. A systematic review of street-level bureaucracy in developing institutional contexts also shows that resource limitations and structural accountability gaps tend to be pushed down to the field implementation level, so that field workers face complexity that should be resolved at higher institutional levels (Mubarrok et al., 2025). The implication is that strengthening the accountability of PSM in Nyengseret cannot be separated from strengthening institutional support at the sub-district and city levels, including clarity in the division of roles among PSM, TKSK, and other PSKS.

As a consequence of this intermediary position, the accountability of PSM cannot be reduced to the ability to fill in a form correctly. Accountability covers the ability to obtain information ethically, verify factual conditions, document evidence, reduce assessment bias, and account for verification results to residents and to the government system. This understanding underlies the concept of evidence-based verification developed through this PkM, namely a simple triangulation among residents' statements, observation of actual conditions, relevant documents, the local knowledge of PSM, and official government indicators, instead of relying on a single source of evidence such as a photo of the house alone.

Thus, PSM are not at the end of the data collection chain but at the meeting point between residents and the data system. The quality of the information they produce determines how far DTSEN data reflect residents' actual conditions, so strengthening PSM is part of strengthening data governance itself.

3.3 Analysis of People-Process-Tools and Human-Centered Design Principles

On the People dimension, the documentation of the Basic Technical Guidance for PSM held by the Bandung City Social Affairs Office, with 100 participants consisting of prospective PSM and volunteers, shows that strengthening PSM capacity in Nyengseret is part of a broader agenda of PSM capacity strengthening at the city level, with materials covering social work values and principles, the duties and functions of PSM, effective communication, basic assessment, and capacity building. This finding gives the PkM a more specific contribution: if the city-level technical guidance provides basic social work competence, this PkM is directed at developing applied competence in the form of empathic communication and social assessment used specifically in the context of evidence-based Verval, so that the training designed is not general communication training but a competence directly connected to the field verification workflow. This pattern of integrating basic and applied competence through a co-design process is consistent with lessons from evaluations of the Human-Centered Design approach in community-based public services, which stress the importance of active user involvement from needs setting to solution trials so that design results can actually be used by field actors (Mukherjee et al., 2021).

On the Tools dimension, the Visual Verval Kit and the digital form are designed not merely as a visual guide but as a field decision-support tool that guides the PSM workflow from determining the verification subject to the case escalation mechanism. This principle is important because the digitalization of instruments does not automatically improve accountability. Studies of street-level bureaucracy and e-government show two complementary theses: the curtailment thesis, which highlights the reduced discretion of field implementers due to digitalization, and the enablement thesis, which highlights how technology provides additional resources for action to both field implementers and citizens. The implication is that the simple digital form developed in this PkM needs to be accompanied by indicator standards, evidence mechanisms, recording trails, and a clear validation flow, so that it does not merely move the paper form onto a digital platform without improving accountability itself. As an illustration that simple digital instruments can bring real benefits when designed together with users at the grassroots level, the development of simple digitalization in a community economic unit shows improved management and regularity of record-keeping after the instrument was adjusted to its users' needs (Borrás and Edquist, 2013).

On the Process dimension, the participatory Verval SOP is designed to cover the whole Verval accountability cycle, from receiving a case indication, initial communication with residents, observation and assessment, evidence collection, and recording of results, to clarification of discrepancies, validation or escalation to the authorities, and complaint mechanisms and the protection of data confidentiality. A conceptual framework on accountability asserts that a relationship can be called accountable when the actor has an obligation to explain and account for his or her actions to a certain forum, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences for those actions (Acciai, 2021). This framework serves as the conceptual reference in drafting the SOP stages so that every PSM verification decision has a clear forum of accountability, both to residents and to the urban village.

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This accountability framework can be mapped onto the Verval design being developed, as summarized in Table 3. The mapping is the authors' analysis and is a design; its application to PSM practice will be tested only at the field trial stage.

Table 3. Mapping of Accountability Elements onto the PSM Verval Design

Accountability Element	Application in the Verval Design	Status
Obligation to explain and account for actions	PSM record evidence and the reasons for their assessments in the Visual Verval Kit and the digital form, including a recording trail for each case	Designed, not yet tested
A forum that can ask questions and pass judgment	Residents being verified and urban village officials; the competent authorities receive escalated cases	Designed, not yet tested
Consequences for actions	Clarification and correction of discrepancies, case escalation, and complaint and data confidentiality mechanisms in the SOP	Conceptualized, not yet ratified

Source: Authors' analysis (2026), referring to Bovens (2007)

Table 3 shows that the three accountability elements can be translated into concrete work elements for PSM, so that accountability does not remain a normative demand. It should be emphasized that at this progress stage, the SOP is still at the stage of formulating its content framework and has not been formally ratified by the *Lurah*, so its sustainability still depends on achievements at the next implementation stage.

The synergy between the discretion of field implementers and structured co-creation mechanisms is also affirmed in recent studies of street-level bureaucracy, which show that involving field implementers in service design can strengthen, rather than reduce, the accountability of policy implementation (Hupe and Hill, 2007).

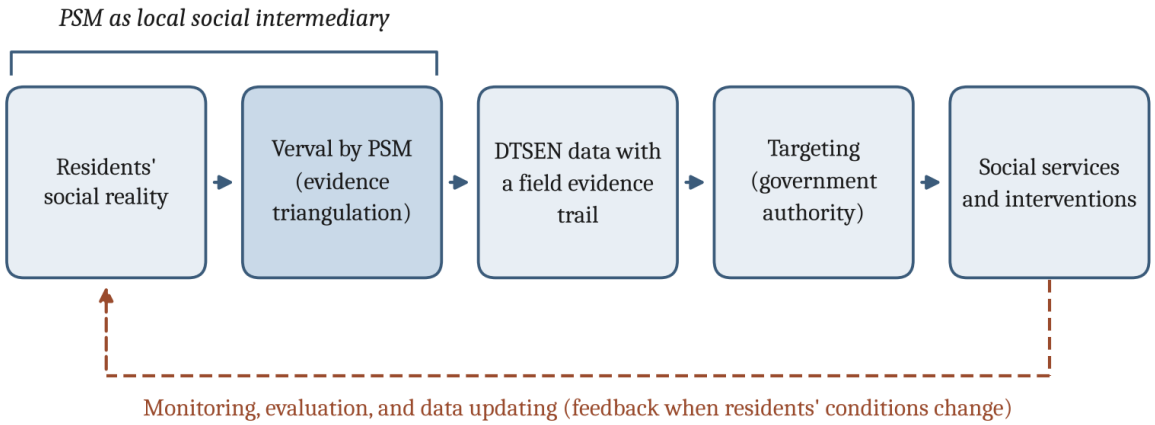
3.4 Toward a Data-to-Service Accountability Framework: A Conceptual Exploration

Based on all the findings above, this article explores the possible development of a conceptual framework called Data-to-Service Accountability, namely accountability that ensures that the field information produced by PSM does not stop as administrative data but has a clear path to decision-making and social services, while also having a feedback mechanism when residents' conditions change. This framework starts from the premise that the accuracy of social protection targeting is determined not only by statistical methods but also by the quality of contextual field verification. A study comparing targeting methods for social protection programs in Indonesia shows that both asset-based and community-based methods face limitations in accurately identifying the poor, so a combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence remains relevant for reducing targeting errors . Recent developments in Proxy Means Test methods that use area-level data features such as night-time imagery and land cover indices also show that the accuracy of statistical models in reducing inclusion and exclusion errors depends heavily on regional characteristics, including the level of urbanity and the number of sub-districts, which underscores the importance of field verification as a complement to statistical models in dense urban areas such as Nyengseret (Mariyah & Wobcke, 2025).

Figure 1 presents the framework as a chain from residents' reality to social services. PSM occupy the first two nodes, capturing residents' reality and translating it into data accompanied by evidence. The following nodes, namely targeting and service delivery, remain the authority of the government. The feedback line affirms that accountability does not end when data are submitted but continues until changes in residents' conditions are recorded in the data again. This figure is a conceptual simplification of the analysis results and has not been empirically tested.

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Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Data-to-Service Accountability in Urban Village-Level DTSEN Verval



Source: Authors' analysis (2026)

The two other documentations reviewed, namely the evaluation of the household kitchen waste reduction program and the provision of Supplementary Feeding (PMT) to 25 stunted toddlers in Nyengseret Urban Village, cannot be claimed as PkM results or IPSM activities, because the available documentation does not prove the direct involvement of IPSM in them. They are used only illustratively to show that the urban village government runs programs that require target identification and evaluation of changes in community conditions, so the logic of the data-information-targeting-intervention-monitoring-evaluation-data updating cycle is conceptually relevant to the DTSEN Verval context, without claiming a causal relationship with DTSEN data.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

This article is prepared from an interim report of a PkM that is still ongoing, so the findings presented are provisional. The four digital documentations reviewed serve as complementary secondary-documentary data to deepen contextual interpretation, not as primary data collected directly by the team, so they cannot be generalized without further verification. The field trial of the Visual Verval Kit and the digital form, and the ratification of the SOP by the *Lurah*, have not been carried out, so the effectiveness of the instruments cannot yet be measured empirically. This study is also limited to one urban village with particular socio-economic characteristics, so applying the Data-to-Service Accountability framework in other contexts requires further testing.

4. CONCLUSION

At the progress stage, this PkM shows that the low validity and accountability of DTSEN Verval in Nyengseret Urban Village stem from three interrelated problems: complicated paper instruments, the limited empathic communication skills of PSM in eliciting sensitive information, and the absence of a participatory, evidence-based verification procedure. The empirical achievements so far are a participatory forum involving residents, PSM, and urban village officials, the mapping of root causes, and the initial design direction of the Visual Verval Kit and a simple digital form.

The accountability of PSM can be strengthened by viewing them as connectors between residents, the data system, and social services, rather than merely as form fillers. From this view, strengthening needs to be carried out simultaneously on instruments that are easy to use, empathic communication skills, and procedures that ensure every verification decision is supported by evidence and can be accounted for to residents and to the urban village.

The effectiveness of this design cannot yet be stated because the field trial, the ratification of the SOP by the Lurah, and the evaluation of user acceptance have not been carried out. The next implementation stage needs to ensure that all three are completed so that the results can be tested. For policy development, the Social Affairs Office is advised to include applied evidence-based Verval competence in the Basic Technical

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Guidance for PSM at the city level and to clarify the division of roles among PSM, TKSK, and other PSKS, so that the strengthening achieved at the urban village level can be replicated in other urban villages in Bandung City.

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