

The Role of Youth as Agent of Change in Empowering Coffee Farmers in Dieng Mountains

Dewi Dzakiroh^{1*}, Suwarto², Heru Irianto³

¹*Universitas Sebelas Maret, Development Extension Study Program, Postgraduate, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia*

²*Universitas Sebelas Maret, Faculty of Agriculture, Program Study of Agribusiness, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia*

³*Universitas Sebelas Maret, Faculty of Agriculture, Agricultural Extension & Communication Study Program, Surakarta 57126, Indonesia*

*Corresponding author: dzakirohdewi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine youth's role as agents of change. This type of research is a qualitative descriptive study. Determination of informants in this study used purposive sampling—data collection techniques employed observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique utilized was the interactive model data analysis by Miles and Huberman. The results showed that young people in the Dieng Mountains have tried to play their role as agents of change in empowering coffee farmers quite well. It could be seen from the aspect of youth's role as the development driver, village assistants, and village independence pioneers, which were quite good. However, farmers' participation in the empowerment program was classified as very low, which was only 4%, while those who did not participate were 96%. The coffee farmers' low participation level was caused by the absence of a synergistic relationship between the coffee farmers' empowerment stakeholders in Tombo Village. Thus forcing the emergence of ARC obstacles in empowering coffee farmers, including a limited budget, infrastructure, and no village government policies that support the development of coffee farming in Tombo Village. The output of this research is expected to contribute to improving the welfare of coffee farmers in Indonesia, especially in Tombo Village.

Keywords: *Role, Youth, Agent of Change, Empowerment, Coffee Farmers*

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of villages in Indonesia with all its problems currently needs attention and actual roles from many parties. One of them is the youths' role because the young generation is one of the pillars with a significant role in the journey of national and state life. Youth's quality is very decisive for prosperous or miserable a village in the future. It shows that the role of youth is crucial in rural development.

Hence, youth need to be managed effectively[1]. To ensure effective youth participation in the development process, it is essential to design youth engagement approaches and strategies to integrate youth in the development process from the program design stage[2]. The involvement of youth in rural development and

particularly agricultural development is one of the factors of strength. The main reason is that youth have many characteristics; if cultivated and nurtured, they prove valuable for agricultural and rural development[3].

In this case, art is a community founded by a group of young people from Tombo Village. They act as agents of change to improve the quality and standard of living of coffee farmers in Tombo Village and its surroundings by raising local coffee products from Tombo Village. Referring to the ARC community establishment background, it is the basis for the researchers to examine the role of youth, who are the ARC community members, as agents of changes in empowering coffee farmers on the Slopes of the Dieng Mountains.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Youth Definition

Youth is one of the greatest assets any nation can have. They are legitimately regarded as future leaders and have potential, and are the most significant investment for a country's development. Moreover, the youth contribution is essentially crucial in the development of rural areas. The youth are essentially human beings in the development of the rural regions. The story of the rural areas of developing countries is the root of economic upliftment[4]. Thus, youth must maintain local traditions and wisdom as a national identity[5].

2.2. The Role of Youth as Agents of Change in Rural Areas

The role is a dynamic aspect of position; if a person carries out his rights and obligations by his work, he plays a role [6]. The agent of change is anyone who has the skill and power to stimulate, facilitate, and coordinate the change effort [7]. Change agents' role is to form the change process and as a linker, a catalyst, and a solution provider to the problems faced by empowerment targets [8].

The role of youth as agents of change in community development is vital[9]. There are three approaches to youth participation in development: youth as beneficiaries, partners, and initiators[10]. As the initiator, the roles of children in community empowerment are 1) development drivers, 2) village facilitators, and 3) village independence pioneers[11]. These youth roles in village development are expected to influence the dynamics of rural life[1].

2.3. Community Empowerment

Empowerment is a deliberate and planned effort to facilitate local communities in planning, deciding, and managing local resources owned through collective action and networking to be independent economically, ecologically, and socially[12]. In the empowerment principle, the best community groups are groups that are indeed born from the needs and awareness of the people themselves. Managed and developed using mainly the resources in the community[13]. Nevertheless, one of the obstacles that cause empowerment not to run smoothly, besides, the obstacle that often arises is the difficulty in synergizing the various empowerment in an integrated program[14].

2.4. Method

This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The research location was at the slopes of the Dieng Mountains, precisely in Tombo Village, Bandar District, Batang Regency. The purposive sampling technique determined informants. In this study, data collection techniques were observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation with the ARC members, farmers, the Tombo Village Government, the Head of the Bandar District Extension Center, and the Head of Plantation Sector, the Batang Regency Food and Agriculture Office. Data analysis employed the analysis interactive model from Miles and Huberman [15], dividing analysis activities into several parts: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or data verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. As-Salwa Resources Center (ARC) Community Profile

In empowering coffee farmers in Tombo Village, ARC played a role as an empowerment agent and a coffee business actor. The ARC community was formed in 2012. The background of the youth's empowerment activities as the ARC members was that the coffee farmers' knowledge and skills in post-harvest coffee processing and marketing were low, causing them not to have a good bargaining position. Therefore, ARC wanted to help coffee farmers in Tombo Village to have the power to optimally exploit the potential of natural resources in Tombo Village to produce quality coffee to compete in national and international markets. ARC community has two divisions: the garden division and the shop division. ARC administrators in the garden division are tasked with fostering and guiding farmers to produce the best quality coffee beans, while managers in the shop division are in charge of processing coffee from bean to ready-to-drink coffee, including coffee marketing. Currently, there are ten core members of the ARC board.

3.2. *ARC's Role as Agent of Change*

3.2.1. *The Development Drivers*

One role of youth in development is as a dynamist. The dynamite is the driving force. The youth's thoughts will awaken the willpower and abilities. When the resolve and skills are united, the child will become the driving force [16]. Youth (ARC), as a development actor, has taken a role in driving development in Tombo Village. The roles carried out included: (a)—mapping the potential to be used as a basis for planning an appropriate development program in Tombo Village. In carrying out potential mapping, the youth (ARC) collaborated with the Tombo Village Government and the Pekalongan State Islamic Religious College. One possible mapping result is to increase the potential coffee development in Tombo Village (b). They are forming a working group in the community. The working group currently being developed by the youth (ARC) was a farmer group. Farmer groups are considered essential to be created because they can become forums for all coffee farmers to exchange information to increase the knowledge and skills. (c). Mobilizing routine programs and managing community potential. If it can be maximally developed, the possibility of the village community will become the potential of the related village. This can then become a superior product of the town [17]. Based on the research results, it was known that Tombo Village has good natural resource potential for coffee cultivation. It was evidenced that coffee cultivation has been practiced in Tombo Village since Dutch colonialism. Most of the people in Tombo Village are still farming coffee, so the coffee commodity is still the second-largest plantation commodity after tea in Tombo Village. Therefore, to re-develop the coffee potential in Tombo Village, the ARC community's youth members, together with the Tombo Village Government, have agreed to carry out empowerment activities for coffee farmers. Therefore, the coffee farmers in Tombo Village can be empowered, and the Tombo coffee production results can compete in national and international markets.

3.2.2. *Village Assistant*

Village Assistance is an activity to empower the community through assistance, organization,

direction, and village facilitation. The assistant has a role as a "friend" of the villagers and the village government in developing programs to be prosperous. According to the Regulation of the Minister for Rural Development and Disadvantaged Areas, and Transmigration, [18] one of the village assistant duties is to assist villages in implementing essential social service management, develop village economic enterprises, make use of natural resources and appropriate technology, build village infrastructure, and empower village communities. Arcas, a village assistant, played a role in motivating and facilitating coffee farmers to achieve the empowerment goals. This assistance is needed to increase farmers' knowledge and skills to solve the problems they face.

3.2.2.1. *Motivator*

The empowerment agent's role as a motivator is to arouse the farmers' enthusiasm and influence them to be motivated to participate in farming activities [19]. Based on the observations results, it was revealed that basically, the youth efforts (ARC) in empowering coffee farmers were good enough because ARC took personal approaches by giving good treatment from the beginning of empowerment activities. It was done so that there was no distance between the farmers and the ARC. ARC tried to revive the coffee farmers' enthusiasm Tombo Village to develop Tombo coffee commodities through discussion activities between farmers and ARC. In the discussion, ARC tried to understand Tombo coffee's potential to be adequately designed and the benefits that coffee farmers would obtain. ARC also invited farmers to find alternative solutions to problems and help coffee farmers decide on alternative problems that suit the farmer's situation. It indicated that ARC's role as a motivator in empowering coffee farmers in Tombo Village had been carried out quite well, although it was still far from optimal.

3.2.2.2. *Facilitator*

The facilitator plays a role in facilitating empowerment goals. The adoption process can be carried out faster by discussing and exchanging information and experiences with the empowerment target [20]. In empowering coffee farmers in Tombo Village, ARC's role as a facilitator was to provide counseling and training. The informants stated that

ARC had carried out extension activities in empowering activities from the in-depth interview results even though they were not routinely carried out. If there were things that needed to be discussed, then extension activities would be held. The ARC committee also opened access for farmers to have discussions together. ARC also conducted training activities; the training activities held were post-harvest coffee processing training, good harvesting techniques, sorting processes, stripping, fermentation, washing, drying, milling, packaging, and storage. ARC also facilitated farmers to visit developed coffee producers and brings in coffee experts to hold discussions together. Based on this study's results, ARC's role as a facilitator for empowering coffee farmers in Tombo Village was quite good, although it was still far from optimal.

ARC has not been able to motivate and facilitate all coffee farmers in Tombo Village optimally because there is no synergy between empowerment stakeholders, thus causing the emergence of obstacles faced by ARC in empowering coffee farmers, including a limited budget, infrastructure, and no village government policies that support the development of coffee farming in Tombo Village. As a result, the percentage of farmers who joined the empowerment activities carried out by ARC was only 4% (12 people), while those who had not joined ARC were 96% (292 people).

3.2.3. Independence Village Pioneers

Independence Village is the village government and the community's ability to improve welfare through the potential of natural and human resources [21]. As the village independence pioneers, youth's roles include pioneering and developing independent businesses by involving an organized working group by utilizing existing technology and information developments. Based on the research results, ARC, as a village independence pioneer, invited farmers to develop Tombo coffee farming. So far, many farmers have suffered losses due to the low purchase price of coffee. The purchase price of coffee that intermediaries offered was Rp. 1,500-3,000/kg for coffee in the form of cherries. Therefore, to improve farmers' income, youth (ARC) have tried to increase competitiveness and the purchase price of Tombo coffee by improving coffee quality, branding, making attractive packaging, promoting Tombo

coffee through social media, and actively participating in coffee festivals. However, in practice, not all farmers could do this; thus, to increase the competitiveness of Tombo coffee products, ARC bought ripe coffee beans (red picks) and those that had been processed into green beans from farmers at a higher price than intermediaries, namely 22,000/kg. Meanwhile, the branding, packaging, and marketing stages were all carried out by ARC. The role of youth (ARC) was also creating new marketing alternatives that were more effective and efficient and raised the tourism potential in Tombo Village. The marketing alternative was ARC making a coffee shop in Tombo Village named Tombo Coffee. Under the expected goals, since the Tombo Coffee shop establishment, many people within and outside Batang Regency have come to the Tombo coffee shop to enjoy Tombo coffee and experience the tourism sector in Tombo Village. Based on this, the coffee farmers benefit, and, as a whole, the people of Tombo Village also feel the benefits. The Tombo Coffee shop, apart from being used to sell ARC coffee, was also often used for workshop events. The goal is to make Tombo Coffee a place to enjoy coffee and a coffee education center.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study can be concluded that the role of youth as agents of change is vital. The child in Tombo village has performed their role as agents of change quite well. Still, the lack of synergy between stakeholders led to the empowerment of coffee farmers in Tombo Village is less optimal. the lack of synergy stakeholder relationships led to the emergence of obstacles faced by ARC, including a limited budget, infrastructure, and the lack of village government policies that support the development of coffee commodities, as a result of the participation of coffee farmers in empowerment is low.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Through this research, the authors have described the role of ARC as an agent of change. The authors hope that the results of this study can be used as evaluation materials and a reference to improve the empowerment activities of coffee farmers in Tombo Village. The author also suggested that ARC streamline communication in

development to all stakeholders to create synergistic relationships to cultivate and develop farmer participation in empowerment activities.

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