

The Church and Humanity: Efforts to Overcome Poverty Problems in Kupang City, NTT

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Abstract— Poverty is a problem shared by all countries, including Indonesia. The causes and effects are varied. They are starting from health problems economics to security. After all, there can be looting because there is a gap between the poor and the rich. This fact calls on all parties to minimize the gap, including the Church. This study aims to find out the actions of the Church in tackling the problem of poverty. The research method used is a qualitative case study with examples in East Nusa Tenggara's Kupang area. The results of the study indicate that actions that the Church can take in tackling the problem of poverty are by opening a Multipurpose Cooperative (KSU), creating employment opportunities, Short Term Assistance (Lambung Yusuf), and long-term assistance (annual assistance). Through this action, the Church has reduced poverty in Kupang.

Keywords—poverty; church; diaconia; Kupang

I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty describes individuals or groups who experience a problematic situation in meeting the needs of life [1]. Poverty is also known as a problem experienced by all nations. There are many definitions of poverty, but poverty is generally defined as a condition of complete deprivation [2]. The problem of poverty is not only thought of by a few individuals but is a problem that leaders in various countries think about. In Indonesia, this type of social problem is still a complicated thing to overcome [3]. Thompson noted that poverty rates in Asian countries have been very high for a long time. For example, Bangladesh and the Philippines, whose poverty rate is almost 80% of the total population. Thompson further explained that 60% of the world's population is globally, and almost all countries in Asia are developing countries, except for Japan, North Korea, South Korea, and Singapore. The

latest data in the Pandemic era also shows an increase in the number of poor people in Asia-Pacific. In 2020 there will be an increase in the number of people below the poverty line, namely the addition of approximately 3.4 million people who earn below \$1.9 (approximately IDR 27,000) per day and an additional 10.7 million people who earn below \$3.20 (approximately IDR 46,000) per day. This expects to continue to increase in 2021, bringing a total of 89 million people earning under \$1.9 per day, 158 million people earning under \$3.2 per day, and 172 million people earning under \$5.50 per day [4]. So Thompson encouraged Christianity to echo the good news for the poor. Because if not, then Christianity is irrelevant and not good news for Asia [5].

When viewed from the state's role in addressing the problem of poverty. The government created a legal stipulation in Articles 33 and 34 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that natural wealth must manage for the community's welfare, especially those in need, such as the poor and neglected children. State assets must be used for the public interest to create social welfare for all Indonesian people [6]. The problem of poverty haunts the leaders in a country and church leaders in carrying out their duties as a religious institution in a country. Thus the Church, whose existence as a religious institution, has a crucial role in maintaining the faith of the believers. Abraham said that the faith of Christians is a hope to solve a social problem that occurs in society in every country [7].

The presence of the Church in people's lives must have an impact. The Church must maintain the harmony of human life. This can do by participating in overcoming the problem of poverty that still occurs in Indonesia or a specific area. In this

way life of every Christian has an impact in an environment where there is a church or association of believers [8]. Given that there is one task, the Church seeks to empower each individual to resolve every crisis.

When viewed from its duties and vocations, the Church is present in the world to carry out the tasks that God has entrusted to it, which are commonly referred to as the Church's Three Tasks, including; *Koinonia* which means fellowship, *Marturia* which means witnessing, and *Diakonia* which means serving [9]. In some churches tend to ignore the deacon service, which is one of the duties of this Church, only a few of the many churches play an active role in carrying out diaconal services [10]. Diaconal service is one of the Church's actions in helping people who crush by social problems. The Church is present to talk about heavenly things, but the Church can also meet the needs of humans on earth [11].

East Nusa Tenggara Province is an area that is backward in various ways—starting from education, even economics. Data released by the Central Statistics Agency states that the province of East Nusa Tenggara is the third poorest area after Papua and West Papua in Indonesia [12]. **The percentage of poor people is increasing every year.** Furthermore, according to the same data, most of the population of East Nusa Tenggara adheres to Christianity. This study aims to highlight how the role of the Church in tackling the problem of poverty in the city of Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara.

II. METHOD

Data analysis using NVIVO application. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The approach used in operational research is through a problem-solving cycle consisting of (i) measuring the magnitude of the problem, (ii) finding the cause of the problem, (iii) developing solutions, (iv) implementing interventions/programs, and (v) program evaluation [13]. This research was conducted from January 2021 to August 2021, located in one of the churches in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province, namely the Gereja Bethel Indonesia Tunas Daud, Kupang. Data was collected by interviewing key informants and selected based on predetermined criteria: the pastor as a program maker or church leader, several church administrators, and some congregations who received services from the Church.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. Church Principles in Facing the Reality of Poverty

Poverty is a problem experienced by many countries. One of the factors causing poverty is the wrong self-concept in responding to life's difficulties [14]. Therefore, the concept of thinking of GBI Tunas Daud leads to the presence of a church that must be able to become the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Present to manage and carry out the responsibilities that God has given. This can see from the vision and mission—namely, Building the Kingdom of God in the context of the second coming of Jesus. Therefore, there is

a deacon service to make the Church a house of treasury and a house of empowerment. This concept is in line with the poverty alleviation strategy in the Bible. The concept of giving Tithe Offering belongs to God.

Moreover, it is intended for the Levites and the poor, including orphans, widows, and foreigners [15]. With the concept of tithing, the poor get help from the House of God. Tunas Daud became an extension of God's hand on the earth and was an institution that performed banking functions before the advent of modern banking [16].

Diakonia calls respond to by conducting three types of diaconia. First, the Charitable form of Diakonia is usually practiced by the Church and social workers [17]. The visible action is providing food, necessities, charity, comforting the sick, and praying as a charitable service. This ministry model is like the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the incident of Jesus feeding five thousand people (Matt. 14:13-21). This illustrates serving fellow religions and all people regardless of ethnicity, race, and religion. Second, reformative diakonia or known as development diakonia. This Diakonia realized by helping hungry people create jobs, so it can conclude that the reformative diaconia service starts with infrastructure development, then provides training and lends money as capital to open a business. The third is transformative Diakonia, which aims to change the social, cultural, economic, and political fields [18]. Transformative diaconia is a service that pays attention to and empowers people who have lost their rights and encourages people to believe in themselves through empowerment [19].

B. The Indonesian Bethel Church Tunas Daud's Actions in Alleviating Poverty

The reality of poverty in Kupang causes the Church to focus on economic problems. Because the community's economy is not improved, it will impact the choice of work. People and even church congregations can fall into criminal acts to fulfill their daily needs. In the following, we will describe the actions taken by the Indonesian Bethel Church Tunas Daud in alleviating poverty in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara.

First, open the *Koperasi Serba Usaha (KSU) Tunas Daud*. KSU Tunas Daud embodies the Church's vision and mission as a Treasury. The formation of church cooperatives, namely: Tunas Daud cooperative with Notary Deed number five of 2010, has been approved by the Mayor of Kupang. A church cooperative is a business entity that does not profit from its members but aims to prosper each member. The Tunas Daud cooperative aims to (i) assist the government in realizing a just and prosperous society. The Church longs for the presence of the Church to be a blessing to those around the Church. By trying to do what the Church can do for the congregation and the surrounding community. GBI Tunas Daud wants to participate in helping the government to overcome or alleviate poverty problems that occur in the city of Kupang; (ii) develop and develop the potential and capabilities of its members to

improve their economic and social welfare. The Church presents a place where every congregation of God gives business capital so that every potential God has given used to improve life's welfare, both from an economic and social perspective; (iii) providing business capital for members who wish to start or develop a business. Informing this cooperative, the initial capital used was church money and funds from several donors to help provide capital to the KSU formed by GBI Tunas Daud. In 2010 the GBI Tunas Daud Multipurpose Cooperative was established with nine administrators. Besides providing capital, GBI Tunas Daud also facilitates each congregation's training to start a business.

Kupang and even outside the District of Kupang, for example, the Church in the district TTU, Malacca to the Church on Alor Island. The Church has discussed this with the Head of BPH GBI in the past period. Even Pastor Tunas Daud was allowed to empower the congregation's economy and how the Church builds economic institutions. However, it was not taken seriously, and there was no follow-up from the center. Finally, the Tunas Daud church started to empower each of God's entrusted congregations by opening KSU Tunas Daud. In the 2016 Regional Council meeting, the membership of KSU GBI Tunas Daud was among local church congregations and began to help churches in the District. The provision of capital to churches is usually more directed to building churches or churches that want to have missions to remote areas. This is the spirit of the Pentecostal mission [20]. However, the cooperative saw that the churches were less cooperative in this empowerment program over time. Judging from how the loan installments deposit, and finally seemed to lose confidence to work together.

In handling this problem, the management of KSU Tunas Daud has tried to contact churches or parties who are collaborating with GBI Tunas Daud, but there has been no good response from the parties concerned. In the end, the course of KSU was a bit blocked because of the problems experienced. The New Testament Bible in the concept of Ronald Sider's interpretation in Eliezer's writings about the role of the early Church in Jerusalem is proof of genuine concern in helping the poor. Acts 2:45 and chapter 4:34 states that actions are repeated over time to assist the poor [15].

Second, Creating Jobs. The role of the Church in addressing the following problem of poverty is to provide a place for photocopying and hospitality businesses. This micro-enterprise belongs to the pastor of the congregation given for a joint business. It will facilitate the congregation who wants to learn to build a micro-enterprise. The facilities obtain in a shop for a place of business without paying rent every month. Every congregation who desires to build a business or business, even in the rental of church shophouses, produces a pretty good impact. Because through the efforts made by the congregation, it can create jobs for other people. As is generally known, the strategy for overcoming the problem of poverty is to provide job opportunities for unemployed people who have no income [21].

Third, Short Term Assistance (Lumbung Yusuf). The Church's next role is the Yusuf barn program, a monthly program routinely provided by GBI Tunas Daud to the congregation. In this program, the Church provides several types of necessities distributed to widows, widowers, and orphans in the Church. However, Lumbung Yusuf's assistance may also distribute to each congregation. The short-term assistance that the Church provides is not only within the church congregation, but the Church is collaborating with the Oesapa Village, Kupang City, to distribute the Yusuf barn for the community in the Oesapa Village Kupang City.

Especially for the photocopy business, apart from the shepherd providing a place of business, the KSU GBI Tunas Daud also facilitates the supply of photocopiers, paper, printing equipment, laptops, and other business equipment. The income from this photocopying business arranged to be deposited to the cooperative, pay rent for the building and pay the church members' wages. Most people employed in photocopying and hospitality businesses are children from areas studying or studying in Kupang. The employment opportunities provided by the Church can help them to meet the necessities of life while studying and, at the same time, ease the burden on parents in paying for all their children's needs. In addition to the jobs provided, the children gave a free place to live, located next to the Church. There facilitate all their activities related to their work, education, and ministry in the Church [22].

Fourth, long-term assistance (annual assistance). GBI Tunas Daud provided long-term assistance by assisting in constructing several local churches. One of them is the Church of Tiberias. The provision of assistance in stages every year to celebrate the Church's anniversary. Another long-term assistance is with Kelurahan Oesapa to distribute 200 food packages for widows in Kelurahan Oesapa Kota Kupang. The diaconal service carried out by GBI Tunas Daud is more focused on Reformative diaconia, where the Church plays a role in providing training to start new businesses. The Church also provides a place to work. There is even a capital loan for every congregation who wants to recover from an unfavorable economic situation.

Some of the Church's efforts to empower the congregation have yielded promising results. Every congregation that opens a business can also create job opportunities for other people outside the Church. In addition, every congregation trains to be responsible for living life through every potential and gift God has given. In the research conducted, researchers obtained information that GBI Tunas Daud also cooperates with several other churches in the KSU program. However, according to the pastor and KSU management, the cooperation process did not go well. Because there are parties who are not responsible for working together, starting from the problem of depositing installments that are not smooth, and the response is not good. Thus, researchers see that not all churches have the same view or understanding in their role in tackling the

problem of poverty that occurs in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Church is God's trust institution throughout the world, effectively carrying out each of its duties and vocations if the Church has a concept of right thinking in carrying out each of its obligations. They collaborate with colleagues from God's churches, government, and even institutions or organizations with the same understanding so that the cooperation can run in a conducive manner. Seeing the role of GBI Tunas Daud through every service carried out, the researcher concludes that this Church is quite good at handling the congregation's poverty problem, although some shortcomings must address.

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