

The Empowerment of Coastal Women Through Capacity Improvement of Seaweed Farmer Groups

Obstacles and Challenges

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Abstract This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the institutional capacity development program of women's groups in the coastal area of Sanrobone District of Takalar Regency and possible factors that influence achievement of the program. The research approach used is qualitative approach with in-depth interview data collection and focus group discussion (FGD). In-depth interviews are used to reveal the effectiveness of programs that have been provided to women's groups and their constraints. While FGD is used to collect information on issues related to the effectiveness of the women's capacity building program to further serve as a basis in providing input to related parties so that programs can be made effective. The results show that a number of capacity building programs that have been provided to coastal women's groups, both from government, banking, and the private sector, have in fact not had a significant effect on the welfare of coastal women. In terms of skills, capacity building programs have been effective in improving the ability of women in the group to process seaweed into various types of processed foods. However, in terms of institutions, women's groups have not been well developed due to several issues: related to group management issues, capital and marketing issues.

Keywords: seaweed, coastal woman, empowerment of coastal woman, capacity capacity building, Sanrobone Sub-district

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end 1980 or early 1990, Government in developed countries have started to realize that public policy cannot be free value or without value, but it must contain value of gender equality and women's empowerment [1]. Women's empowerment as a variable in international development [2]. Women empowerment and economic development are closely related: in one direction, development alone can play a major role in driving down inequality between men and women; in the other direction, empowering women may benefit development [3].

The number of women reaching 125.5 million people or 49.75% of the total population of Indonesia is a huge potential to be empowered in development program. Women empowerment have got serious attention today, since the gap

between men and women in almost every aspect of life are still quite wide.

The description of the gap can be obtained using perspective of *Human Development Report* using *Gender-related Development Index (GDI)* and *Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)* as two ways of gender injustice measurement [4]. Women's participation [5] in national development is predicted to increase from year to year. However, Women in Development Approach (WID) introduced by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that women are resource that has not been utilized optimally to contribute to economic development. It means that women and development have been highlighted internationally, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a more comprehensive study.

The term empowerment has been largely defined by experts, but there is a clear agreement for interdisciplinary science. In the social sciences, the term concept of community empowerment is interpreted as an effort to give power for their voices to be heard in order to contribute to the planning that affects the community. Empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of relative control over one's life, destiny, and environment [6]. Meanwhile, [7] argued that empowerment as a process in leadership education is seen as fundamental to community development. Community empowerment is a process of re-negotiating power in order to gain more control. It recognizes that if some people are going to be empowered, then others will be sharing their existing power and giving some of it up [8].

Women's empowerment is a process of enhancing women's capacity to have competence to manage village resources in the sense of having the competence to: (1) be involved in determining the need for improvements of the population and village institutions; (2) participate on every stage of activity in the sense of being in decision-making and represented at every stage of the activity, (3) access all aspects of life, (4) control in the sense of self-control and community control. One of ways to empower women is through group formation. Women who

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are members of a group will have a greater bargaining position. Through the group, women will be able to get better assistance and guidance from the government easily.

Women who are on the coast of Sanrobone District have formed several groups of women but in their development, have not been able to empower them. It is the main reason of this research, why the existing women's groups have not been optimal compared to other women's groups in Indonesia, what programs of capacity improvement have been gained, and what obstacles are faced so programs of capacity improvement cannot be effective to empower women who are members of coastal women's groups at Sanrobone District, Takalar Regency.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The subject of the study was a group of women residing along the coast of Sanrobone District of Takalar Regency. The focus of the research is the women's capacity building program and its effectiveness in improving the welfare of coastal women's groups.

The study employs qualitative method with in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD). The informants were the heads and members of the women's group, the Sanrobone sub-district head, the Takalar District Fisheries Department, the Head of the Takalar District Office of Industry.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sanrobone District is one of districts in Takalar Regency that produces seaweed. Along the coastline of Sanrobone District is used by local people to grow seaweed. There are three types of seaweed that are often grown by coastal community such as Euchouma Cottoni, Gracilaria, and Spinossum. The result of seaweed is sold directly in wet conditions, some of them are dried and then sold. Women who are on the coast seeing this seaweed as a business opportunity if it can be processed into various processing. Based on that fact, fishery counseling officer assists the women to establish groups.

Women are the assets (capital) of the nation and the State that has a high fighting power, especially in the face of various challenges of life, especially economic problems. As an asset, the government needs to pay serious attention especially in increasing their capacity to create independent women so as to help the family economy. There are many potentials on the coast that can be managed by women, such as in the coastal district of Sanrobone Takalar District which is one of the producers of seaweed in South Sulawesi. To produce seaweed with high economic value, it takes skill and expertise to manage it.

Since 2010, there have been 5 groups of women that have been established, those groups are (1) *Assamaturu* (2) *Julu Atia* (3) *Sehati*, (4) *Bunga Pesisir*, and (5) *Mawar*. The number of members for each group around ten people, except *Assamaturu* Group consisting of 13 members. At the beginning of its establishment was actually only 10 members, but since 2014 the number increased to be 13 members. Average of education level of group members is secondary school.

The following descriptions are some institutional capacity building programs that have been provided by the government and private sector to coastal women's groups.

A. Description of Institutional Capacity Building Program for Coastal Women Group

Capacity building is understood as an effort to assist governments, communities and individuals in developing the skills and skills required to realize their goals. Capacity building is a term used to build a society through change in itself, for example the improvement of science, skills, organizing the program and others. Capacity building is a model of change process, developmental movement as well as individual, group, organizational changes and changes in the formation of frame work of a system towards the better. Thus, capacity building can be done individually or organizationally or institutionally. In this study, it refers to the development of institutional capacity of coastal women to improve their skills and abilities so as to improve their quality for the better. In the capacity building efforts of coastal women's groups, the government and the private sector have implemented various programs that are expected to improve the skills of women who are members of the group.

Based on the results of interviews and document tracing, data and information related to capacity building programs addressed to coastal women groups are as follows:

Table 1. Type of Training that has been followed by Coastal Women Group

No.	Type of Training	Training Objectives	Organizer	Year
1	Appropriate technology	Improving women's ability to utilize appropriate technology	Manpower office	2010
2	Processing of seaweed	Improve the skills of women to process seaweed into a variety of seaweed processed foods	Department of Industry and Trade of South Sulawesi Province Cooperation with Industrial Training Center	2011
3	Small and Medium Industry Development Program	To improve the entrepreneurial spirit for women To improve the entrepreneurial spirit for women	Department of Industry and Trade of South Sulawesi Province	2011
4.	Processing of seaweed	Improve the skills of women to process seaweed into a variety of seaweed processed foods	Regional Industrial Training Center 7 Makassar	2012
5.	Halal Certification Training	Provide an understanding of the importance of halal label in food products	The Industry and Trade Office cooperates with Takalar	2012

Table 1 continued

			District Health Office	
6	Institutional strengthening	To improve management skills	Fisheries Department of Takalar Regency	2015
7	Training of Fishery Business Actors	Improve fishery business insight	Fisheries Department of Takalar Regency	2016
8	Certification and Durability of Fishery Products for Small and Medium Enterprises	Increase product durability skill	Fisheries Department of Takalar Regency	2016
9	Workshop Certified Local Food Processing	Introducing various types of local food preparations.	Food Security Service	2016

Source: Results of interviews and women's group documents, 2017

In 2014, seaweed processing group has obtained halal certification from the Food and Drug Administration (BPOM). BPOM is a Non-Departmental Government Institution, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia No. 103 of 2001 is a central government institution established to carry out government duties in overseeing food and drug products produced by small, medium and large industries.

Based on data on the type of training that has been provided to women's groups, it appears that many capacity building programs have been provided, but have not significantly affected the improvement of family welfare. This is seen from the income level of women who are members of seaweed processing group, on average earning income that is still below the regional minimum wage of South Sulawesi province. This means that capacity building programs already provided by the government and the private sector have not been effective in improving family welfare. Proceeds from the sale of seaweed processed products obtained just to meet the needs of daily living.

Based on field study, this study identifies six fundamental issues regarding empowerment program for women in coastal areas. *First*, the selection of group business type has been adjusted based on coastal area potential. Most of the coastal community work as seaweed farmers seen as an opportunity for the group members. Raw materials are seaweed obtained by buying from seaweed farmers. Seaweed is processed into various kinds of processed foods such as stick cheese, *dodol*, syrup, crackers, meatballs, etc. Processed seaweed into cheese stick is a product that is liked by many customers because it tastes delicious and tasty. This product already has its own brand of product based on the name of the group and packed into interesting plastic. Production is still on a small scale and very limited marketing range, because it is only sold at home of group leader.

Second, training is not evenly distributed for all groups. There is only one of five groups gaining some training. The group is *Assamaturu*. While the other four groups only get one or two training, and there is even one group that has never

got any training. Types of training that have been obtained such as training on processing of hygienic and qualified seaweed, product packaging, etc.

Third, in addition to training assistance, women's groups also received assistance of production equipment. Equipment assistance is obtained from Industry Department, BRI Bank, and universities. Assistance of types based on group business. But there is assistance that cannot be used by the group because the cost of production equipment is really high. It is experienced by *Mawar* Group that proceed seaweed into local snack product which is known as *dodol*. The Industry and Trade Office of Takalar Regency gives electric pan production equipment. The electric pan cannot be used for production, because the electricity used is very high voltage. Production cost is not comparable with the sale result. Finally, leader of the group sells the electric pan to *dodol* entrepreneur in Takalar Regency.

Fourth, the groups do not have their own organization. The groups' effort to conducted at home of the group leaders, so the leaders of the groups are really important. Low capital factor is main cause. The groups do not have any budget to build a production house that can be used together by the group leaders. Assistance of production equipment that has been received on behalf of the groups stored at home of the group leaders, and used personally to produce. Starting from the capital, production, and marketing is done by the leader groups personally.

Fifth, marketing has not been clear yet. The marketing of seaweed processed products has limited consumer and marketing. The marketing of processed products is still done at home of the group leaders so that the customers are still limited to neighbors and relatives.

Sixth, business management is still weak. It also becomes an obstacle. It is seen from the ability of group leaders to move the members. It is seen that only group leaders are active in managing the business, started from planning of raw material purchasing, processing seaweed, packing, until product marketing. Synergy between group members is still low.

This study finds that the capacity building programs already provided by the government and the private sector have not been effective in improving family welfare. This result is different from that of the literature in Western countries; however, it is accordant with previous studies in rural Asian countries.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the challenges of capacity building for women's groups in Indonesia. The first thing to note is the organizational capability of the program organizers. Is having a genuine commitment to increase the capacity of women's groups. Assessing the implementing organization of the program becomes important to be noticed by the government, so that the costs incurred for the training program can give maximum results. The organizational capacity can be assessed from the personnel belonging to the organization, whether it has experience in training, and how often training is provided, as well as the motivation of the organizers. This

is important, as this empowerment program requires the government's seriousness that the budget spent can have a significant effect on capacity building.

Capacity building is a challenge [9] for all parties to make capacity building programs can positively impact community empowerment. This finding is in line with the report of Crown Agents which suggests that there are 6 challenges for capacity building success, i.e. (1) balancing expertise, (2) contextualizing learning, (3) institutional development, (4) assessing impacts, (5) keeping up with technological advancements, and (6) diversifying the workforce [10].

The results of study show first challenge facing the government in developing the capacity of women's groups is to provide a balance of technical training and managerial training. The technical trainings provided have effectively increased the skills of women, but in reality, the increased skill does not have a significant influence on the development of the group. Therefore, organization are increasingly recognizing the need to balance building technical skills with 'soft' management skills to heighten effectiveness. Public sector organizations have traditionally focused on developing technical skills but we have seen that many are now taking a more holistic and sustainable approach to capacity building.

The research has provided some reflections on the practical implications. Public managers and policymakers in Indonesia should pay full attention to the challenges. This is important for the sustainability of women's group organizations.

IV. CONCLUSION

Generally, the potential of processed seaweed can be an alternative business for coastal women groups. In terms of skill, the women have been able to make the processed products that are liked by many customers. Because of the capital limitations so this business cannot develop optimally. The productions are still small scale and based on the customer orders. Increasing of institutional capacity of women groups in coastal area of *Mappakasunggu* district is not done optimally.

Women groups can actually improve if they can synergize together so it can strengthen their bargaining position in development programs. In this district, there are two types of women's groups, namely territorial and sectoral groups. Territorial groups such as *PKK Desa*, *PKK Dusun*, *Dasawisma*. While the sectoral groups are women's groups of processing seaweed, health care group, savings and loan group. But unfortunately, those groups have not been able to synergize one another so based institution, they are not strong yet.

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