



Research Article

Management Dynamics of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi in West Pasaman (1998–2023)

Iqbal Dwi Cahyo* & Syafrizal

Universitas Andalas, Indonesia

Abstract

This article examines the development and management dynamics of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi in Nagari Maligi, Sasak Ranah Pasisie District, West Pasaman Regency, from 1998 to 2023. It analyzes the cooperative's evolution and the challenges it faced in managing community-based oil palm plantations. The main issues examined are the cooperative's role in local economic development, its internal management dynamics, and conflicts involving members and external parties, particularly PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II. Using the historical method of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, the study draws on documents, field observations, and interviews with key informants. The findings show that KUD Permata Sawit Maligi contributed significantly to local welfare and conflict resolution, but also experienced internal disputes that weakened community trust. The study concludes that the cooperative's sustainability depends on transparent management, active member participation, and effective mediation in community-company relations.

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*Corresponding Author

igbaldc1801@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The development of Indonesia's oil palm plantation sector has become an important subject in studies of rural economies and social transformation. Since the 1990s, the expansion of oil palm plantations has not only driven economic growth but also generated a range of institutional dynamics at the local level. One widely implemented model is the Perkebunan Inti Rakyat (PIR) scheme, which links large companies and local communities through partnership arrangements. Under this scheme, communities participate not only as laborers but also as owners of plasma plantations managed through cooperative institutions (Firdaus, [2024](#)).

Several studies indicate that oil palm plantations can increase community income and improve rural infrastructure (Putri & Fitriasia, [2021](#)). Other studies, however, highlight problems such as land conflicts, unequal relations between companies and farmers, and the limited institutional capacity of local organizations to manage partnerships. This debate demonstrates that the effects of oil palm plantations are complex and context-dependent, varying according to the social, economic, and institutional conditions of each region (Colchester et al., [2006](#); Sahdan & Setiyawati, [2019](#); TanahKita, [n.d.](#); Trianita et al., [2018](#)).

In this context, cooperatives—particularly Village Unit Cooperatives (KUD)—play an important role as intermediary institutions linking communities, companies, and government agencies. Previous studies have often treated cooperatives primarily as economic instruments responsible for-profit distribution and plasma plantation management. More in-depth studies, however, show that cooperatives also have social and political dimensions, particularly in managing internal and external conflicts (Hardianto, [2009](#); Hertati, [2015](#); Prastanto, [2022](#); Sofiana et al., [2016](#); Widiyanti & Sunindhia, [2003](#)).

Nevertheless, an important gap remains in the literature: limited attention has been paid to the long-term internal dynamics of cooperatives, particularly leadership conflicts and their effects on institutional sustainability. In addition, most studies emphasize the economic effects of oil palm plantations, while the role of cooperatives as arenas of institutional contestation remains underexplored.

KUD Permata Sawit Maligi has functioned not only as an economic institution but also as a social and political arena mediating relations among local communities, the company, and the government. Its development, however, has not been stable. Prolonged land disputes with the company and the emergence of dual leadership within the organization indicate that the cooperative's institutional dynamics have been shaped by both internal and external factors. Studies of oil palm plantations have gradually moved beyond purely economic approaches toward more critical and multidimensional perspectives that emphasize institutions, conflict, and power relations. Accordingly, this study examines KUD Permata Sawit Maligi through the lens of leadership dynamics and conflict rather than treating it merely as an economic institution. This focus is significant because long-standing conflicts between the company and local communities have affected not only economic conditions but also the transformation of local institutions and the capacity of community organizations to sustain partnership arrangements. The study therefore seeks to explain how local institutions adapt to contestation and reconstruct relationships among communities, companies, and government actors in the context of oil palm plantation development.

METHOD

This study employs the historical method, which consists of four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Daliman, [2012](#); Gottschalk, [1986](#); Kuntowijoyo, [2005](#)). During the heuristic stage, the author collected primary and secondary sources related to the history of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi. Primary sources included the cooperative's founding archives, amendments to its Articles of Association, cooperation agreements with PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II, records of land-dispute mediation, minutes of members' meetings, and oral sources obtained through interviews with cooperative managers, members, and company representatives. Secondary sources included books, journal articles, undergraduate theses, master's theses, and previous studies relevant to the development of oil palm plantations and cooperative institutions.

The source-criticism stage involved both external and internal criticism. External criticism was used to verify the authenticity and provenance of the documents, while internal criticism assessed the credibility and consistency of their contents. To strengthen data validity, the author cross-verified documentary sources, interview accounts, and field observations. Information obtained from cooperative managers was compared with accounts from cooperative members and company representatives, as well as with available official documents. When discrepancies were identified, the author reconstructed the chronology of events using other relevant sources, compared testimonies from different informants, and situated each account within the context and interests of the respective parties. Differing perspectives were therefore not eliminated but treated as part of the historical dynamics and contestation of interests surrounding the development of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi.

During the interpretation stage, verified facts were connected and analyzed to explain leadership dynamics, land conflicts, and the changing role of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi in its relations with local communities, the company, and the government. The analysis was conducted chronologically and contextually to identify the relationships among conflict, leadership changes, and the cooperative's institutional transformation. In the final stage, historiography, the findings were organized into a systematic and analytical historical account of the development of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi and the dynamics that accompanied it.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Life of the Maligi Community

Nagari Maligi is in Sasak Ranah Pasisie District, West Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra Province. The name Maligi is derived from Mahligai, the name of a traditional *rumah gadang* that once stood in the area and served as a resting place for travelers from outside the *nagari*.

In 2017, Nagari Maligi had a population of 4,796 people in approximately 1,500 households. The main livelihoods were plantation agriculture and fisheries. The local economy comprised five

sectors: plantations, agriculture, marine and fisheries, livestock, and industry and cooperatives. The plantation sector played the largest role in the local economy, with plantation land covering 4,875 hectares, or more than one-third of the total *nagari* area.

Historically, most residents of Nagari Maligi depended on fisheries, with the majority working as fishers. Its location along the Sasak coastline made fishing the community's primary livelihood. Nagari Maligi is also known for its rich and diverse marine resources, including economically important commodities such as tuna, skipjack, and shrimp. For many years, therefore, the local economy was closely connected to the sea (Syah & Fitriisa, [2021](#)).

In the early 1980s, the Pasaman Regency government introduced a plantation-development program based on the nucleus–plasma scheme. These plantations formed part of the government's efforts to improve community welfare through the Perusahaan Inti Rakyat (PIR) program. The scheme established nucleus and plasma plantations in cooperation with private companies to support plantation-based economic development. PIR aimed to develop smallholder plantations within a mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership framework. Through this program, several areas in Pasaman Regency, including Nagari Maligi, were transformed into oil palm plantation zones (Firdaus, [2024](#)).

Oil Palm Plantations in Nagari Maligi

Oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi formed part of the expansion of the plantation sector in West Pasaman Regency, which accelerated in the late 1990s. Before oil palm was introduced, the Maligi economy was dominated by fisheries and traditional agriculture. Coastal conditions made fishing the main livelihood, while agriculture was practiced on a small scale and was largely subsistence-based (Putri & Fitriisa, [2021](#); Syah & Fitriisa, [2021](#)).

Oil palm development began when PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II entered Nagari Maligi in 1997 and signed an agreement with the *ninik mamak* for the transfer of 2,118 hectares of customary land. In 1998, the company obtained a location permit from the West Pasaman Land Office for 1,400 hectares of nucleus plantations and 2,118 hectares of plasma plantations. After five years of development, the plantations began producing in 2004, and management of the plasma plantations was subsequently transferred to KUD Permata Sawit Maligi and its members (personal interview with a KUD member, 2024).

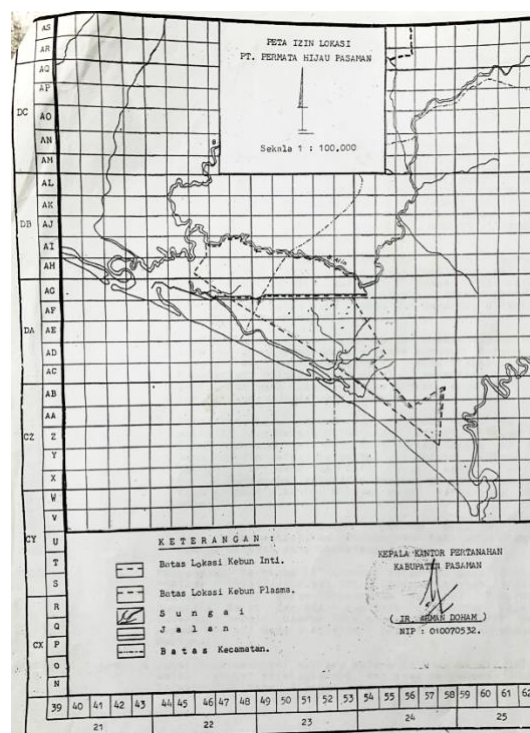


Figure 1. Map of the Location of Oil Palm Plantations in Nagari Maligi

Changes accelerated when the local government opened the area to oil palm investment as part of its economic-development policy. In 1997, PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II entered Maligi under the Perkebunan Inti Rakyat (PIR) scheme. Under this arrangement, the company managed the nucleus plantations, while the community participated as plasma smallholders. The land used for the scheme came from customary land transferred by the *ninik mamak* through deliberations involving the *nagari* and district governments.

The expansion of oil palm plantations had significant economic effects on local communities. Many residents saw oil palm cultivation as an opportunity to increase their income and improve their standard of living. Work as plasma farmers and plantation laborers provided new and relatively stable sources of income compared with fishing, which was highly dependent on natural conditions. Plantation development also contributed to infrastructure improvements, particularly roads and transportation access (personal interview with a KUD member, 2024). At the same time, oil palm expansion transformed the community's occupational structure from fishing toward plasma farming and altered previously more independent economic relations, making residents increasingly dependent on the nucleus company. The resulting partnership was asymmetrical because the company exercised greater control over plantation management, marketing, and access to production-related information. Consequently, plasma farmers had a relatively weak bargaining position, and KUD Permata Sawit Maligi was expected to help balance relations between the community and the company (Putri & Fitrisia, 2021; Syah & Fitrisia, 2021).

Nevertheless, the development of oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi was not without problems. One of the main issues concerned land control and management. In practice, discrepancies emerged between the area of plasma plantations specified in the initial agreement and the area realized in the field. This situation generated community dissatisfaction and became a source of conflict between plasma farmers and the company. Moreover, farmers' dependence on the company for plantation management and product marketing further weakened their bargaining position (Antara Sumbar, 2018; Colchester et al., 2006; Rahmah, 2020).

In this context, Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi played an important role. The cooperative was established as an intermediary institution to represent the interests of plasma farmers and facilitate relations between the community and the company. Its development was inseparable from the expansion of oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi, as KUD became the main institution responsible for managing plasma plantations, administering membership, and distributing production proceeds (Hertati, 2015; Sofiana et al., 2016).

Establishment of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi

The establishment of Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi was closely linked to the introduction of oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi in the late 1990s. The arrival of PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II brought major changes to the community's economic structure and created a need for an institution capable of representing the interests of local plasma smallholders. In this context, the cooperative was regarded as an institutional form consistent with the principles of collective action and community participation.

The idea of establishing KUD Permata Sawit Maligi emerged alongside the implementation of the Perkebunan Inti Rakyat (PIR) scheme in Nagari Maligi. Through this scheme, community members became owners of plasma plantations whose production was managed in cooperation with the company. An intermediary institution was therefore needed to facilitate relations among the community, the company, and banking institutions and to ensure the effective management of the plasma plantations. KUD was formed to perform this function (personal interview with a KUD member, 2024).

The establishment of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi began with a series of deliberations involving community leaders, *ninik mamak*, *nagari* officials, and representatives of prospective plasma farmers. These meetings addressed the cooperative's objectives, membership, and management structure. The participants eventually reached a collective agreement to establish KUD as an official institution representing the interests of plasma farmers in the management of oil palm plantations.



Figure 2. Photo of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi

The cooperative office symbolizes the institutional presence of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi in Nagari Maligi. As the administrative center of cooperative activities, it serves as a venue for members' meetings, decision-making, and interactions among members, managers, and external stakeholders. KUD Permata Sawit Maligi was officially established on March 2, 1998, and obtained legal status in accordance with prevailing regulations. In its early years, managers were elected through members' meetings with consideration for community representation and organizational capacity. The management was responsible for administering membership, establishing cooperation with the company, and managing relations with banking institutions involved in financing the development of plasma plantations (personal interview with a KUD member, 2024).

In its early years, KUD Permata Sawit Maligi faced several challenges, particularly limited human resources and a lack of experience in cooperative management. Most managers and members had limited knowledge of cooperative administration and oil palm plantation management. Nevertheless, KUD played an important role in assisting the community during the development of plasma plantations and served as a collective forum for addressing emerging problems.

Thus, KUD Permata Sawit Maligi was established in response to the Maligi community's need for an institution capable of managing its economic interests within the oil palm plantation system. KUD functioned not only as an economic institution but also as a means of strengthening the community's bargaining position in partnership relations with plantation companies (Colchester et al., 2006; Widiyanti & Sunindhia, 2003).

Membership of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi

Membership is a central element in the sustainability of Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi as a community-based economic institution in Nagari Maligi. Members generally consist of residents directly involved in the oil palm plantation program under the Perkebunan Inti Rakyat (PIR) scheme, in which community members own plasma plantations (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, 1998). KUD membership is therefore not merely administrative; it is directly connected to the control and management of economic resources in the form of oil palm plantations (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

In the early years of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, membership was dominated by residents who transferred customary or family-owned land for development as plasma plantations. Each member received a specific land allocation based on the agreement established during the initial stage of cooperation with the company (personal interview with community leaders of Nagari Maligi, 2025). Cooperative membership became a key requirement for participating in plasma plantation management and provided the basis for distributing oil palm production proceeds through the cooperative (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, 2000).

As cooperative members, plasma farmers have rights and obligations regulated by the Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART) of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi. Members have the right to attend members' meetings, express opinions, and elect or be elected as cooperative managers (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [1998](#)). They are also entitled to economic benefits from the management of plasma plantations, including profit sharing and other cooperative services. Their obligations include complying with cooperative regulations, paying required savings contributions, and maintaining the reputation and sustainability of the cooperative (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [1998](#)).

In practice, member participation in KUD Permata Sawit Maligi did not always reflect cooperative ideals. Some members actively attended meetings and participated in decision-making, while others remained relatively passive and primarily received plantation proceeds. This variation was influenced by factors such as time constraints, educational background, and members' understanding of cooperative functions and principles (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

As internal and land-related conflicts emerged, membership dynamics also changed. Dissatisfaction with management performance, particularly regarding financial transparency and plantation proceeds, led to declining trust in the cooperative among some members (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2012](#)). Relations between members and managers became less harmonious, weakening members' oversight of the cooperative's operations (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

Despite these problems, KUD Permata Sawit Maligi's membership remains the main foundation of the cooperative's sustainability. The relationship is mutually dependent: the cooperative requires member participation to perform its functions, while members depend on the cooperative to manage plasma plantations and distribute production proceeds (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

Management of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi

The management of Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi plays an important role in carrying out the cooperative's functions as an economic and social institution in Nagari Maligi. Its management structure consists of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and supervisory board, all elected through a members' meeting in accordance with the cooperative's Articles of Association and Bylaws (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [1998](#)). The management is responsible for administering the cooperative, managing relations with the plantation company, and ensuring the distribution of plasma plantation proceeds to members.

In the early years of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, management positions were largely held by community leaders who had social influence and the trust of members. The selection of managers emphasized representation and trust rather than managerial competence (personal interview with community leaders of Nagari Maligi, 2025). Despite their limited experience in cooperative management, the early managers played an important role in assisting the community during the development of plasma plantations and in establishing cooperation with PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2000](#)).

Over time, the management of KUD underwent several changes. Leadership transitions through members' meetings did not always occur in a democratic and orderly manner. In several periods, changes in management were triggered by members' dissatisfaction with managerial performance, particularly regarding financial transparency and plantation proceeds (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2010](#)). These developments indicate that KUD management was closely intertwined with competing interests among cooperative members (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

Management problems became more complex when KUD Permata Sawit Maligi became involved in land conflicts with the plantation company. Managers faced the difficult task of balancing members' demands with the cooperative's established relationship with the company (personal interview with KUD managers, 2025). Some managers' inability to handle these conflicts transparently and communicate effectively triggered internal tensions that affected the cooperative's stability.

Management tensions reached a peak with the emergence of dual leadership within KUD Permata Sawit Maligi. Two management groups claimed legitimacy as the rightful leadership, disrupting operations and services to members (personal interview with KUD members, 2025). This situation not only weakened the management function but also reduced members' trust in the cooperative as an institution expected to protect their interests (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2015](#)).

Despite these conflicts and leadership changes, KUD Permata Sawit Maligi continued to pursue organizational continuity. Consolidation efforts included forming new management and holding members' meetings as the cooperative's highest decision-making forum (personal interview with KUD managers, 2025). In subsequent periods, management faced growing demands to improve professionalism, transparency, and accountability to rebuild members' trust.

Benefits of the Cooperative for Members

Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi provides various benefits to its members, particularly in the management of plasma oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi. As a collective economic institution, the cooperative organizes members' interests so that economic benefits can be obtained collectively. Through the cooperative, members participate not only as individual plantation owners but also as part of a more structured and coordinated economic system (personal interview with a KUD Permata Sawit Maligi member, 2025; Hertati, [2015](#); Prastanto, [2022](#); Widiyanti & Sunindhia, [2003](#)).

One of the main benefits of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi is the facilitation of oil palm management and marketing. The cooperative acts as an intermediary between plasma farmers and the plantation company in transporting and selling fresh fruit bunches. By marketing production collectively through the cooperative, members reduce transaction costs and their dependence on middlemen (personal interview with KUD Permata Sawit Maligi management, 2025; Sofiana et al., [2016](#)).

In addition to providing direct economic benefits, the cooperative helps protect members' interests and strengthen their bargaining position. Individual plasma farmers occupy a relatively weak position in partnership relations with plantation companies. KUD represents members' collective interests in communicating aspirations and demands to the company and local government. This role becomes especially important when disputes arise over the realization of plasma plantations and the distribution of production proceeds (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2012](#); Colchester et al., [2006](#); Sahdan & Setiyawati, [2019](#)).

The cooperative also provides social benefits by creating a forum for communication and deliberation. Members' meetings serve as the main venue for expressing opinions, evaluating management performance, and determining cooperative policies. Through this mechanism, the cooperative fosters collective awareness and member participation in the management of shared economic resources (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

In the long term, the benefits of the cooperative extend beyond economic gains to include social sustainability. KUD Permata Sawit Maligi helps maintain social relations among members through the principles of solidarity and cooperation. Despite recurring internal conflicts and organizational changes, the cooperative remains an important institution for members facing economic uncertainty and social change in Nagari Maligi (personal interview with community leaders of Nagari Maligi, 2025).

Participation of Cooperative Management in Land Conflict Resolution

In 1998, a land dispute emerged in Nagari Maligi over land ownership and control. The dispute concerned the use of customary land that did not conform to the agreement between the Nagari Maligi community and PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II. The initial cooperation agreement stipulated that 2,118 hectares would be developed as plasma plantations and 1,400 hectares as nucleus plantations within three years. After three years, however, only 665 hectares of plasma plantations and 1,118 hectares of nucleus plantations had been realized. This discrepancy generated public anger because the plasma plantations promised to the community had not been fully developed, resulting in conflict between the

community and PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II. In this situation, KUD Permata Sawit Maligi management played a strategic role in bridging the interests of the community, the plantation company, and the local government (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2005](#); Antara Sumbar, [2018](#); Rahmah, [2020](#)).

KUD management participated in land-conflict resolution in several ways, from collecting members' complaints to communicating community demands to the company. The management served as the official representative of plasma farmers in negotiations with PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II and sought to articulate members' concerns regarding land rights, profit sharing, and the legal status of plasma plantations (personal interview with KUD Permata Sawit Maligi management, 2025).

In addition to serving as an intermediary between the community and the company, KUD management participated in mediation facilitated by the local government. These efforts sought solutions to the prolonged land conflict, which had the potential to generate social tension at the *nagari* level. KUD management nevertheless faced difficulties because it had to balance members' demands with the cooperative's limited decision-making authority over land issues (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

KUD management's participation in resolving the land conflict was not always effective. Limited managerial capacity, particularly in understanding land law and conducting negotiations, was a major obstacle. Moreover, management's position between community and company interests sometimes generated suspicion among members, especially when the conflict-resolution process produced little substantive change (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2012](#)).

Despite these limitations, KUD management's involvement in land-conflict resolution demonstrates the cooperative's broader social role in Nagari Maligi. KUD functioned not only as an economic institution but also as a collective platform for defending community land rights. This involvement formed an important part of the cooperative's management dynamics and illustrates the complexity of its role within the oil palm plantation system (personal interview with community leaders of Nagari Maligi, 2025).

KUD Permata Sawit Maligi's participation in land-conflict resolution shows that the cooperative's role extends beyond purely economic functions. Although the outcomes did not fully satisfy all parties, the involvement of KUD management remained important in reducing conflict and maintaining social stability in Nagari Maligi. This experience also highlights the need to strengthen cooperative institutional capacity in responding to complex agrarian conflicts (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2020](#); Padang TV, [2024](#)).

Emergence of Leadership Dualism

The emergence of dual leadership within Koperasi Unit Desa (KUD) Permata Sawit Maligi marked one of the most critical phases in the cooperative's history. Two management groups each claimed legitimacy as the rightful leadership. This situation did not emerge suddenly but resulted from the accumulation of internal problems over time, particularly members' dissatisfaction with managerial performance and decision-making processes (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2013](#)).

A management conflict erupted within KUD Permata Sawit Maligi in 2022, taking the form of dual leadership in which two groups claimed the right to manage the cooperative. The conflict arose when some members and former managers, dissatisfied with the elected management, formed a competing management group and sought to take control of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi (personal interview with a KUD Permata Sawit Maligi member, 2025; Dutametro, [2022](#)).

Leadership dualism was also shaped by conflicts of interest involving managers, members, and external parties. Differences in managerial responses to land disputes with the plantation company intensified internal tensions. Some members regarded management as too conciliatory toward the company, while others viewed this approach as necessary to maintain partnership stability. These differing perspectives developed into open conflict and eventually contributed to the formation of two management groups. The resulting governance crisis reflected declining member trust, limited transparency, competing leadership claims, and weak accountability mechanisms. Together, these

factors reduced the cooperative's capacity to maintain organizational cohesion and represent members' interests effectively (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

The effects of dual leadership were strongly felt by KUD Permata Sawit Maligi members. Cooperative activities could no longer function effectively because the competing management groups rejected each other's authority. Services to members were disrupted, particularly the management of plantation proceeds and the communication of members' concerns to the company. Dual leadership also weakened members' trust in the cooperative as an institution expected to protect their interests. The conflict reflected not only personal rivalry but also a broader struggle for institutional legitimacy, as both factions used different organizational mechanisms to secure recognition and authority.

Efforts to resolve the leadership dualism included mediation facilitated by the local government and the convening of an extraordinary members' meeting. The process did not always proceed smoothly because each group continued to assert its claim to legitimacy. Nevertheless, these efforts reflected an awareness of the importance of organizational unity to the cooperative's sustainability. Resolving the dual leadership also provided an opportunity for members and managers to reconsider governance practices and strengthen transparency and democratic decision-making (personal interview with KUD Permata Sawit Maligi management, 2025; Kontras TV, [2024a](#)).

Internal Conflicts Between Management and Members

Internal conflict between the management and members of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi formed part of the cooperative's organizational dynamics as oil palm economic activities expanded. These tensions did not emerge suddenly but accumulated from problems related to cooperative management, organizational communication, and differences of interest between managers and members. In this context, internal conflict reflected the gap between members' expectations and management's capacity to perform the cooperative's institutional functions (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2010](#)).

A major source of internal conflict was the lack of transparency in cooperative management. Members demanded access to information concerning financial reports, plasma plantation proceeds, and management policies related to the partnership with the plantation company. When this information was not communicated clearly and regularly, suspicions about managerial performance arose, weakening members' trust and increasing tensions between managers and members (personal interview with a KUD Permata Sawit Maligi member, 2025).

Conflict was also shaped by differing perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of cooperative managers. Managers faced the difficult task of balancing members' demands with the cooperative's limited authority in dealing with the plantation company. Some members, however, interpreted management's willingness to compromise as insufficient alignment with their interests. These differing perceptions intensified and prolonged internal tensions (personal interview with a KUD member, 2025).

Internal conflict also contributed to declining member participation in cooperative activities, particularly members' meetings. Some members became less active because they felt that their concerns were not adequately accommodated. This decline in participation weakened member oversight and further widened the gap between managers and members. Over time, such conditions undermined the democratic principles on which the cooperative was based (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2013](#)).

The effects of internal conflict extended beyond relations between managers and members to the cooperative's overall performance. Decision-making slowed, activities did not operate effectively, and services to members were disrupted. Unresolved internal tensions also contributed to the emergence of leadership dualism, further weakening the organizational stability of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2014](#)).

Despite its negative consequences, internal conflict can also be understood as part of an organizational learning process. It created opportunities to evaluate managerial performance and encouraged members to scrutinize cooperative management more critically. In this sense, the conflict highlighted the need for better governance, greater transparency, and stronger communication between

managers and members so that the cooperative could function more effectively (personal interview with KUD Permata Sawit Maligi management, 2025).

The internal conflicts between the management and members of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi therefore reflect the complexity of cooperative organization amid the social and economic transformations experienced by the community. Open and democratic conflict resolution is essential to prevent disputes from escalating into divisions that could harm all parties. These conflicts also provide important lessons for strengthening KUD Permata Sawit Maligi's institutional capacity. More broadly, they demonstrate that the cooperative functioned not only as an economic institution but also as an arena of competing interests. Internal disputes and dual leadership reveal a process of institutional transformation shaped by struggles over legitimacy, weak governance, and imbalanced relations among members, managers, and the company (KUD Permata Sawit Maligi, [2020](#); Kontras TV, [2024b](#)).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the development of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi from 1998 to 2023 reflected the complex institutional dynamics accompanying the expansion of oil palm plantations in Nagari Maligi. Initially established to manage plasma plantations and represent community interests within the PIR scheme, the cooperative became an important institution linking local communities, the plantation company, and government agencies.

The findings show that KUD Permata Sawit Maligi contributed significantly to local economic development by facilitating community participation in oil palm cultivation and providing access to plantation-based income. However, the cooperative also faced major institutional challenges, including declining member trust, internal conflicts, leadership dualism, and disputes over plasma land allocation. These problems indicate that cooperative sustainability depends not only on economic performance but also on transparent governance, accountability, effective leadership, and active member participation.

The case of KUD Permata Sawit Maligi further shows that governance failures emerged from tensions among member expectations, managerial capacity, and competing claims to legitimacy within the cooperative. At the same time, unresolved discrepancies in the realization of plasma plantations became a major source of conflict between the community and PT Permata Hijau Pasaman II. Despite these challenges, the cooperative continued to function as an important mediator in community–company relations and conflict-resolution processes.

This study highlights the importance of strengthening cooperative institutions through greater transparency, accountability, conflict-management capacity, and member participation. As a historical case study, it also contributes to a broader understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by rural cooperatives operating within nucleus–plasma plantation systems in Indonesia.

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List of Informants

1. Febrizal, 56, Maligi, West Pasaman, interviewed on 18 June 2024.
2. Rutini, 62, Kapa, West Pasaman, interviewed on 24 August 2024.
3. Adriman, 55, Kapa, West Pasaman, interviewed on 23 August 2024.
4. Nur Amina, 51, Maligi, West Pasaman, interviewed on 18 June 2024.
5. Efriman, 52, Maligi, West Pasaman, interviewed on 18 June 2024.