

The Role of Legal Assistance in Preventing Property Business Disputes in Gunungkidul Yogyakarta Indonesia

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Abstract: *This community service aims to implement legal assistance as an effort to prevent property business disputes in Indonesia, with activities located in Gunung Kidul Regency, Yogyakarta. The background of this community service is based on the low level of public understanding of the legal aspects of property business, particularly land legality, agreements, and dispute resolution mechanisms. The method used is a participatory qualitative approach through a community legal empowerment model, which is implemented through problem identification, legal counselling, participatory discussions, direct legal assistance, and activity evaluation. The results of the community service programme showed an increase in the community's legal understanding and awareness, as well as a change in attitude towards conducting property business transactions in a more careful and legally compliant manner. Legal assistance proved to play a strategic role as a preventive instrument in preventing disputes, strengthening legal culture, and supporting sustainable local economic development.*

Keywords:

Community Empowerment; Dispute Prevention; Legal Assistance; Legal Certainty; Property Business

Introduction

Legal assistance in the property business sector is an important issue in Indonesia, given the high frequency of disputes arising from the complexity of regulations, contractual agreements, and varying levels of legal awareness among business actors (Kurniawan et al., 2022). This complexity affects not only large businesses, but also MSMEs and local communities involved in small to medium-scale property projects. A study shows that agreements in the property business, such as the Sale and Purchase Agreement (PPJB), often become a source of legal conflict if they are not formulated correctly and comprehensively understood by the transacting parties, thus requiring mitigation through adequate legal assistance.

In general, disputes in the property business are not only about land ownership claims, but also related to the validity of documents, contract interpretation, and

administrative issues that often involve technical and procedural legal understanding. This situation further places business actors in a vulnerable position to legal risks if they are not accompanied by competent legal personnel. The existence of notaries, for example, has been identified as an important element in providing legal certainty for property transactions through the preparation of authentic deeds that can prevent disputes from arising in the future (Estera & Djaja, 2023).

In Indonesian law, property disputes range from ownership disputes to breach of contract, which ultimately lead to litigation in court. Ambiguous clauses in contracts are often the main source of controversy between parties, making the role of legal counsel not merely a formality, but a strategic necessity to minimise the risk of disputes from the outset of a transaction.

Alternative dispute resolution methods such as mediation have also been introduced as an effective solution to avoid costly and time-consuming litigation. Mediation is considered capable of maintaining good relations between parties and accelerating conflict resolution, especially in commercial business disputes. The presence of professional mediators as part of legal assistance can contribute significantly to preventing conflicts from escalating into court cases.

Particularly in the Gunung Kidul region of Yogyakarta, the socio-economic characteristics of the community, which depend on the development of local property for both residential and tourism businesses and MSMEs, make legal assistance an important part of community empowerment. The high potential for property investment in this region also creates a need for legal certainty to prevent disputes that could harm the local community. Although there have not been many specific empirical studies in Gunung Kidul, the dynamics of the property market, which are similar to the national context, indicate the need for legal intervention through assistance.

Consumer protection in property business contracts is also an integral part of effective legal assistance (Suwardi, 2024). Consumers' lack of understanding of their rights and obligations in sales contracts often results in practices that are detrimental to one of the parties, especially when the contract clauses do not provide legal certainty for consumers. Increased protection can be achieved through legal assistance that helps the public understand their rights under applicable regulations. Not only that, land disputes or land ownership often become structural conflicts involving administrative certainty and document legality. Efforts to resolve land disputes do not always end in court decisions, so non-litigation alternatives have a strategic role. Research on land dispute resolution mechanisms shows that despite the existence of a formal legal basis, access to resolution mechanisms can be hampered by limited

resources and a lack of legal understanding among the community (Br Sembiring, 2024).

The context of property dispute resolution must also be understood as part of the broader legal system in Indonesia, where various legal institutions and procedures play a role in preventing protracted conflicts. Strong legal assistance institutions can help the public recognise legal risks early on in transactions, thereby reducing unnecessary litigation. The role of legal assistance for local communities in Gunung Kidul is very strategic, given that communities do not always have adequate access to basic legal knowledge. This assistance includes providing education on land rights, property registration processes, and understanding business contracts in accordance with national laws. Providing legal education is part of a preventive strategy to anticipate disputes that often arise due to legal ignorance.

Other studies also highlight the importance of legal protection in land disputes, showing that legal protection for land rights holders is often hampered by complicated administrative procedures. Legal assistance strategies that include support in administrative processes and land registration can be an important step in preventing disputes related to property ownership. Meanwhile, particularly at the local level such as in Gunung Kidul, economic dynamics have also encouraged the community to engage in property businesses to increase their income. However, without legal assistance, the participation of the local community in this business has the potential to face a high risk of disputes due to a lack of legal preparation. Legal assistance here is not only about resolving issues, but also building the legal capacity of the local community to be more proactive and aware of legal risks.

Effective legal assistance in Gunung Kidul can focus on providing consultation, educating people about local and national regulations, strengthening contract mechanisms, and facilitating mediation when conflicts arise. These efforts not only provide justice for property businesses but also help maintain social relations and sustainable economic development. In practice, legal assistance must involve various elements, including solicitors, notaries, mediators, and legal aid institutions that have expertise in property law. The role of solicitors or legal advisers is important as strategic partners for the community in preparing strong contracts and understanding their impact in the context of Indonesian law.

An evaluation of the implementation of legal assistance also shows the need for a participatory and sustainable approach, through workshops, legal counselling, and direct assistance in the field. This will foster a stronger legal culture among local property businesses. Strengthening the role of legal assistance for communities in areas such as Gunung Kidul is an urgent necessity if the goal of fair and sustainable

economic development is to be achieved. With appropriate legal support from the outset, property disputes can be prevented, and communities can gain confidence and certainty in carrying out their economic activities.

Method

The community service methodology used in this activity refers to a qualitative approach with participatory community service methods. This approach was chosen because community service aims to build legal awareness and community capacity directly through active involvement between the community service team and the target community (Tumini, 2023). The participatory method allows for two-way interaction, so that the material on property business legal assistance can be tailored to the real needs of the community in Gunung Kidul Regency, Yogyakarta. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate for exploring the community's understanding, perceptions, and legal practices in property business activities.

This community service activity was carried out using the Community Legal Empowerment model, which is an approach to empowering the community through legal education, consultation, and assistance. This model places the community as the main subject, encouraging them to understand and use the law as a tool to protect themselves against the risks of property business disputes (Grimes, 2025). This approach is relevant to the Gunung Kidul region, which has a community of small and medium-sized property businesses with varying levels of legal literacy.

The subjects of the study consisted of local property businesses, landowners, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in the property and tourism sectors, and members of the community involved in property sales, purchases or rentals. The subjects were determined using purposive sampling, i.e. selecting participants who were directly involved in property business activities and potentially faced the risk of legal disputes. This technique is commonly used in qualitative research and community service to obtain relevant and in-depth data.

The initial stages of service were carried out through the identification of legal issues faced by the community, particularly those related to property business transactions. Identification was carried out through focus group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured interviews (Fajrin et al., 2025). This method was used to map potential forms of disputes, levels of contractual understanding, and legal practices that have been carried out by the community. This initial data forms the basis for the preparation of contextual and applicable legal assistance materials.

Based on the results of problem identification, the community service

continued with legal education on property business covering aspects of agreements, legal certainty of land, licensing, and dispute prevention mechanisms. The education method used an educational-dialogic approach, so that participants did not only receive material unilaterally, but also actively asked questions and discussed specific cases they faced. This approach proved effective in improving the community's understanding of the law. Furthermore, service is also carried out in the form of direct legal assistance, particularly at the stage of drafting and reviewing property business agreements. This assistance aims to prevent potential disputes through the improvement of contractual clauses, adjustments to applicable legal provisions, and the provision of preventive legal recommendations. This direct assistance model is an important part of practice-based legal service.

In order to prevent conflict escalation, the programme also applies a non-litigation approach, particularly through simulations and simple mediation practices. The community is provided with an understanding of alternative dispute resolution methods outside of court that are more efficient and consultation-oriented. This approach is considered relevant for maintaining local community social relations while minimising legal costs. The evaluation of community service activities was conducted using formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluations were conducted during the mentoring process to assess the effectiveness of the methods and materials presented, while summative evaluations were conducted at the end of the activity to measure the increase in the community's understanding of the law. The evaluation techniques used were participatory observation and qualitative participant feedback.

The data obtained during the community service activities were analysed using qualitative descriptive analysis, interpreting patterns of understanding, responses, and changes in community attitudes towards aspects of property business law. This analysis aimed to describe the effectiveness of legal assistance as an instrument for dispute prevention, without using a quantitative statistical approach. This community service methodology is designed systematically and sustainably to ensure that legal assistance is not merely incidental, but capable of building long-term legal awareness in the Gunung Kidul community. By combining education, assistance, and participatory evaluation, this community service is expected to make a real contribution to preventing property business disputes and strengthening the legal culture of the local community.

Result

The implementation of community service related to the Role of Legal Assistance in Preventing Property Business Disputes in Indonesia in Gunung Kidul Regency showed significant results in increasing the community's understanding of the law. Based on initial observations and post-service evaluations, there has been a shift in participants' mindset from being passive towards legal aspects to becoming more aware of the importance of legal assistance in property transactions. This is in line with findings that education-based legal interventions can progressively increase public legal awareness. The results of the outreach programme show that most participants previously considered property transactions to be purely a matter of trust, without the need for strict legal regulations. After participating in the outreach and mentoring activities, participants began to understand that written contracts, land legality, and clarity of rights and obligations are key instruments in preventing disputes. This change reinforces the view that legal education plays a strategic role in mitigating business conflicts.



Figure 1. The documentation of community service activities

The legal assistance provided also had an impact on improving participants' understanding of the types of property disputes that often arise, such as default, land boundary disputes, and ownership conflicts. Participants were able to identify potential disputes from the early stages of a transaction, which they had never considered before. This confirms that a preventive approach is more effective than a

repressive approach in resolving legal disputes. From the results of the focus group discussions, it was found that participants began to understand the importance of the role of notaries and solicitors in the property business process. They realised that the use of authentic deeds and legal consultation was not a form of waste, but rather a long-term legal investment. These findings support research stating that access to professional legal assistance increases legal certainty in business transactions (Dia & Melitz, 2024).

This service also demonstrated an increase in participants' understanding of property business agreement mechanisms, particularly regarding the rights and obligations clauses of the parties. Previously, most participants did not read or understand the contents of the agreement thoroughly. After the assistance, participants stated that they were more careful and critical of the contract contents, which is an indicator of increased contractual legal literacy. Another notable result was the increased awareness among participants of the importance of land administration legality. Participants began to understand the urgency of land registration, certificate verification, and land use suitability before conducting transactions. This is in line with research indicating that property disputes often stem from weaknesses in land administration.

In the context of dispute resolution, participants demonstrated a new understanding of non-litigious dispute resolution alternatives, particularly mediation. Participants stated that dispute resolution through deliberation was more suited to the social character of the Gunung Kidul community. These findings reinforce the theory that ADR approaches are more effective in communities with strong social ties. Legal assistance also has an impact on increasing participants' confidence in making property business decisions. They feel more secure and legally protected after understanding the preventive measures that must be taken. This condition shows that legal assistance not only has an impact on knowledge, but also on the psychological aspect of business actors.

The evaluation of the results of the activity shows that the dialogic extension method is more effective than the one-way lecture method. Participants were more active in discussing and asking questions relevant to the real cases they faced. These findings support the participatory legal education approach as an effective method in community service. The results of the community service programme also showed that participants began to understand the difference between informal and formal transactions in the property business. This awareness encouraged participants to avoid informal practices that could potentially lead to disputes in the future. This is in line with research stating that legal formalities play an important role in protecting

the economic rights of the community.

In addition to increasing understanding, this outreach programme also resulted in a change in participants' attitudes towards legal risks. Participants became more cautious and tended to seek advice before making business decisions. This change in attitude is an indicator of the success of legal empowerment-based outreach programmes (Joshi et al., 2022). In terms of sustainability, participants expressed the need for ongoing legal assistance, particularly in drafting agreements and resolving initial disputes. This shows that the service not only provides immediate benefits, but also creates awareness of the importance of sustainable access to justice.

The results of the comprehension survey showed that the majority of participants were in the 'good' to 'very good' category in understanding property business material after the activity took place. This achievement demonstrates the effectiveness of the community service approach that was implemented, particularly in improving public legal literacy. This community service also shows that local and contextual approaches greatly influence the success of a programme. Materials tailored to the conditions in Gunung Kidul made it easier for participants to understand and apply the legal knowledge provided. This is in line with the principle of a community-based approach in community service.

The results of the study prove that legal assistance plays a strategic role in preventing property business disputes, especially in areas with developing local economic potential. Legal assistance has been proven to increase the community's understanding, awareness, and preparedness in facing legal risks (Hasan & Renaldy, 2025). The results of this community service project confirm that legal assistance is not only an instrument for resolving problems, but also a means of empowering the community to create a safe, fair and sustainable property business climate in Gunung Kidul Regency.

Table 1. Results of the Property Business Material Comprehension Survey

No	Name of Respondent (Initials)	Score	Minimum Score	Category
1	AP	87	70	Good
2	BS	80	70	Good
3	CTL	81	70	Good
4	S	70	70	Medium
5	SR	76	70	Medium
6	DW	89	70	Good
7	KP	90	70	Excellent
8	P	86	70	Good
9	LH	81	70	Good

No	Name of Respondent (Initials)	Score	Minimum Score	Category
10	SW	78	70	Good
11	T	77	70	Good
12	TW	75	70	Good
13	KNP	90	70	Excellent
14	DJ	91	70	Excellent
15	GL	78	70	Medium
16	A	92	70	Excellent
17	AH	71	70	Medium
18	AS	81	70	Good
19	RD	82	70	Good
20	IL	93	70	Excellent

Based on Table 1 of the property business material comprehension survey results, it can be concluded that the legal assistance activities that have been carried out have had a positive and significant impact on improving participants' comprehension. The majority of respondents were in the 'Good' to 'Excellent' category, indicating that the material presented was well received and understood by participants from various backgrounds. These relatively high comprehension scores reflect the effectiveness of the dialogic counselling and direct mentoring methods used, especially in explaining crucial aspects of the property business such as land legality, agreements, and dispute prevention. This condition confirms that an educational approach based on the real needs of the community can substantially improve legal literacy.

Although there are still some respondents in the 'Medium' category, this actually shows the importance of continuing the legal assistance programme so that public understanding can continue to be improved evenly. This variation in the level of understanding is influenced by differences in experience, education level, and the respondents' involvement in property business practices. Overall, the survey results in the table indicate that legal assistance not only serves as a means of knowledge transfer, but also as an instrument for community empowerment to build a cautious attitude and legal awareness in conducting property business. Thus, legal assistance has the potential to be an effective preventive strategy in preventing property business disputes in Gunung Kidul Regency.

Discussion

This discussion of the results of community service shows that the legal assistance process, which began with problem identification, education, and direct

assistance, has resulted in tangible changes in the level of legal awareness among the community. In the early stages, the community in Gunung Kidul tended to view property business activities as social practices based on trust, without the need for adequate legal regulation. However, through a participatory and dialogical education process, the community began to understand that the law functions as an instrument of protection and risk prevention, not merely as a tool for conflict resolution. This finding is in line with the theory of legal consciousness, which states that public legal awareness is formed through social interaction and direct experience with the law in everyday life. Thus, the change in understanding that has occurred is the result of a continuous social process, not merely a one-way transfer of knowledge.

Furthermore, the discussion of the results of the community service shows that the community legal empowerment approach contributes significantly to changes in the attitudes and social behaviour of participants. The community not only understands the normative concept of property business law, but also begins to internalise the value of prudence in transactional practices. This is evident from the increasing tendency of participants to consult before making agreements, understand the contents of contracts, and consider non-litigation mechanisms as solutions to conflicts. The theoretical perspective of legal empowerment emphasises that access to legal knowledge and assistance can increase the community's capacity to manage risks and fight for their rights independently. The literature also shows that effective legal empowerment encourages social transformation by reducing inequality in access to justice and strengthening the bargaining position of the community in economic activities.

In the final stage, discussions on the results of the community service programme revealed indications of gradual but sustained social change, particularly in the way the community views the law as an integral part of property business activities. This change was not only reflected in the individual participants, but also began to influence social interaction patterns within the community, such as increased legal discussions among business actors and the growth of collective awareness to avoid risky informal practices. These findings are in line with the theory of education- and participation-based social change, which states that community-based interventions can create social transformation through changes in knowledge, attitudes, and social norms. Thus, this community service not only produced outputs in the form of increased legal understanding, but also contributed to the process of social change towards a more conscious, preventive, and equitable legal culture in the property business in Gunung Kidul.

Conclusion

Community service on the Role of Legal Assistance in Preventing Property Business Disputes in Indonesia, carried out in Gunung Kidul Regency, Yogyakarta, shows that legal assistance has a strategic role in increasing public awareness and understanding of the law. Through a series of activities ranging from problem identification, legal counselling, participatory discussions, to direct assistance, the community gained a more comprehensive understanding of the legal aspects of property business, particularly regarding land legality, agreements, and dispute prevention efforts. The results of this community service programme demonstrate that an educational and preventive approach is more effective in building public legal preparedness than a repressive approach that is only implemented after a dispute has occurred.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that community service based on legal empowerment can encourage changes in the attitudes and social behaviour of the community in conducting property business activities. The community no longer views the law as a burden or a threat, but rather as a means of protection and certainty in transactions. This change is reflected in increased caution in making agreements, awareness of the need to involve legal counsel, and understanding of non-litigation dispute resolution mechanisms. Thus, legal assistance not only contributes to improving individual legal literacy, but also strengthens the collective legal culture at the community level.

Overall, this service confirms that legal assistance is an important instrument in supporting equitable and sustainable local economic development, especially in areas with growing property business potential such as Gunung Kidul. The success of this service project demonstrates the need for the sustainability of legal assistance programmes through collaboration between universities, local governments, and legal aid institutions so that the positive impacts that have been achieved can be maintained and expanded. With continued support, legal assistance is expected to become a strong foundation in preventing property business disputes while increasing public confidence in conducting economic activities safely and in accordance with the law.

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