



Social and Economic Empowerment for Village Women as a Strategy of Village Development

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K Kushandajani¹

*Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia
ningkisworo123@gmail.com*

Abstract

The issuance of Law No. 6/2014 that is followed with the distribution of village fund has led the rise of program initiatives from village people. One of the crucial elements of development that needs for attention is social and economic development for women. Women's roles in these two areas are significant as compared to the other sectors like politics. Developing women in these two sectors is expected to encourage further development in the village. This research is based on qualitative research using first-hand data collected from interviews with selected informants. This research used a case study as an approach and was focused on one village, namely Lerep, Semarang District, Central Java. In Lerep, we can see that the government have strived to a prioritized woman in their empowerment programs. The areas of development include health, education, domestic violence minimization, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and poverty reduction. As a result, women in Lerep could gain more income and enjoy some public facilities provided by the village government, which contribute to the improvement of woman health. In the future, there is a need to encourage woman empowerment as a framework for village development. Therefore, the advantage of the village fund will bring further impacts on society as a whole.

Keywords: village development; village governance; woman empowerment

1. Introduction

In simple terms, there are at least three schools of thought that discuss village development in Indonesia. The first school sees the village area and its community as something unique and specific, wherein driving village development, the approach used is a minimal role of government. The second school tends to see the village as something homogeneous and needs to be driven by maximum government interference. This thinking underlies the compilation of various village development blueprints, and the enactment of various laws and regulations, that make the village a 'government tool' in the development. The third school tries to balance the power of rural communities and the state in determining the direction and purpose of social change that occurs in rural communities. (Jamal & Jamal, 2017)

In carrying out village development, the government carried out development through two directions. First, with participatory planning, within the framework of development from, by, and for the village, which is called 'village building' (*desa membangun*). Second, technocratic planning, which involves supra-village forces, such as sub-districts, districts/cities, provinces, and central government, within the framework of rural development called 'building villages' (*membangun desa*). (Soleh, 2014)

Corresponding Author: Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia
Email: ningkisworo123@gmail.com

Within the framework of village development, the existence of Law No. 6 of 2014 can be seen as a government effort to strengthen village development. Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages also constructs village authority in Article 18, which includes the authority in the field of implementation of Village Government, the implementation of Village Development, Village community development, and empowerment of village community based on community initiatives, rights origin, and village customs. Meanwhile, Article 19 emphasizes Village Authority, which includes: (a) authority based on the origin of the right; (b) Village-scale local authority; (c) authority assigned by the Government, Provincial Government, or the Government District/City; and (d) other powers assigned by the Government, Provincial Government, or the Government District/City in accordance with the provisions of the legislation. Kushandajani's research found the authority of village-scale local authority using Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, as follows: (Kushandajani, 2016) "(1) development planning; (2) education; (3) health; (4) public works; (5) housing; (6) agriculture and food security; (7) environment".

Indonesia has accommodated women's participation in village development, with the issuance of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages. One of the things stipulated in Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages is the representation of women in the administration of village governance. Article 26 paragraph (4) explains, one of the obligations of the head of the village is to carry out democratic life and gender justice. Furthermore, Article 63 mentions the obligations of members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), one of which is implementing a democratic life that is gender equitable in the administration of village governance. More explicitly, Article 58 states that BPD membership is based on territory, women, population, and village financial capacity. Furthermore, Government Regulation (PP) No. 43 of 2014 on Village Article 121 paragraph (2) clearly states that village development activities must be determined based on gender justice; Article 72 paragraph (1) states that BPD membership guarantees women's representation; and Article 80 paragraph (3) states that the representation of women's groups is one of the elements of the community that participates in the highest decision-making process in the village, namely village meeting (*musyawarah desa*).

Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages has implications for the structure of the village community, which brings the dynamics of relations between members of the community. The law is a guideline or basis for the community and village government in carrying out village development. The Village has the authority to make programs that can increase the economy of its people. It is the Villages themselves that decide the needs of their villages, and look for ways to meet those needs. Thus, the construction of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages also acts as a strategy guide for village development.

In contrast to villages in Java, Papua uses a cultural model of animism to guide development there. Animism is a traditional village governance system that is known as a powerful tool, which has advanced from a historical and anthropological analysis of instructional products, designed by and for Papua. (Dumatubun & Suwandi, 2016)

Meanwhile, Sanneoul village was created in Korea to develop an ecological village to attract residents from crowded cities to rural areas, and provide a healthy community life. These considerations were included in the village development plan. (Nam, 2018)

The village development strategy includes how to increase women's participation in the village's social and economic processes. From the aspect of capacity building, Grindle more specifically examines three dimensions, namely the development of the human resources, strengthening organizational, and reformation of institutions. (Yunus & Sani, 2017) The most important problem in implementing development programs in human resource issues (staff skills and knowledge) (Keath & White, 2006).

Similarly, the health and education sector has become the main basis for measuring women's empowerment. The World Bank states that "Investments in health and education – human capital endowments - shape the ability of men and women to reach their full potential in society." (World Bank, 2012a)

The description above indicates that in terms of the policy, Indonesia has embodied a village development strategy that considers gender. However, how is a reality? This research focuses on describing how village women take part in the socio-economic empowerment, with the existing institutional institutions, and how socio-economic empowerment improves the quality of life (village woman).

2. Methods

The research aims to describe the involvement of women in village development, in one village in Central Java, Lerep Village, Ungaran Barat District, Semarang Regency, through two domains: social and economic in 2017. Through qualitative methods, with in-depth interview data collection techniques and secondary data in the form of village development planning documents, the research findings will be explained in this paper. Data analysis proceeded through induction, interpretation, and finally, conceptualization. The emic perspective was obtained through detailed and contextual data (induction),

in the form of data that is easily understood and detailed but has been focused, in the informant's original expression. The data was then searched for meaning, in order to find the meaning behind the story shared by the informant (interpretation), and finally, a concept created (conceptualization).

3. Result and Discussion

The Lerep Village Mid-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) for 2014 - 2019, is the first step of the village government with the village community, in planning several development programs in accordance with village needs, including community empowerment, which includes: (1) business training in fields of economics, agriculture, fisheries and trade; (2) training in appropriate technology; (3) training for village officials and the Village Consultative Body (BPD); (4) women's empowerment, which includes Family Welfare Guidance Programme (PKK) and Village Health Forum (FKD); (5) empowerment of farmer groups; and (6) empowerment of youth groups. This medium-term plan is then outlined in the annual plan, in the form of a Village Government Work Plan (RKPD) document, which appears in detail in the Lerep Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDesa).

Table 1. Lerep Village 2017 Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBDesa) based on Village Authority Grouping

APBDesa 2017 (Rp)		
Organization of Village Government	733,637,301	32.97%
Village Development	1,133,501,000	50.94%
Village Community Development	21,000,000	0.94%
Village Community Empowerment	237,375,000	10.67%
Unexpected Financing	10,000,000	0.45%
Other Financing	89,826,699	4.04%
Total	2,225,340,000	100,00 %

Source:

Table 1 illustrates that systematically, community empowerment programs occupy the third-largest budget position, after village development and village administration. This arrangement can be understood because 2017 is a year of infrastructure, where the central government encourages physical development to meet the needs of rural communities. Meanwhile, the budget for administering village governance is used from spending on village government activities to spending on healthcare and social security (BPJS), both health and employment. The community empowerment budget includes the capacity building of Integrated Service Posts (*Posyandu*), FKD and Pregnant Women, Farmers Group Association (*Gapoktan*), Early Childhood Education (PAUD), PKK, and *Karang Taruna* (youth groups).

The role of women is powerful in all social sectors, such as health, education, and poverty reduction. In Lerep Village, there is a village health forum, where 99% of those involved in village health forums are women "... because the men are not painstaking" (Sumaryadi, Head of Lerep Village). The village health forum, every once a month hold meeting; conduct monitoring, such as child mortality, infant mortality, possible residents affected by HIV; and discuss how to deal with these problems.

For the *Posyandu* program, there are obstacles in terms of funding, due to unclear authority between the district government and the village government. *Posyandu* is a program that comes from the District Health Office. When the Village Funds (*Dana Desa*) entered the village, there was an idea that the *Posyandu* manages independently by the village, through budgeting sourced from the Village Funds. This creates a problem, because of the inconsistency of the district government (*Pemerintah Kabupaten*) in managing the *Posyandu* program. "... until all *Posyandu* administrators were crosschecked, whether they received the funding twice or not. So, the issue of authority distribution was still not fixed; it was not regulated in the regional regulations (*Peraturan Daerah*), so we were just stuttering" (Indarsih, Treasurer of Desa Lerep). Also, there is a Young Women Forum (*Forum Remaja Putri/FRP*) that collaborates with PKK and is funded through Village Funds, which specifically accommodates adolescent reproductive consultations, and discussions on healthy sex issues.

In the field of education, often managers of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) are women. There is PAUD in Lerep Village, all of which are part of the PKK. PKK pioneered, as well as carried out companion cadre and develop the educator resources. Initially, educators were only high school graduates. Now, it is being upgraded to a Diploma in education, especially PAUD education.

Sundaram believes, "Education is many countries, such as Pakistan face the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development, and welfare" (Sundaram, S., Sekar, M., and Subburaj, 2014) Constraints on women's empowerment, for example, where very patriarchal cultural values make it very difficult for women to reach socially and communityly. In a sense, access to government is very limited. "In

a traditional society like Pakistan, the entire major, as well as the minor decisions related to inside and outside the house, are taken by the men” (Mujahid, Ali, Noman, & Azeema Begum, 2015). In fact, in India “...that access to education and employment are only the enabling factors to empowerment, achievement towards the goal, however, depends largely on the attitude of the people towards gender equality” (Nayak & Bidisha Mahanta, 2009). Therefore, a strong commitment is needed, especially the government, family, school, and community (Aboo & Khalid, 2014), to proceed continuously in making the role of women active in the village development.

Women's empowerment in the education sector shows that the PKK is very active and able to mobilize human resources, for development purposes, by encouraging the principle of volunteerism. PKK works in villages across borders, ethnicities, religions, and classes, because of the concept of motherhood that prioritizes the interests of children, husbands, extended families, and nearby communities as a binding identity. (Soetjipto, Soetjipto, & Adelina, 2015)

In overcoming domestic violence (*KDRT*), the role of women is also dominant, although they often face obstacles in their implementation:

“Yes, I usually call the families who experience domestic violence; which is outrageous and indeed clearly categorized as domestic violence. I called them so that the problem can be processed, but they do not want to. One of my residents had her cheeks ironed by his husband when he was angry. I insisted that the problem must be processed. Still, she does not want to. I asked the reason was that she would feel sorry for his son if later his father became a prisoner.” (Sulis, women activist of Lerep Village)”

In the field of poverty alleviation, the National Community Empowerment Program (*PNPM-Perkotaan*), is now renamed as the KOTAKU (No Slum City) Program, under the control of the Directorate General of Human Settlements (*Dirjen Cipta Karya*). This is a central government program that operates in the village. All funding from the Central Government, but management is in the hands of the Community Self-Reliance Agency (*BKM*), the result of *PNPM-Perkotaan* formation. Nearly half of the managers and volunteers of the *BKM* Desa Lerep are women. The Comprehensive Village Development Programme (*CVDP*) on Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh finds “... the program has contributed much to human resources development through imparting training, organizing capital through shared-savings, harnessing local resources through participative planning, enriching entrepreneurial skills by implementing different Income-Generating Activities (*IGA*) through micro-credit, and on the whole, creating social capital for village development”. (Rana & Sultana Beauty Nahida, 2017) The role of women in overcoming poverty can also be seen from the efforts of women in *Kandangan Hamlet*. The condition of poverty in *Kandangan Hamlet* fosters community self-reliance through *Al-Hidayah*, a women's Qur'an recitation group. The recitation group routinely organizes recitation activities every Thursday night. In addition to reading the holy verses of the Qur'an, they also collected funds, according to their respective abilities. The money collected was used to add public facilities, such as loudspeakers in the mosque, buying concrete for wells, and even installing additional electricity facilities for the road (Kushandajani, 2008).

In the economic field, the Group of Women Farmers (*KWT*) *Sumber Hasil* in *Dusun Lerep* has a mainstay product of milk soap, because the *Lerep Village* produces milk. Meanwhile, the *Manggar Lestari KWT* in *Indrakila Hamlet* produces more products such as palm sugar, *kolang-kaling*, and instant ginger.

“*KWT* members are in their 30s, and above, all of them are women. Some are old. *KWT* are divided in here; for example, some make milk candy; some want to make milk or nurseries.” (Ratni, Director of Village Owned Enterprises (*BUMDes*) of Lerep)”

In *Lerep*, women have been involved in the production of agricultural and livestock products, because there are no problems related to land ownership and management access. A different thing happened in *Rwanda*, where women's access to land was minimal. *Rwandan* laws to increase women's access to land and assets through inheritance tend to have an impact in various fields. (Ali, Deininger, & Goldstein, 2014) Thus, it is essential to reposition the gender mainstreaming strategy in the agricultural development policy strategy in the village. The dual role of peasant women proves that multiple livelihood patterns are essential and strategic, as an effort to increase income. (Elizabeth, 2007) In the *Sambiroto Village Joint Business Group (KUB)*, which is driven by women, proves that women have added value to all citizens. (Kuncoro & Kadar, 2017)

In addition to *KWT*, *BUMDes* has also been formed in *Lerep Village* called *Gerbang Lentera* (an abbreviation of *Gerakan Pembangunan Desa Lerep Aman Tenteram Sejahtera*, or Development Movement of a Safe, Peaceful and Prosperity *Lerep Village*). This *BUMDes* has catering production branches, community-based waste management, tourism, fisheries, and agriculture. There are five work units: waste management, catering, fisheries and livestock, Microfinance Institutions (*LKM*), and department store (*Waserda*). The heart of *BUMDes* is precisely in their activities, which are driven by women. The existence of Law No. 6 of 2014 has positive implications for the formation of economic

centers managed through *BUMDes*. Initially, the community was indeed skeptical of the existence of *BUMDes*. However, after seeing the results can provide additional family income, the community's view of the *BUMDes* was more positive. It is proven that the ability of women in economic "... that enables participation in family economic decision-making. Individuals are empowered when they can maximize the opportunities available to them without constraints". (Rahman, 2013) The evidence that gender equality, particularly in education and employment, contributes to economic growth is far more consistent and robust than the relationship that economic growth contributes to gender equality in terms of health, wellbeing, and rights. (Kabeer, 2015)

The research findings that address the empowerment of women in the social and economic level indicate that the indication that all this time states that women are weak in the political sphere but have strengthened in the social and economic sphere has become manifest. Thus, the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, especially those relating to women's empowerment, also depends on how the village community is concerned, constructing the role of women in the political, social and economic fields. Based on the findings above, women's social and economic empowerment is strong, when compared in the political sphere, as Khalid's research stated "...that the forms, issues, intensities, and capacities of grievances may be diverse, but women are facing a constant gender struggle for equality ... The traditional fatalistic mindset of gender stereotyping is still very present and damaging" (Aboo & Khalid, 2014).

Why? Because the construction of the community concerned has not placed the position of women as partners in decision-making. A similar thing happens in the village. This affects women in the village to limit their work in decision-making processes because their presence is represented by husbands, who are also present in village decision-making processes. Although there are some women who have held positions as village officials, even in strategic positions as village secretaries, their work is still limited to executing decisions that have been taken by the village head through a village discussion forum. Never once was involved in drafting the concept, much less having a stake in deciding village level policies. On the contrary, in the social and economic realm of the village, the role of women is very dominant, because husbands do open up vast spaces in these two fields. When husbands go to work outside the home, women are active in village social and economic activities.

The findings have shown that gender equality in the village can move forward as in other places, with strengthened by world institutions that carry out the same initiation. The World Bank defines gender equality as equal access between men and women, both in the fields of education, health and assets, and opportunities, to earn income and become agents in development and decision making, as well as to get welfare. (World Bank, 2012a) Thus, gender equality is not only related to the process but also results, where both men and women are equally involved in the process of village development. This definition highlights the dimensions of ability to influence institutions, action, choice, and action. (World Bank, 2012b) Australia's Aid Policy, which was launched in June 2014, stated "... establishes gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority for development, and sets an ambitious target requiring that eighty percent of all Australia's aid, regardless of objectives, perform effectively in promoting gender equality". (Australian Government, 2016).

4. Conclusion

From the research findings, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, women's empowerment in Lerep Village has illustrated the strong role of women in the social sphere, through various women's activities in village social institutions, such as PKK, FKD, Posyandu, KWT, BKM, FRP for young women. In the economic aspect, women's involvement is very strong in the development of *BUMDes*, with various existing businesses. Second, through various women's empowerment activities, village women get direct benefits, both socially and economically. Socially, women can bridge the implementation of various village development programs, which are difficult for men. As for economic activities, village women obtain additional income for the family, which in turn will lead to an increase in family welfare.

Based on the findings, it can also be concluded that the main problem of women's empowerment is related to access for women in community institutions and organizations, which facilitate women's socio-economic activities. Thus, women can obtain and take advantage of their rights in improving the family's economic and social life. Women's empowerment can be pursued through efforts in creating a conducive situation, and strengthen the potential/power possessed by women.

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