

The Challenges of Batik Workers: A Case Studies at Gumelem Banjarnegara

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ABSTRACT

Women batik worker characteristics who live near poverty line, have difficulty meeting their needs limited access to skills development. Batik training, tools assistance and materials to colouring training still make them helpless. Batik training for them is a willingness to receive "wages" rather than knowledge gained, because batik has become a part of life. Colouring training for them is a mere "lie" because the recipe given is not effective recipe, they still must trial and error themselves. While tools and materials assistances are only temporary and not sustainable. Fund disbursement provided is full of conditions and ultimately causes dispute among fellow batik makers. Geographical and demographic conditions also marginalized them. This study effective to observe how the aid program provided for batik workers. The unit of analysis in this study was the batik workers in Gumelem, Banjarnegara. The method used is ethnography with the result that aids is ongoing if it matches what is needed and vice versa. The recommendation is that human resource development aids with an empowerment strategy is more needed than physical aids, the study is expected to sustain with community service.

Keywords: *Aid, Batik Workers, Human Resources Development, Empowerment*

1. INTRODUCTION

UNESCO's recognition of batik as an intangible cultural heritage has been running for about 11 years. Supported by the stipulation of October 2nd, each year as National Batik Day in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 33 of 2009, Indonesian batik is increasingly developing. The Industry Service noted that until 2018 batik had contributed to the country's economy around US \$ 52.44 million [1]. While the list of batik industries registered at the Central Batik Handicraft Centre, there are 294 industries [2]. The impact of the success of the development of batik, directly or indirectly, is the effect on the absorption of people's livelihoods. Tracing the past 2009, the spirit in the world of batik can be said to have revived. Where areas that already have batik are competing to create batik, while areas that already have batik centres seem to have revived. This called "demam batik" (batik fever) or booming batik are not stranger to hearing.

"Demam batik" (batik fever) can be indicated by the increasing number of people using batik, various agencies both government and private to school children wearing batik. Batik is also used as anything, not only as a long cloth but a jacket, hat, sandal, and so on. Batik is

no longer worn as a person's social status but as a daily wear, fashion, and lifestyle.

The government also supports "Batik Revitalization" programs, where batik revives because it has an important meaning. "Kampung batik" (the area of batik) were also established in various regions, especially at the village/ level [3]. Inside the "Kampung batik", there are many batik industry owners, as well as batik workers. So that human resources can be obtained easily and cheaply. The batik industry is generally in the form of a home industry where owners and workers have lived side by side together for a relatively long time, so that there is geographical and social closeness, and becomes a naturally formed cultural landscape [4].

This is much in accordance with the characteristics of women batik workers who work at home (in the domestic area), work in community (have kinship), with lower wages, according to the characteristics of the village community [5]. As the batik makers in Gumelem Banjarnegara who have worked for decades. Her small income has contributed to her family. Especially for women who have husbands who work as day laborers, or who have no husband plus dependents on the number of children. The informal sector is dominated by women by

86% compared to men who only account for 14%. Their presence in the informal sector cannot be separated from their educational status is very low, 78.2% only reached the elementary school level [6].

The life cycle of the batik workers keeps turning, while their income is uncertain. Even if the income is there, it will be priced low. They also have to find additional income by becoming farm laborers, or working odd jobs. Often they have difficulty meeting their food needs. They average condition of their house is small, and already fragile. In the rainy season, their house gets wet in some places. There are no chairs in the front corner of their house. At least their condition is in the dimension of poverty. As Chambers said that poor households have low income and asset ownership, even in meeting their food needs they develop low consumption patterns both in quality and quantity [7]. On average, the economic condition of the batik worker family is near the poverty line.

The existence of batik in Gumelem, Banjarnegara cannot be separated from the long history of the establishment of the Kademangan (Kingdom) Goemelem which is closely related to the history of Mataram Surakarta. Batik is a vital necessity for Demang (the leader of the Kademangan region) and his servants. Batik is the lifeblood for the needs of Kademangan and the surrounding community who always serve the needs of the Wastra. However, unfortunately in 1959 Kademangan turned into a Praja Village according to the government order. Batik production has decreased dramatically because batik is no longer the main requirement. Until finally batik experienced a long lethargy and the decline in future generations.

During the “temporary death” there were also shifts in the world of batik due to influence from within and from outside. An apparent shift in human resources. Where batik skills in the past were carried out from the initial process (raw materials) to the final process (finished goods), from empty cloth to dyeing and becoming ready to use cloth. However, at this time, batik makers only do the initial process, namely making batik on cloth (“raw batik”). As a result, the selling price is lower because they have to continue the next process. The colouring process in the past was done by women with natural dyes from plants and other natural materials, while now the colouring is done with chemicals and is done by men. A shift also occurred in the skill of making batik, where in the past, the batik made directly from plain cloth, the cloth was then processed with certain treatments (the batik had to beat the cloth or what was called “kemplong” and gave tapioca flour which was called “nganji” for cloth easy to draw with hot wax). Meanwhile, at this time, batik makers make ready to use (pictorial) fabrics.

The influence of increasingly sophisticated technological advances, on the one hand, is detrimental

to the written batik, their work that is done in detail with handmade must compete with the results of the manufacturer that it can create a batik patterned fabric in a mass and at a low price. Their skills will be marginalized by technology.

The Banjarnegara government has attempted to provided policies to improve the quality of human resources for batik workers, including: batik training, colouring training; providing credit assistance, aiding batik tools, and financial assistance. However, the good policy of the government caused disputes, for example on financial assistance that was not accepted by all the batik workers who eventually happened social jealousy. Batik training policies that generalize are sometimes not on target. This was realized by the government through the Industrial Services and Cooperatives (Indakop) which said that not everyone could enter the training program because of the limited budget.

Various policies that are bottom up seem to place them as objects so that the involvement of batik is nothing more than participation in formality. When met in the field, the batik workers said that when she joined the training she only received "wages" instead of absorbing the knowledge delivered. He felt that he already knew the knowledge, but could not practice it because of limited capital

As in training, colouring is only done in 2-5 days, where the dye has been prepared arid only must practice. When batik trying to practice the results failed. They must try to try again with a trial and error process which of course uses a lot of cost. Finally, the knowledge gained stagnates, it is impossible for them to carry out further development, while to fulfil their needs they are lacking.

The 2003 government policy regarding the use of batik in all civil servants' environments in Banjarnegara seemed to be a breath of fresh air for batik workers because it improved their economy. But unfortunately, this did not last long, because it was followed by the permissibility of employees using stamp batik / printing. Even in a training forum it was said that in the neighbourhood local officials did not promote batik made by their own villages.

From the description above, it can be concluded that policies in improving human resources in Banjarnegara based on the implementation decisions are made by government. Program implementation is made with many limited (time, space, and energy). This approach, on the other hand, has a weakness in which the selection of target recipients is less precise. On the other hand, the programs provided were not in accordance with what the participants needed [8]. In addition, the top down approach pays less attention to sustainability. The goal of the implementation of the program is empowerment [9].

Women cannot get many benefits in the informal sector without empowerment [10], [11]. The skills

development program, financial independence that has been carried out by the government is inseparable from the empowerment framework [12]. In addition, the Banjarnegara government through the National Community Empowerment Program (PNPM) has provided cash loans (micro credit) as a stimulation of business development. In one study, microcredit became an effective tool for overcoming poverty [13]. In another study, it was stated that microcredit is also a role played in empowering women to achieve their goals of meeting needs and economic empowerment [14].

Empowerment is a process of being empowered by encouraging, or motivating individuals to have the ability to utilize resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills to increase capacity [15]. Empowerment of batik women means increasing their existing abilities with full awareness. Empowerment means to gain access to actively participate in solving family economic problems as well as improving family life [16]–[18]. The impact of empowerment can be measured by the following indicators [19], 1) material changes which include increased income, increased access to resources, increased capacity, 2) change perception which includes increasing self-perception, self-confidence, future expectations, respect for individual values and contributions, and relational change that is able to make decisions and group participation.

Empowerment to batik, at least carried out continuously in accordance with the framework of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) which have 3 dimensions, namely, social, economic, and environment [20]. In accordance with the problem of women batik, this study will discuss the economic dimension.

Based on the explanation above, there is a gap between batik and the government even though both have the same goal in developing Gumelem batik. The question formula asked is how the aid program provided for batik workers. This study will analyse the problems experienced by batik by SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat), then provide recommendations for batik development programs.

2. METHOD

2.1. Setting

This research was conducted in Gumelem Kulon Village and Gumelem Wetan Village, Susukan, Banjarnegara. The location was chosen because it has a history of batik since the age of Kademangan related to the Mataram Islamic region which became the forerunner to the emergence of batik in Gumelem. In the Kademangan era, batik developed rapidly because it was produced for the fulfilment of the Kademangan family and environment. However, since Kademangan changed to Praja Village in 1959 batik production has experienced

a long sluggishness. The event is directly proportional to the increasingly rare number of batiks. The momentum of UNESCO's recognition in 2009, became an era of revival for batik in Gumelem. Unfortunately, this did not last long because of the switching of batik generation who were not as skilled as batik in the Kademangan era and the number of batik workers who were scarce and were in their old age.

This research uses ethnographic method, which is a qualitative study of individuals or groups with the aim describe cultural characteristic space and their own time. Apart from that the methodology concerned with describing people and how they behave, either as individuals or as part of a group, influenced by culture [21].

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis Method

The method of data collection is done by participant observation where the researcher lives for 9 months at the study site. Researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with purposive techniques and snowball. Purposive method is done to get specific informants to get the perspective of the informants according to the problem. The snowball technique is carried out because the number of batik workers is increasingly scarce, to get the batik informants it is important to ask the informants beforehand, in general they network and know each other. The stages of this research based on the Spradley model, starting with determine a key informant who is the informant authoritative and believed to be able to “open the door” for researchers to enter object of research [22]. After that the researcher conducted an interview. Next, the researcher's attention on the object of research, and began asking descriptive questions, followed by analysis of interviews.

Data obtained from 10 women batik. Researchers do not generalize their characteristics, but only show indications of similar patterns. These indications include the existence of low education with an average up to elementary school. Second, an indication of an average age ranging from 50 years and over. And the average batik skills using pattern techniques, namely drawing with a pencil on fabric before making batik. In an indication of this expertise it was also found that the average batik only sells his work in a raw form in the form of night strokes without colouring process. All data is collected, then selected according to the theme of the research problem and written descriptively. Data analysis is done by looking at the settings that occur and related to existing theories.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in Gumelem Banjarnegara. The Gumelem area is administratively divided into two, namely Gumelem Kulon and Gumelem Wetan, however sociocultural they are one unit that has the same characteristics and history of the past. The two villages are located in the west of central Java, and bordering Kebumen, Banyumas. The presence of Kademangan (Kingdom) in Gumelem is the beginning of the existence of batik. The history of batik is related to the needs of batik at that time, but after the government changed to a village, the need for batik experienced a drastic decline. Even had experienced stagnation for a long time.

After the recognition of UNESCO, the preservation of Gumelem batik came to life. However, the number of batik makers has dropped dramatically, now there are only a few. Even then, it is closely related to the activities of the traditional institution ("Mataram, Family Association") which is dominated by the older generation, the younger generation currently prefers jobs outside the city. It cannot be denied that the life of batik workers is closely related to poverty, simplicity, uncertain income because it is not promising, etc. meanwhile the demands are getting higher. In addition, the current generation lacks skills, whereas in the present era, creativity must be increased.

The results showed the following SWOT:

1) Strengths

The handmade batik products produced by Gumelem women are of high quality, the scratches produced are next and of artistic value. The motifs created are also unique which is a combination of Islamic Mataram and Banyumasan Kingdoms. Their skilled hands can create diverse motifs, like the Mrs. Risah who makes batik without seeing an example of a pattern first. Batik workers Gumelem has had a decade of experience in making batik. This is the strength of themselves to remain batik. And the main reason is they can work at home while taking care of the household. The batik included in the category of "adol batikan" (selling batik directly into the hands of consumers, without intermediaries, and not having a boss) tend to set prices that are relatively stable.

2) Weaknesses

From the side of weakness can be seen from the colouring that depends on other regions namely Sokaraja and Pekalongan. Like the Mrs. Risah, Mrs. Sarinah, Mrs Misem, and Mrs. Siyem who left the colouring in Sokaraja and Pekalongan (regions in other cities) so they had to increase production costs. In addition, the colouring process takes at least three months which they should have earned faster if the process is done alone. This is one of the reasons why they are not able to receive many batik orders in a short time. However, if the order

is very urgent, they can turn to other colorants who are not necessarily of good quality.

Regarding the quality of colouring that is not good, the government through the Indakop (Industry Service and Cooperatives) once told his experience, that Gumelem batik dye quickly faded and faded so that it is not durable if used. Colouring training for them is a mere "lie" because the recipe given is not effective recipe, they still must trial and error themselves. While tools and materials assistances are only temporary and not sustainable.

Batik makers also do not have a brand image that can attract the attention of buyers, usually they only write "Gumelem Wetan" or "Gumelem Kulon" on the edge of the fabric. After completion, they then market it. Batik marketing is still done manually by word of mouth, they are not familiar with information technology such as through social media so that marketing becomes less varied. This is one of the reasons they are hampered by network access and market access.

Another weakness is that capital ownership is relatively small, so they cannot produce more. Batik production is carried out when there is an order. Sometimes they owe other people capital to make batik. Mrs. Sarinah said that she was fortunate when she was previously included in the micro-credit program from PNPM (Community Empowerment Program) where she was given a loan of Rp 250,00000 and was paid in instalments for one year.

Regarding the results of the product from Batik Gumelem itself in the form of a long cloth only. There are no variations in other forms. Like the previous people the results of batik production are only used as "tapih" (lower garment). In her story, Mrs. Risah tells us that she only made long fabrics for decades. The long cloth is usually sold to people who are members of a traditional institution called the Mataram Family Association.

3) Opportunities

Batik requests from local and regional government officials as promotional efforts are an opportunity for batik workers. Moreover, supported by policies that support such as in 2003 in which the government provides a policy regarding the obligations in the environment of civil servants (civil servants) to wear Banjarnegara batik clothing. Government support in the form of capital, batik equipment is also an opportunity. For batik workers like Mrs. Sura, assistance in the form of cloth and batik equipment really helps himself for a while.

Batik demand from collectors is also an opportunity for batik. The development of Indonesian fashion using batik cloth has become an opportunity in the development of Gumelem batik. Banjarnegara tourism

development, especially in the annual cultural festival becomes an opportunity for batik. Because cultural festivals usually involve a lot of people wearing traditional clothes and Banjarnegara batik, Gumelem batik. Although batik is not technology literate, at least the world of e-commerce has evolved, and can be an opportunity for the emergence of online marketing.

4) Threats

At least batik has a threat from outside himself, namely the emergence of new entrepreneurs who have large capital so that it increasingly marginalizes its position. In addition, there are artificial motives that were created a *masse*. This has been experienced by Mrs. Risah in which the motive she created turned out to be imitated by other batik workers, she could only be annoyed and regretful of the person's actions. Because he realized that he did not have a patent on the motives he created. Regarding patents themselves, batik does not have the hope to make it because it takes a very high cost and takes a long process. Competition from outside cities is also a threat. Because entrepreneurs in Gumelem also provide batik products from outside the city.

In addition, young workers in Gumelem prefer to work in factories or offices rather than become batik workers. Of the approximately 250 million Indonesia perhaps only 3% understand the value of the batik process [23].

Unfair competition also occurs between batik workers. When found in the field, some batik workers the results of batikan other people and favour the results of their own batik. Another threat is building trust again in consumers who have been disappointed with the results of Gumelem batik colouring. Regarding this matter, it was told that one of the entrepreneurs created batik printing with colouring that was not in accordance with the example of the goods offered to employees so that it was true, the employees felt disappointed because the quality obtained was no better than the goods offered. This is also supported by the emergence of printed batik or printing with the exact motifs like written batik.

The above explanation, it appears that from an internal perspective, batik has more weaknesses than strengths. While from the external side, batik is more faced with threats rather than opportunities. Therefore, continuous empowerment and assistance is needed more now. Their skills, knowledge and networking are insufficient, so they have a low income. Therefore, ongoing empowerment is important.

According to the World Bank (2016), women's empowerment is the basis of their participation in development which is a potential in realizing sustainable development [24]. From the results of the OECD report states that increasing Women's Economic Empowerment "will be able to provide more economic opportunities

[25]. Empowerment is a continuation of social support that will positively affect empowerment [26].

Women's empowerment, discusses various obstacles faced by disadvantaged women, which makes it more difficult for them to get empowerment in the community [27]. The indicators observed in women's economic empowerment are related to their share in the family, the role in family economic activities, generating additional income, entrepreneurial activities, and food resistance [28]. Economic empowerment in this case is prioritized to create batik income generating. Skills, knowledge, and access to networking and market access is done to increase their income.

4. CONCLUSION

This study describes the SWOT analysis to determine the internal and external position of batik. Government assistance can be sustainable if it is in accordance with what is needed by batik, and vice versa. This study has limitations that allow further research to be carried out, namely looking the characteristics of batik in detail and whereby looking at these characteristics the study will be more comprehensive. Second, this research will be more useful if it is equipped with further action plans for batik accompaniment. So that it can compare further studies. This kind of research is expected to help identify problems.

Recommendation from this research is that increasing sustainable empowerment is very important to be realized by involving batik as a subject not just an object. All efforts must be directed to reduce the factors that weaken and threaten batik. In addition, policies that support it are needed to be more empowered. Human resource development assistance with empowerment strategies is more needed than physical assistance. The study is expected to be sustained with community service.

From this brief paper, it reflects that made efforts to provide what they can do, and batik as well, improvement of knowledge and skills in needed for sustainability more than just equipment assistance. For better batik, batik workers establish relationships so that unfair competition does not occur again.

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