

# Farmers Group as Community Change Agents (Study of the Role of Farmers' Group "Mugi Rahayu" Tegalsari Village, Ponorogo District in Improving Farmer Performance)

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**Abstract:** Farmer groups as a container for farmers have the aim to improve and develop the ability of farmers and their families and play a role in increasing farmers' income. Assistance of farmers through farmer groups needs to be carried out more intensively, directed and planned, so that farmers are able to increase their role and function not only as suppliers of food but also able to have a function to empower themselves. The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with phenomenological design. Farmer groups as non-formal education institutions carry out several activities in an effort to improve the ability of their members, including: (1) holding regular member meetings; (2) assisting members (farmers); and (3) cooperating with partners. Farmers as adult students understand that their participation in farmer groups has several benefits, among others, that farmers are able to solve problems faced together when there are problems that cannot be solved by themselves. Changes in the farmers themselves can only be done by the farmers themselves, facilitated by farmer campers and parties who are partners of farmer groups, carried out in a participatory, equal and responsible manner by involving various parties.

**Keywords:** farmer groups, change themselves

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has great potential in the agricultural sector to be managed professionally in order to improve the welfare of the community. BPS data in 2014 states that around 44% of the total workforce in Indonesia works in the agricultural sector so that it can be seen that most of the population in Indonesia has used natural resources to support their needs in the agricultural sector. Lincoln et al (2011) stated that in agricultural countries the agricultural sector has a role and function in economic development, including: (1) producers of food and raw materials for the agricultural, non-agricultural, and industrial developers; (2) the agricultural sector is the biggest absorber of labor; (3) the agricultural sector can create demand for non-agricultural products which is a prerequisite for the secondary and tertiary sectors; and (4) the agricultural sector can become a foreign exchange earner from the export of commercial agricultural products.

The improvement of the agricultural sector can be done through development in the field of agriculture which includes the development and improvement of technological factors, natural resources, human resources, and institutions (Uphoff, 1986). Agricultural businesses that include input, production and output activities need to be supported by the existence of a strong farmer institution and support in improving the performance of farmers' businesses. Farmer groups as institutions that are formed with the role of learning media, collaborative media, as production units, and as business units have a duty to be able to facilitate activities in an effort to improve the performance of their member farmers (Witjaksono, 2012). The formation of a group because of the existence of several people who have the same problem (Rusdi, 1999).

Education is an activity that always accompanies human life from the simple nation of

parade until the nation is high in the face (Soelaiman & Santoso, 1979). Organized education is needed, organized outside the formal system that can provide services to farmers in order to solve the problems faced in improving their performance in agricultural matters. Farmer groups as a container for farmers have the aim to improve and develop the ability of farmers and their families and play a role in increasing farmers' income. Assistance of farmers through farmer groups needs to be carried out more intensively, directed and planned, so that farmers are able to increase their role and function not only as suppliers of food but also able to have a function to empower themselves.

Not all farmers have adequate insights in understanding the problems that arise in the activities they do, analyzing problems, and choosing problem solving that is in accordance with the conditions faced to achieve farmers' goals that will affect the ability of farmers to do their daily work. Assistance to farmers can be done through farmer groups because it is based on the formation of farmer groups based on the similarity of interests among group members to have the ability to access all resources, both natural, human, capital, information, and infrastructure in developing farming (Jamal, 2007). This study aims to describe the efforts of the farmer groups in carrying out their role as agents of community change; this study conducted a study in the Farmer Group "Mugi Rahayu" Tegalsari Village, Ponorogo Regency.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Farmers Group as an Institution for Non-Formal Education

Farmer groups are a group of farmers consisting of adult farmers, both men and women, and cadets, namely young people or young women who are related informally in a group area on the basis of harmony and shared needs, common interests, similarity in environmental conditions (social, economic, resources)

and familiarity to improve and develop the members' business as stated in the Guidance for the Development of Farmer Groups and the Joint Farmers Group Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture (Permentan) No. 82 of 2013. The formation of a Farmer Group (Poktan) has the aim to solve problems faced by farmers that cannot be solved by the farmers themselves individually (Nuryanti and Swastika, 2011). Farmer groups can be a means of communication between farmers in finding alternative solutions in solving problems so that the productivity and welfare of farmers increases.

Permentan No. 82 of 2013 states that farmer groups are non-formal institutions in rural areas that have the following characteristics: 1. Characteristics of Farmer Groups a. Among its members know each other, are familiar and trust each other. b. Have the same views and interests and goals in farming. c. Have similarities in tradition and / or settlement, business expense, type of business, economic and social status, culture / culture, customs, language, and ecology. 2. The Binding Element of the Farmer Group a. Farming areas are joint responsibility among members. b. Farmers have highly dedicated peasant cadres as the drivers of farmers with leadership received by other farmers. c. Most members of the farmer group can feel the benefits of the activities carried out. d. Local community leaders provide encouragement or motivation to support the program that has been set. Division of duties and responsibilities of fellow members based on mutual agreement. These characteristics that distinguish farmer groups as non-formal institutions differ from other formal institutions.

Previously explained that the farmer group is a non-formal institution in the countryside, where the farmer group has an institutional function for its members. The functions of farmer groups include:

1. Learning class. The ability to increase knowledge, skills, and changes in attitudes for members to be able to grow and develop into independent farming in increasing productivity, income, and a better life can be done by farmers through farmer groups.
2. Forum for cooperation. Strengthening good cooperation among fellow farmers in farmer groups and between groups and with other parties can be done through farmer groups. Collaboration formed by farmer groups will be able to make farming more efficient and better able to deal with threats, challenges, obstacles, disruptions and more profitable.
3. Production unit. Each member of the farmer group in the implementation of farming must be viewed as a business entity that can be developed to achieve business economies of scale, with quantity, quality and continuity.

Farmers have different cultural patterns from other communities. Farmers with developed farming are required to communicate continuously with the thinking of local communities from outside the organization and able to interact with outsiders to follow the long path of interaction between the

communities or in this research called Poktan with sources of change (Redfiel, 1985). It has been mentioned before that farmer groups are non-formal institutions in rural areas as a forum for farmers to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their ability to manage farming so that they become independent farmers. Farmer groups that also have a role as learning class for fellow farmers. All organized education (learning) activities held outside the formal system, either alone or as part of broad activities intended to provide services to certain students in achieving learning goals are called non-formal education (Coombs in Joesoef, 1992).

Non-formal education is every opportunity where there is targeted communication outside the school and the individual will get information, knowledge, training, and guidance in accordance with the age level and needs of life with the aim of developing the level of skills, attitudes, and values needed in the family environment, work, community environment and the country (Joesoef, 1992). Learning objectives in the path of non-formal education are aimed at continuing education after fulfilling basic education, as well as expanding education and living values education (Abdulhak & Suprayogi, 2012).

Non-formal education has different characteristics from formal education. Abdulhak & Suprayogi (2012) states that non-formal education has the following characteristics:

1. Aim to obtain skills that will be used immediately. Non-formal education emphasizes functional learning that suits the needs of students' lives.
2. Centered on students, in non-formal education students are independent learners who must take initiative and control their learning activities.
3. The implementation time is relatively short, and generally not sustainable.
4. Using a cafeteria curriculum is flexible.
5. Using participatory learning methods by emphasizing independent learning.
6. Educators are facilitators.
7. Learning resources utilize learning resources that come from the environment.

The Law Number 19 of 2013 concerning Farmer Protection and Empowerment in pasal 1 states that the empowerment of farmers is all efforts to improve the ability of farmers in a better farming system through education and training, counseling and assistance, development of systems and means of marketing results. It can be understood from this statement that the empowerment of farmers can be done through education, training, counseling, and then assistance in the same. The government and regional governments are obliged to carry out education and training to farmers.

## **B. Farmers as Adult Learning Objectives**

Adult learning goals have special characteristics that are inherent in each learning target and are individual, such as talents, interests, attitudes, learning motivation, learning styles, and initial abilities that

have been possessed. Adult students can be seen from the physical (biological), psychological, and social dimensions (Kamil, 2012). Someone is said to be biologically mature if he has been able to reproduce. Psychologically mature when someone has responsibility for life and all the decisions taken. Adults are based on the completeness of their physical, age, psychiatric conditions, and can play a role in accordance with the task demands of their status.

Adults as students have different characteristics with children. Developers and managers of informal and informal education programs must understand the differences in these characteristics in developing and managing programs. Tamat (1985) states that adults in learning have the following characteristics:

1. Learning leads to a maturation process, adults have the ability to direct themselves, requiring self-direction even though in certain circumstances they are dependent.
2. Learning aims to gain self-understanding and maturity to be able to survive, so learning is more important to use learning methods that are suitable for learning goals.
3. Adults will be prepared to learn when learning material can solve their life problems, so that the programs arranged are tailored to their actual life needs and the order of presentation must be adjusted to the readiness of the participants.
4. Capacity building oriented learning focused on its activities, so that the preparation of learning material is based on the abilities expected by students.

Mudjiman (2007) suggested that adults have characteristics in learning, including:

1. Learning activities are self-directing, not dependent.
2. Questions in learning are answered by themselves on the basis of experience, not expecting answers from others.
3. Do not want to be dictated by teachers because they do not expect continuously, this tendency arises because adults are aware of their own abilities, not happy with the coercion of others.
4. Happier with problem-centered learning than content centered learning because adults face many problems in real life so they are more happy with problem solving learning.
5. Prefer to participate actively not passively.
6. Always utilizing the experience that has been owned, adults do not like learning with "empty heads".
7. Prefer collaborative learning by sharing experiences with fellow learning participants.

Some basic principles of learning in adults according to Raharjo (2005) are:

1. Adults maintain the ability to learn.
2. Adults have prominent differences in groups and individuals in terms of desires, needs, backgrounds, and skills.
3. The experience of adults has decreased gradually.
4. The experience of adults as learning citizens is a

fundamental source of learning situations.

5. The concept of self-moves from dependence to independence so that individuals will grow a sense of responsibility in experience and confidence.
6. Adults tend to be life oriented.
7. Adults are motivated to learn with various factors.
8. Participation of adults as citizens learning to learn in the learning process gives contributions to learning.
9. A supportive environment is the key to learning in adults.

Lunandi (1987) states that adults as students have factors that arise from within themselves that can inhibit the participation of adults in an educational program, namely:

1. Increasing age can inhibit the near point of sight or the closest point that can be seen clearly starting to move farther. Likewise, the far point of sight or the farthest point that can be seen clearly decreases.
2. Age increase affects the amount of lighting needed in a learning situation.
3. The more age the perception of color contrast tends to go red rather than the spectrum, due to yellowing of the cornea or the lens of the eye, so that the incoming light is somewhat isolated. Soft colors cannot be distinguished properly, you need to use bright colors and contrast for visual aids and learning media.
4. Hearing or the ability to receive sounds reduces with age. Generally a person experiences a setback in his ability to distinguish the tone sharply in each decade of his life.
5. Sound differentiation or the ability to distinguish sounds decreases with age.

The difference in characteristics of adults and children as students must be addressed by developers and managers of learning to prepare different learning processes in accordance with these characteristics. Farmer groups that have a function to improve farmers' ability to help farmers add insight and skills must also pay attention to the characteristics of farmers as adult learners so as to be able to prepare learning activities effectively and efficiently.

### III. METHODS

This study attempts to express in depth and examine the characteristics in existence, phenomena and factors that influence the implementation of farmer empowerment. To be able to uncover these problems in this study, qualitative research-oriented approach is used to describe the efforts made by farmer groups as agents of community change in improving the performance of farming in the "Mugi Rahayu" Farmer Group in Tegalsari Village, Jetis District, Ponorogo Regency.

This research is a research that uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative approach with phenomenological design. Miles and Hubberman (2009) qualitative research is research that deals with

complicated things, in-depth interviews, has broad, concrete, and direct meaning. To get all the phenomena and actual in this study, researchers are directly in the field and collect phenomena contained in the situation and dynamics of the learning actors in their activities to assist farmers in improving the performance of farming for farmers who are members of farmer groups.

The observation technique used in this study is participatory observation to obtain data about the subject's behavior and the interaction with other components. This is related to the observation statement is the right technique in this study. To get direct information from research subjects such as reasons, perceptions, hopes and goals, these observations were followed up by direct interviews. Interview is a data collection technique with a conversation that aims to obtain information about events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivation, recognition, and seriousness (Sutopo, 1996). The use of interview techniques is primarily to explore and obtain data that cannot or are difficult to trace with observation techniques. This study also uses documentation techniques, namely taking photos. This technique is used to obtain data that is not netted through observation and interviews. The documentation in question is like data about the status of the person, the physical condition of the extension site, facilities and infrastructure, and events related to the research context.

#### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **A. Learning Implementation in the “Mugi Rahayu” Farmer Group in Improving Farmer Business Performance**

The research data states that the farmer group “Mugi Rahayu” made several efforts to facilitate farmers in increasing their knowledge and skills in an effort to improve farm performance, namely:

1. Hold regular member meetings The research data found that the farmer group

“Mugi Rahayu” held regular meetings to discuss matters relating to the latest policies on planting, the crops that will be planted in the next planting season, and the problems that arise during the planting period and may appear during the next planting period. This routine meeting is held every three months or can be less than three months if there are urgent events that require immediate handling, for example to overcome plant pests that can affect farmers' crop during the planting period at that time.

This is consistent with the statement that increasing the ability of farmers to increase knowledge, skills, and changing attitudes in order to be able to grow and develop into independent farms in increasing productivity, income, and a better life can be done by farmers through farmer groups (Permentan No. 82 Year 2013). The farmer group becomes a learning class for its members in increasing the ability of both knowledge, skills, and changing attitudes to solve the problem at hand.

Tamat (1985) explains that adults will be prepared to learn when learning material can solve their life problems, so that the programs arranged are

tailored to their real life needs and the order of presentation must be adjusted to the readiness of participants.

2. Assisting members (farmers)

The results of regular meetings of farmer groups will find problems that must be sought for alternative solutions to problems. From the results of the study it was found that the farmer group “Mugi Rahayu” provided assistance to members in the form of assistance when farmers who were members of the farmer group experienced agricultural problems during the planting period.

The farmer group “Mugi Rahayu” provides assistance to its members through several activities, for example by training and training related to problem solving in accordance with what is being faced. From the research, it was obtained data that the farmer group “Mugi Rahayu” had carried out several training sessions, namely training in the making of organic fertilizer followed by all members of the farmer group.

All organized education (learning) activities held outside the formal system, either alone or as part of broad activities intended to provide services to certain students in achieving learning goals are called non-formal education (Coombs in Joesoef, 1992). Tamat (1985) states that the development of skills oriented learning is focused on its activities, so that the preparation of learning material is based on the abilities expected by students. As Nuryanti & Swastika (2011) stated that the formation of farmer groups has a goal to solve problems faced by farmers that cannot be solved by the farmers themselves individually.

3. Cooperate with partners

From the results of the study, it was found that the farmer group “Mugi Rahayu” in carrying out their duties and functions as a learning forum for farmers in improving the ability of farmers, farmer groups to establish partnerships with partners, including Agricultural Extension Centers (BPP), field agricultural extension officers through extension activities, fertilizer producers, as well as other related partners.

Farmer groups have a function in strengthening cooperation between fellow farmers in farmer groups and between farmer groups and with other parties can be done through farmer groups. Collaboration formed by farmer groups will be able to make farming more efficient and more able to deal with threats, challenges, obstacles, disruptions and more profitable (Permentan No. 82 of 2013).

##### **B. The Meaning of Farmers' Groups as Community Change Agents**

Farmers as adult students understand that their participation in farmer groups has several benefits, among others, that farmers are able to solve problems faced together when there are problems that cannot be solved by them. In carrying out its function as a non-formal institution for its members, the farmer group does not do it alone but involves several parties, including members, as well as working partners of

farmer groups such as field agricultural extension agents and larger organizations namely the Association of Farmers' Groups. This is in accordance with Permentan No. 82 of 2013 which states that the cooperation that will be formed by farmer groups will be able to make farming more efficient and able to deal with threats, challenges, obstacles, disruptions and more profitable for its members.

Farmer groups can develop institutionally by empowering members who are a group of members who have the same goal so that togetherness between members is needed and has similarities between members and has similarities in perspectives and interests. This is in accordance with what was stated by Ministry of Agriculture (2007) that farmer groups have different characteristics from other institutions, the distinguishing characteristics are: (1) knowing each other, being close to each other, trusting among members; (2) having views and interests that same in business; (3) having the same tradition or settlement, type of business, economic status and ecology; and (4) there is a division of duties and responsibilities of fellow members based on mutual agreement. These institutional characteristics can make farmer groups become independent institutions and enable group members to become farmers who have the ability and skills to solve problems effectively in accordance with the problems being faced.

Changes in the farmers themselves can only be done by the farmers themselves, facilitated by farmer campers and parties who are partners of farmer groups, carried out in a participatory, equal and responsible manner by involving various parties. The process of self-change of farmers can be done through the process of mentoring or giving opportunities to farmers that are carried out by facilitators through a series of activities that allow the community to have the ability and confidence in facing problems in their work (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2005). Mentoring is a strategy that will determine the success of programs that empower people (Suharto, 2005). Mentoring activities are carried out not only on technology transfer but include the entire learning process for key actors (farmers) so that they are able to help and organize themselves in accessing market information, capital technology and other resources in an effort to increase productivity, business efficiency, income, and welfare as well as increase awareness in the preservation of environmental functions (Wardani and Waridin, 2005).

## V. CONCLUSION

Farmer groups as non-formal education institutions carry out several activities in an effort to improve the capacity of their members, including: (1) holding regular member meetings; (2) assisting members (farmers); and (3) cooperating with partners. Farmers as adult learners mean that their participation in farmer groups has several benefits, among others, that farmers are able to solve problems faced together when there are problems that cannot be solved by themselves. Changes in self-farmers can only be done by the farmers themselves facilitated by farmer campers and parties who are partners of farmer groups,

carried out in a participatory, equal and responsible manner by involving various parties.

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