

# Human Resource Empowerment: Women Groups in Poverty Alleviation in Sidoarjo Regency

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## Abstract

This study aims at describing the empowerment of human resources of women groups and its constraints in the poverty alleviation in Sidoarjo Regency. Poverty is a complex problem that is influenced by various factors interrelated and influences one another. In fact, it is not uncommon to influence the existence and resistance of a government on a local, regional, or national and even international scale. The problem of poverty that is multi-dimensional, should have seen that poverty is not only measured by income but also the vulnerability of people or groups of men and women to be in a poor condition, as well as the limited access of the poor in determining public policies that affect their lives.

The type of research used is qualitative descriptive. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Data analysis were done by employing data reduction steps, data presentation, and drawing conclusion. The results showed that empowerment to women groups in poverty alleviation in Sidoarjo regency was provided through social assistance and protection for women groups and empowerment of micro, small and medium enterprises. This assistance is short-term efforts to save women groups. In addition, recovery efforts emerge as long-term efforts which include improving the quality of women's resources through education, health, and community income. The issues such as less involvement from women groups in poverty alleviation programs resulted in unsolved problems of unemployment, poverty, and inequality in income distribution.

**Keywords:** empowerment, women groups, poverty alleviation

## Introduction

Poverty is a gender issue as women have a central role in managing their family's welfare. A dimensional issue which occurs in Indonesia currently such as in economic, social and political area and natural disaster has affected the price of consumable goods to raise, made clean water becomes rare, and other effects which puts women in the most crucial position to find some alternative ways to overcome these issues. Therefore, women issues is important as the quality of a housewife is closely related to the quality of family welfare. This situation means that a low quality of woman as a housewife will affect her family quality. Women as a housewife function their family and reproduction roles. It is

then become a question of how women can fulfill their function well when they are still vulnerable towards any exposure.

Women from poor community generally try to get a better living situation by making the best use of their potential. Therefore, women empowerment from the poor household is an urgent need to address in the poverty alleviation program. To face the globalization, it requires a mutual commitment in solidarity as well as relationship building between men and women. Women need to involve in the planning, implementation, evaluation and program effect analysis towards the development. The effort to have a maximum women empowerment and the poverty alleviation can be through humanistic of women mentoring approach, economic-productive approach, and the environmental awareness.

The government commitment towards women empowerment has started since 1978 with the initialization of Women in Development concept. This approach has not been successful to improve women to their maximum degree in all aspects. Women poverty is the evidence of the low quality of women's lives as a result of the limited access and control towards development resources as well as the conservative culture towards women's freedom. This fact has caused women are still left behind in a number sectors of development.

The next challenge for women is the low education level which will affect their position at workplace along with their salary. The low education level indicates the low level of skill and expertise. Therefore, they only fit for manual labor work with a lower income than those who have skills and expertise. In the legal field, the opportunity to increase the women's status and role has started with the Regulation No. 7 the Year 1984. The work split based on gender in the society has proven that women are lagging behind men, where women are accounted for the domestic job while men for the public issues. The gender-based work split is an unfair practice for women.

Poor women suffer more than men do in a similar situation. Worse, these women even suffer more than other women do who come from the better economic status. Some common conditions that must be faced by the poor on their daily basis

are lack of food, low income, and untreated diseases due to the financial issue and health facilities, poor nutrition, unhealthy homes, poor environment, and lack of clean water supply. This condition forces the poor to spend their time and energy to fulfill their basic needs to survive. The low education level or even worse, the illiteracy in increasingly limiting these poor people to access information.

This situation is in line with the finding by Birdshal and McGreevey (1983) that stated that poor women suffer more because they have to bear a double role, both as housewives and to afford the family. Women are responsible for the domestic issues and financial management of the household which consumes most of their time and energy.

Nevertheless, this burden is rarely taken account as a real job so that the household never considers this as a part of the production process. The situation is worse by the belief that women income is only a support to her husband's earning. There is a correlation between women and poverty where the patriarchy society indirectly contributes limitation for women, lead to an unfair and unequal state which gives women identity close relation with poverty. As the above explanation, the problem of the study is to find out to what extent the women empowerment program is and its obstacles in poverty alleviation program in Sidoarjo regency.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Definition of Empowerment**

From the etymology point of view, the empowerment derives from a noun, power which means strength or ability. Based on the understanding, we can define the empowerment as a process to obtain power, strength, and ability. At the corresponding course, the empowerment also implies the shift of power, strength, and skill from the powerful people to those who are needing it. According to Sulistyani (2004), the purpose of society empowerment is to shape the people in becoming more independent. The independence includes the independence of thinking, acting and controlling their action. A community is independent when its people are able to make consideration, decision and proper action to achieve a solution to their problems by using their ability.

Rappaport explained that the empowerment is a psychological understanding of the influence of individual control towards the social situation, political power, and his/her rights. While MacArdle defines empowerment as a consequent decision-making process to achieve collective goals that are empowered through independence. Empowerment is even interpreted as a "necessity" to be done through personal effort and accumulation of knowledge, skills, and other resources in achieving goals without being dependent on help from external relations. According to Ife [1] the empowerment carries two essential notions, namely power, and powerless group. The power in this sense acts not only in term of political authority in the narrow sense but also holds the power of the client. Therefore, the empowerment is a both, process and goal. As a process, the empowerment is a series of actions to strengthen or empower the weak group in the society,

including the unfortunate individual. As a goal, the empowerment refers to the statement or result to achieve from a social change that is the empowered society. This sort of society has the capacity, awareness, and ability in fulfilling their needs in term of physical, economic and social needs such as to have self-confidence, the skill to convey aspiration in social activity, and be independent in running life tasks.

### **Women Group Empowerment**

Women are the first and foremost, educator, therefore they must improve their quality, be given support to be more empowered and independent. The success of women empowerment is not by having women work outside the house, but it is more to create independent women who can educate their children by making use their broad knowledge. Upon her professional career; women must be able to balance their job with the responsibility they have at home. The development of human resource has become one of the components of the empowerment. Therefore, the development of human resources in the context of the empowerment of the people's economy carried out by women, must be taken seriously. Because human resources, especially women, are the most fundamental element in strengthening people's economy.

Women empowerment is an attempt to increase women's pride in the society. The women empowerment concept emphasizes the process of giving women the power and strength, to support every single individual to have the ability in choosing their way of life. Women empowerment is focusing at groups of people or society that are left behind in term of economic level. The women empowerment is an effort to make women independent through their skills. According to the guidance of women empowerment in the environmental management (2006:8-9), the empowerment is a set of women efforts to achieve welfare access, to get the chances to participate as an actor in the development, to decide and to control the resources of economy, politic, social, culture and environment. The attempts are to make women able to participate and take more role through the development process.

According to the guidance of women social empowerment (2006:4), the empowerment is a series of program and activity to give confidence and authority to women. These program and project are to increase the women's motive, to provide women with the skills and make them understand their dual function through the awareness of women empowerment, to promote the women potential, to execute an intervention on women empowerment, and to establish the women empowerment program and media. Women empowerment is a systematic and well-planned effort to achieve gender equality and justice in the life of family, society and nation.

### **Research Method**

This research applied the participatory approach to consider that active involvement for the research subject is a crucial factor to determine the proper and on-target program, with a practical orientation which is empowering and sustainable. [2]

1. The first stage used a participatory approach which emphasized more on the case study to support the data baseline as a consideration to conduct the identification on small business management development. This business will then be in the form of simple, applicative and sustainable design. The research used Focus Group Discussion, interview, and business plan development technique. This stage involves the representative from local society, religious leader, women organization, the committee of family welfare organization, women organization for religious affair, and housewives. The researcher made business development planning based on this finding.
2. The second stage was to formulate a simple and sustainable women empowerment program through Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

To obtain an overview of the poverty alleviation program in Sidoarjo regency, for the data collection used observation, interview, and documentation. The research used a qualitative descriptive by Miles and Huberman as its data analysis method with the following steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing [3].

## Result and Discussion

### Women Group Empowerment

Reviewing about women issues is closely related to the value and rules which differentiate the social identity between men and women, along with that responsibility for both genders in the field of economy, social, politics, and culture in the family life, society, and nation also stated that the utilization of a fundamental concept of women empowerment as a way to increase the social welfare is through: 1) taking into account local actors to utilize the resources sustainably. 2) Conducting an improvement of resources regeneration productivity. 3) Increasing a fair welfare. 4) Improving the life quality and local knowledge, and 5) Paying attention towards the support ability of sustainable resources.

The program strategy must relate to the socio-cultural factor in the attempt to utilize the resources as the basic asset for poverty alleviation. This program is to increase the welfare so that people get a number of choices to afford the family. The government of Sidoarjo through related institutions has done programs to fulfil the basic needs of the society, especially women, to overcome the poverty issues. The women get the opportunity to the access, control and benefit in the development process by increasing the main indicators such as:

**Table 1:**  
Main Indicator of Poverty Determinant Analysis

Sector	(Suggested) Main Indicators
Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gross Enrollment Rate</li> <li>2. Net Enrollment Rate</li> <li>3. Drop-out Rate</li> <li>4. Literacy Rate for citizen 15+</li> </ol>
Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Infant Mortality Rate</li> <li>2. Toddler Mortality Rate</li> <li>3. Maternal Mortality Rate</li> <li>4. Prevalence of Malnutrition in Toddlers</li> <li>5. Labor with Trained Health Worker</li> </ol>
Employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unemployment Rate</li> <li>2. Employees work for &lt;35 hours/ week</li> <li>3. Employee of non-formal sectors</li> </ol>
Regional infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to a Sustainable Proper Sanitation</li> <li>2. Access to Potable Water</li> <li>3. Electrification Rate</li> </ol>
Food security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Price Fluctuation of Rice</li> <li>2. Price Fluctuation of the Basic Commodities</li> </ol>

Source: on field analysis result, 2017

Based on the above table, there are two main issues of women role. First, women issue is a result of the low quality of women resources. This reason has caused women to be incapable of competing with men in term of taking an active role in the process of development. Therefore, it requires a strategy to eliminate the discrimination in women education. Second, to use the effective approach that is to realize that unsuccessful development is due to less involvement of women in the process of development. This analysis method focuses more on the marginally women role, and concerns more to their practical role in fulfilling daily needs.

The populist economic consists of 3 (three) elements, the first is a thorough participant from the society members in the national process. The second element is the complete participation from all society members in enjoying the national product. The third element is the production establishment and the distribution of the national product which must be under control a particular society leader the society members. Therefore, the participation of society's member in the process of national product establishment is essential for the populist economic.

### Poverty Alleviation Issues

There are some obstacles to overcoming the poverty issues, some of them are: Women are still enrolling mostly in the domestic field and are considered non-productive activity. The strategic resources are mostly under control by men than women do. Poor women receive less priority in promoting their resources; thus they are trapped even farther in the unsupportive situation. Poor women obtain low education and earning, they participate less in any productive activity and possess a low level of access and control to the resources to increase their income.

## Conclusion

Beside the availability of sufficient resources, the poverty alleviation requires some alteration in the regional budget management by diverting non-productive cost and raising the expenses that provide advantages towards the majority of the community, especially women. Apart from that requirement, the poverty alleviation needs a support from a good governance which priorities the synergy between government and private sectors. This role leads to the target group so that it can achieve the women empowerment one of which by increasing family welfare to reduce the poverty. The programs will be successful by mentoring effort through enhancing the participation, improving the knowledge and skill, and the reinforcement of social economy of women group.

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