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Pesantren-Based Economic Empowerment in Rural Javanese Community

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is not only limited to economic issues, indicated by limited skills, access to education, business and capital facilities, but also includes cultural and spiritual issues. As a matter of fact, most people in Grumbul, Karangtengah, a village close to a touristic destination of Baturaden, Banyumas, Central Java, have an income below the local's minimum standard. This may be due to their limited resources in economy, culture, and spirituality. Their lacking in these factors have possibly caused them to become vulnerable to trafficking, prostitution and crime. This paper is aimed to analyze economic empowerment activities by a pesantren-based community in Grumbul, which covers the enhancement of the villager's spirituality, business awareness, skills and knowledge, that are in line with their potentials and the available natural resources. The methods that are used are Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), observations, direct interviews, sustainable livelihood analysis (SLA), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The results show that these activities have significantly changed the mindset of these communities, and their spirituality supporting to such mindset. This is indicated by the improvement of their skills in using the natural resources around them, which goes and in hand with the rising intensity of religious practices in their daily lives.

Keywords: Economic empowerment, Pesantren-based community, and Javanese rural society

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a complex concept, which can generally be linked to a matter of economic, cultural and spiritual factors. Most experts have stated that poverty is not only indicated by lower income, lack of education, and poor nutrition, but also by limitation of health and housing services.[1] [2]Others argue that poverty should also include the following aspects: cultural, mental attitude and socio-political behaviors. Yet, the other also argue the importance of spiritual aspect such as the lack of religiosity, both in terms of knowledge and practice, to our effort of redefining what poverty is.[3]

To alleviate poverty, improvement programs can be implemented for enhancing the economic capacity (in a broad sense), eliminating less positive cultures, and increasing spiritual strength in the form of religious knowledge and practices. Thus, we must seek for alternatives ways of helping them out of the poverty trap. During the exploratory research on March 3, 2017[4], in Grumbul Karangtengah, which is located on the southern slope of Mount Slamet Banyumas Central Java we found that the community are poor socially, economically, educationally as well as spiritually.

The village of Grumbul Karangtengah is actually one of the beneficiaries of the Baturanden tourism destination, with abundant water resources flowing from the Mount Slamet, which is fresh and clean enough for supporting fish and fertile soil for farming. Most (around 90%) of the

families also had their fishponds, though only 20% of them were cultivated. In addition, around 60% of them also cultivated rice and secondary crops, goats, ducks, and chicken[5]. However, these works were not integrated yet, so that they were not efficient, a wast of food, labors, and spaces. Because of their lack of knowledge, they still used a traditional management system, which is not economically valuable. As a result, the profits of their cultivation were very low. Thus, the people in this area were not able to get benefit from the available resources in this area. To reduce sustainable poverty, a larger investment policy is needed to be focused on the rural area, where the majority of the poor live [6] and an agricultural investment is deemed more effective for the poor, than in non-agricultural sectors.[7] Besides, the community are vulnerable to involve in activities related to prostitution, drinking alcohol, and engage in brawls.

The objective of the study is to foster an economic and spiritual empowerment programs, focusing on, firstly, strengthening the economy of the Grumbul Karangtengah community through integrated fisheries by building their awareness of the poverty problems they experience and realizing the potential of existing natural resources to be used for their economic development. And secondly, strengthening the religious faith and knowledge, improving their basic skills in practicing their religion and improving their awareness to obey religious commands and to avoid forbidden deeds.

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2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Poverty, according to Moeljarto, [8] is not only a matter of welfare, but includes six other indicators. These are, a problem of vulnerability; closure of access to participation in production process, and a trapping in exploitative production relations with low rewards; a matter of distrust, emotion and social impotence over decisions made by bureaucratic elites at various levels; a means to spend all income for food consumption in limited quantity and quality, so that consuming low nutrition which results in low production; low intelligence and dependency, because of the large family responsibility that results in low consumption, which affects intelligence; and a cultural attitude that is passed on from one generation to another.

Poverty indeed is a complex issue that is not only about inability to fulfil material needs, but also includes cultural and spiritual welfare as the basic human needs, that according al-Ghazali's view, comprises of religion, soul, mind, descent, and property. This needs to be approached from various aspects.

Then, there are several theories about empowerment, as Ite stated that empowerment is to increase the power of economy of people.[9] Then, according to Swift and Levin[10] empowerment is an attempt to allocate power through changing social structures. According to Rappaport[11] empowerment is a way in the name of people, organizations and communities that are directed to be able to master (or rule over) their lives. According to Parson[12] empowerment is a process by which people become strong enough to participate in share control over, and influence the events and institutions that affect their lives. Empowerment emphasizes the acquisition of sufficient skills, knowledge, and power to influence the lives and lives of others that concern him.

According to Pranarka and Vidhyandika there are three forms of empowerment: 1. the destruction of power or power to nobody, namely the power that has alienated and destroyed humans from their existence, so that power must be abolished. This concept is often referred to magical paradigm; 2. Power to everyone (power to everybody), the power must be distributed to everyone, so that they can actualize themselves. This concept is called naive paradigm; 3. Empowerment is power to nobody or power to powerless. This concept is often referred to critical paradigm.[13]

Hogan, as quoted by Adi, presents five stages of a sustainable community empowerment process: (1) To bring back a recall disempowering/empowering experience; (2) Discuss the reasons why empowerment and discussion for disempowerment; (3) Identify problems of the project; (4) Identify the meaningful power bases for making changes; and (5) Develop and implement action plans.[8]

To measure poverty, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) uses the concept of the ability to fulfill basic needs. So, the poor are people who have an average expenditure below the poverty line, that according to BPS is as follows: (1) Poverty line is the sum of the food poverty line and non-food poverty line. (2) Food poverty line is the

expenditure value of the minimum food requirement which is equal to 2100 kilo calories per-person, per day. (3) Non-food poverty Line is the minimum requirement for housing, clothing, education and health.[15]

The measurement method used by the BPS, according to Suhariyanto (Head of the Central Bureau of Statistics), is higher than the average of the provincial minimum wage and World Bank standards.[16] The World Bank's poverty standard is 1.9 USD Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per-person per day, whereas the BPS poverty line is equivalent to 2.5 US dollars PPP per-person per day.[17]

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This community strengthening program used a community-based and participatory program implementation approach. The beneficiary groups became the subject of the program, while the research team acted as facilitators.

In assessing the potential and the condition of the village area, the research team used a participatory assessment method, with the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method: observation, direct interview, sustainable livelihood analysis (SLA), and focus group discussion (FGD).

The PRA method is part of the action research method. PRA is used to find out the problems in the community to plan together the possible solutions that can be arranged. In this method the role of the researcher is as a facilitator.[18] Action research is a type of research that offers an agenda of change in the level of knowledge and policy. By using the principle of participatory, this method is expected to be able to be comprehensive and synergistic in solving the contextual conservation problems. In principle, the action research method is a cycle of research activities that include several stages, namely diagnosing, action planning, taking action, evaluation, and specifying learning.[19] In this context, participatory rural appraisal is the stage of diagnosing and action planning.

The purpose of using PRA in this study is as follows: 1. to know the problems, needs, and potential associated with the community of the Karangtengah Grumbul community; 2. to know and describe the roots of the problems faced by the citizens of that community; 3. to know and to identify fisheries potential that can be developed to improve economic prosperity, and to strengthen the spirituality of community of the people; 4. to set priorities for economic and religious livelihood problems based on the criteria and aspirations of the community.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Activities Conducted in Grumbul Karang Tengah Community resulted in

4.1.1. Assets inventory

Data collection using the PRA method in assets inventory of the assisted community, is resulted in as follows:

- The assets of the Grumbul Karangtengah community comprised of types of livelihoods, social, physical, financial, human, and natural resources. Based on the demographic data of Karangtengah Village in 2014, the livelihoods/types of occupations in Karangtengah village are as follows:[4]

Table 1 Type of Livelihood for the residents of Karangtengah Village

No.	Type of job	Total
1	Farmer	337 people
2	Farm workers	200 people
3	Fisherman	- people
4	Entrepreneur	393 people
5	House wife	2.660 people
6	Construction workers	317 people
7	Trader	599 people
8	Transportation Entrepreneurs	10 people
9	Government employees	96 people
10	Nurse	1 people
11	Midwife	4 people
12	TNI / Polri	6 people
13	BUMN / BUMD employees	3 people
14	Retired	113 people
15	Craftsmen	329 people
16	Breeder	271 people

Source: Demographic Data of Karangtengah Village

The data showed that there were several professions that were vulnerable to poverty or to becoming poor, namely: farm workers 200 people, housewives 2,660 people, construction workers 317. They were vulnerable to poverty and to becoming poor.

The social assets found in this village was a strong social bond among members of the community. Most people in the community according to Mr. Seno were connected through kinship relationship and marriages.[4] Their physical assets included fish ponds, houses, and a good road. Their financial assets were 13 financial services which offer savings and loans, which were operated by the community.[4] With regard to human assets, most of the assisted groups were primary school graduates, with traditional skills in fish pond culture, skills in construction jobs, and traditional agriculture.

Table 2 Table Of Educational Levels Of The Community Of Karangtengah Village

Level of Education	Never attended	Not completed	Completed
Primary School	1.301	1.017	3.930
Junior High School			976
High school/Equivalent			605
University/College			85

Source: Demographic Data of Karangtengah Village

From the above table, it is indicated that the educational levels of the Grumbul community are mostly elementary school graduates (49.65%), not/never attending school (16.4%), not completing elementary school (12.85%), junior high school graduates (12.33%), high school graduates (7.64%), and higher education graduates (1.07%). The great proportion of the number of people who only finished secondary school or lower, and only a small portion of those who completed their higher education, had resulted in difficulty in finding a job, and eventually they were trapped in poverty. To solve this condition we gave the community a training in integrated farming skills in accordance with natural assets that they have. Their natural assets are the abundance of water resources available from springs and fertile soil, and the rich variety

of fish that can live in this water, including tilapia, patchouli, carp, and gourami.[4]

- Through the transect method, our data on the existing condition of the assets of the community indicated that the layout of the ponds and water sources were not suitable for fish-pun culture; and that utilization of the natural resources was still lacking. Due to the community demands, the team members, along with the community, have redesigned to optimize the fish ponds culture and the natural resources utilization. We applied of tarpaulin canvas at the bottom of each pond in order to minimize the lost of water.[4] The implementation of this technique resulted in significant increase of the fish harvest.
- In addition, the focus group discussions (FGDs) resulted in clarification and explanation of various problems encountered in the fish farming business such as the expensive feed and labor. According to FGD participants, there were different from the 1970s-1990s where fish farming were still good because of good fish prices, cheap feed and labor. However, after the economic crisis the price of fish became low, the cost of labor and fish feed increased dramatically.[20] In order to resolve these problems we feed the fish with *Azolla microphylla*. This alternative feed, is cheap and easy to cultivate in the pond without having to employ any labor

4.1.2. Workshops

The workshops had obtained reviews, feedback, and confirmation of the results at the identification stage, and various alternative strategies to overcome the problems faced, relating to economic empowerment, especially fisheries management, in addition to improving understanding and participating religious teachings. In addition, the conducted workshops produced several scenarios for strengthening community in fish farming: a. integrating fish farming with agriculture; b. integrating fish farming with livestock; c. strengthening the market with the formation of fish farming communities; d. integrating the Azolla system with integrated fish farming and livestock already existed in the community. e. encouraging and facilitating school-age children and adolescents to study religion in the Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren; f. persuading the surrounding people to participate in the activities of the Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School).

4.1.3. Participatory Program Planning

The community established a group and they participated in it, including in determining its program priorities, preparing its program designs, identifying actors of its activities, distributing authority, and specifying the work. The results are: a. capacity of fish farming business through integrated fish with the Azolla system; b. combining the Azolla system with integrated fish farming and livestock in the community; c. encouraging and facilitating the surrounding community to participate in the activities of the Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren, both in the form of religious learning activities and other social activities.

4.1.4. Parties Involved (stakeholders) and Forms of Engagement

Stakeholders engagement involved parties relevant to the issues and focus of service performed. The parties involved in this service program were as follows: a. KH. Sofwan Mabur and Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren in Karangtengah Village, Baturaden to provide assistance in religious and integrated fish farming development with *Azolla microphylla*. b. The Sumbang Village Farmers Group, Sumbang Purwokerto Sub district which has practiced an integrated fish farming system with Azolla to provide training and assistance. c. Faculty of Economics of Soedirman University, to provide training to become a business incubator. 4. The Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab and the Humanities of IAIN Purwokerto, to provide training to be a *dakwah* preachers.

4.2. Community action

In order to improve the interaction between people in the community, groups were created. In the groups, people were able to interact with others to build a desired condition together. In the groups, people also could learn from each other, cooperate, and compete positively to achieve progress. Kuer Lawin stated the essences of a group is not the similarities and differences of the members, but their independence.[1] In this study the groups is a group of people who has the same goal to integrate fisheries with livestock, by utilizing the latest findings, in addition to increase the religious knowledge and practice.

The community actions in the context of economic empowerment of the people of Karangtengah Grumbul included.

4.2.1. A Comparative studies into integrated fish farming in Sumbang sub-district, Banyumas district

A comparative study on an integrated fish farming plot by LPPM of Soedirman University, was conducted, because it had successfully implemented an *Azolla microphylla* system, developed by Supartoto. In this place, the facilitator team and the group members got an explanation from Mr. Narpun, the group leader who was trusted to accompany the student researchers of Soedirman University, related to *Azolla microphylla*.

4.2.2. Entrepreneurship training and management of the integrated fish farming with *azolla microphylla*

Training for this group was facilitated by Ir. Supartoto, M.Agr.Sc, from the research center of Soedirman University. The speaker presented about "the introduction and development of the use of *azolla microphylla* for self-sufficient farmers". According to him there are several problems to increase farmers' income. a. The high cost of poultry feed, fish feed and fertilizer, are factors that cause losses; b. Limitations to fulfill feed/fertilizer requirements, causing unsatisfactory growth; c. The arable land is narrow, resulting in a low profit. These three factors need to be solved. Now according to Supartoto, the solution based on his research for years, is an alternative feed/fertilizer, called *Azolla microphylla* with efficient land use.

4.2.3. Planting practice of *Azolla microphylla* with tarpaulin media

The *azolla* planting model was done with the following steps: a. tarpaulin ponds; b. ground pool; c. intercropping with floating nets; and d. *azolla* flat. Integrated farming model of circulating duck pool → stratified *Azolla* pool → catfish pond → *azolla* tarpaulin pond → *azolla* tarpaulin pond 2 → back to duck pool.

4.2.4. Strengthening the residents' religious capacity

Community actions in the context of strengthening the religious capacity of the residents of Grumbul Karangtengah, include: a. the already established Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren organized formal education institutions called the education of the Quran (TPQ) and junior high school education; b. the Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren organized a program of memorizing the Qur'an which provide personnel from the surrounding community; c. The Pesantren organized Islamic studies for the neighboring community.

4.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

In monitoring activities, the accompanying team fielded two types of facilitators, namely technical staffs and social staffs. The technical assistance consists of two people from the researchers and two social staffs from the local community who are self-supporting. Technical assistants together with social assistants monitor the productive business activities of the beneficiaries from the technical side or those related to the community.

In the evaluation phase, we appointed a team of micro and macro economic experts engaged in small businesses and local communities to evaluate the feasibility of the program, which had been achieved and which had not yet appropriately done. In addition, the research team, together with the beneficiaries, also conducted weekly, monthly, and quarterly evaluations, and the final evaluation of the program. In addition, the performance of each technical facilitator and social staff was evaluated by leading researchers.

The improved knowledge and skills of the community of Grumbul Karang Tengah and the Darul Qur'anul Karim Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) were tangible, indicated by the improvement of their economic levels through integrated fish farming, animal husbandry and agriculture, using *azolla* as a source of protein and fish food, and a source of plant fertilizer. In addition, the spirituality of the community of the Grumbul Karang Tengah had also improved, indicated by their participation in various religious activities in the pesantren in the forms of Islamic studies, reading and memorizing the Qur'an, and praying in congregation. The improved spirituality was also indicated by the decrease in crimes and prostitution.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that a multi-dimensional endeavor of empowering human assets, through education, spirituality and skills, has resulted in optimization of the natural assets. The social assets, such as mutual cooperation, networking, and cooperation, are an invaluable asset in community that needs to be preserved. Furthermore, the utilization of natural assets must be environmentally friendly, and the financial resources must always be accessible to the community in order to avoid the trap of an interest-based bank system.

In conclusion, the economic empowerment of pesantren-based communities through enhancing their spirituality, skills and knowledge has significantly changed the mindset of the Grumbul community, which in turn solving their own problems through better understanding of their own potentials and the available resources in their vicinity.

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