

UDC 332

## **STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SALTED FISH PROCESSING IN PULAU KAYU VILLAGE OF SUSOH DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST ACEH REGENCY, INDONESIA**

**Lestari Rachmatika\*, Tjoetra Afrizal, Safrida**

Teuku Umar University Aceh, Indonesia

\*E-mail: [rachmatikalestari@utu.ac.id](mailto:rachmatikalestari@utu.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

Pulau Kayu Village, located in Susoh District, is 152 villages in Southwest Aceh Regency, a coastal area whose people work as fishermen with abundant fish resource potential. It is important to research because the development of this women's business group can also contribute to help increase the income of fishermen in Pulau Kayu Village. The study aimed to find out strategies and the challenges of women's groups in tackling the abundant potential of fish into salted fish. This research used qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Result research showed that the development of women's groups' 'Sepakat' in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency refers to the concept of *people-centered* community empowerment, with 3 (three) main characteristics, namely *participatory*, *empowering*, and *sustainable*. The challenge is that the women's business group 'Sepakat' has not been optimal in processing and marketing the production of salted fish business, so it has not been maximized to increase family economic income.

### **KEYWORDS**

Strategy, Community Development, Village, and Women Empowering

Pulau Kayu Village is one of the 152 villages in Southwest Aceh Regency, which is a coastal area, so many of its people in Village work as fishermen. Therefore, Pulau Kayu Village has the potential for abundant fish resources. Fish is the leading potential resource for coastal communities, especially fishermen in Pulau Kayu Village. Much likely, fish produced by coastal communities in Pulau Kayu Village, Southwest Aceh Regency, are sold at low prices. Therefore this situation is considered strategic to develop the Village's economy, for example, by salted fish processing carried out by mothers in the region. Through government policies, each Village has been given the authority to form an empowerment group program. This is evidenced by the provision of budget assistance for village funds of 20% in terms of village development (Presidential Regulation Number 104 of 2021 concerning Details of the State Budget for the fiscal year 2022, 2021), especially in the sector of developing the local economy. In the Village of Pulau Kayu, in taking advantage of this, the community took the initiative to create the potential of the Village by empowering the fishing community, namely by forming a women's empowerment business group, 'Sepakat,' in the management of salted fish.

The women's empowerment business group 'Sepakat' comprises women in Pulau Kayu Village who are engaged in processing salted fish. This group is part of an empowerment program by the Village of Family Welfare Development (PKK). It is under the supervision of the Village Head to help the economy of lower-middle or low-income families in the Village. With the formation of this developed group of women's businesses, the benefits are felt not only for the group but also the tiny fishermen in the region, such as the purchase of processed raw materials from business groups sourced from small fishermen with simple net equipment. So that the existence of this 'Sepakat' women's empowerment group can also directly help increase the income of small fishermen in Pulau Kayu Village.

However, the development of women's empowerment in processing wet fish into salted fish has not been fully maximized regarding production process techniques, processing, and management. They still use many traditional methods, limited facilities and infrastructure,

and fixed capital, and they do not understand group management and sound finances. Competition between coastal villages is also a factor in the narrow scope of marketing. Therefore, based on this background, it is essential to conduct research to find the right strategy for empowering coastal communities, especially the women's group of Pulau Kayu Village, in the future so that the challenges faced with increasing the family income can be carried out correctly.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Etymologically it is a derivative of the Greek word Strategies. Strategies can be translated as "military commanders" in the democratic times of Athenians. Initially, the term strategy was used in the military world, which was interpreted as using all military power to win a war (Mukhlis et al., 2021). define strategy as 5P: strategy as Perspective, strategy as Position, strategy as planning, strategy as Pattern of activity, and strategy as "Deception" (Ploy), i.e., secret deception. As Perspective, where the strategy in shaping the mission, the mission describes the Perspective to all activities. As a Position where sought options to compete. Planning, in terms of strategy, determine the company's performance goals as a pattern of activity, where in the strategy, a habit is formed, namely feedback and adjustments (Hutabarat, 2006).

The word "program" in the definition concerns managers' active, conscious, and rational role in formulating organizational strategies. The strategy provides an integrated briefing for the organization and the various objectives of the organization and provides guidelines for the utilization of corporate resources used to achieve the goals. Furthermore, strategy can also be defined as a pattern of an organization's response to the environment over time (Handoko, 2012). Three reasons show the importance of strategic planning, namely (1) Strategic planning provides a basic framework in which all other forms of planning must be taken, (2) Understanding strategic planning will facilitate the understanding of other forms of planning, and (3) Strategic planning is often the starting point for understanding and assessing activities in the organization (Kurnianingsih et al., 2017).

Community empowerment is very often spoken about and known in the community because the poverty rate in society is increasing in Indonesia. Poverty does not only occur in rural areas where there is still limited information, but deprivation can also occur in urban areas. From year to year, the government has empowered the community with programs launched by all parties, both from the government and community organizations and professional organizations. The program launched is to alleviate poverty, but many of these programs have not been appropriately implemented (Pratama, 2016).

Robert Chambers, an expert whose thoughts and writings are devoted to the benefit of community empowerment efforts, argues that community empowerment is a concept of economic development that summarizes social values (Alfitri, 2011). This concept reflects the new paradigm of development, which is *people-centered, participatory, empowering, and sustainable*. This concept is broader than merely meeting basic needs or providing a mechanism to prevent further impoverishment processes (*safety net*), whose thinking has lately been more developed to find alternatives to the concept of growth in the past.

The main objective of empowerment is to strengthen the power of society, fragile groups that have helplessness, both because of internal conditions (their perceptions) and external conditions (oppressed by social structures that do not apply pretty). Therefore, to complete the understanding of empowerment, it is necessary to know about the concept of vulnerable groups and the causes of the helplessness they experience (Pratama, 2016).

Empowerment is an effort to build and overcome a problem. Empowerment can be done by developing the potential that can be used to solve problems. Empowering fishing communities in the Village begins with mapping the condition of the Village and the community, carrying out participatory research, and then planning and realizing collective actions. From this empowerment, it is hoped that there will be changes that encourage community independence through the development of processed fish businesses to market needs and processed innovations from the community to realize welfare (Zakariya, 2020).

Community empowerment, especially the empowerment of coastal women, can be done by several methods. Such as strengthening institutions in coastal areas by forming cooperatives so that fishermen can join; this is a very strategic decision supporting bargaining power and cooperation with external parties. Likewise, women's empowerment in developing the potential of their villages, such as salted fish processing, also needs institutional strengthening (Setyadiharja et al., 2018).

Women's empowerment aims to increase resilience in helping families. Poverty and low welfare are often attached to coastal communities, so women's empowerment efforts are an alternative. Empowerment efforts can be made by improving the quality of human resources through training by the government. For example, utilizing coastal area tourist sites as market locations and marketing by using technology, and the government facilitating the public to take part in comparative studies on knowledge of market expansion techniques. In addition, suppose there is a forum and institution that houses women's businesses. In that case, it requires the sensitivity of the government, especially the marine and fisheries service, to overcome various problems the community experienced through needed policies (Butarbutar et al., 2020).

Coastal communities, especially women, have been less than optimal in processing the fish produced. Hence, it is necessary to have new techniques or models provided so that they can manage the existing potential to improve the community's economy. In this case, the solution to empower the community is offered the ICZM (*Integrated Coastal Zone Management*) model to improve the economy. Therefore, it cannot only be felt by coastal communities such as women but can also be enjoyed by the entire community in general and stakeholders. In essence, empowerment begins with strengthening motivation in the community so that they can participate in developing businesses and effectively and sustainably (Hilyana et al., 2019).

In addition, based on Robert Chambers, the concept of community empowerment is also known for reflecting the new development paradigm, namely *People-Centered* (human-centered). Community empowerment is an effort to improve the dignity and dignity of the community who are in poor condition so that they can escape from poverty and backwardness. Empowerment is an effort to build community capabilities by encouraging, motivating, and raising public awareness of their potential and seeking to develop it into concrete actions (Kartasamita, 1996). Structurally a person needs to be allowed to actualize himself, a basic human need that cannot be denied. Therefore, the orientation of community empowerment is an effort to create a just and civilized humanitarian atmosphere and become increasingly effective and efficient in structural, economic, social, and cultural (Easterbrook, 1984). The success of the empowerment process is also influenced by the community's level of participation or assisted communities who previously started this empowerment with research methods to find out the existing social problems. According to Fay, in the book Agus Afandi et al., the primary purpose of involving the community in the research process is for people to see themselves and the social situations that suppress their lives (Afandi et al., 2016).

Content that community empowerment essentially offers a development planning process by focusing on participation, abilities, and local communities (Korten, 1980). In this context, the community needs to be involved at every stage of development implementation, from the planning, performance, and evaluation of the programs they carry out. It has a meaning, placing the community as actors (subjects) of development and not just making them passive recipients of services. Therefore, sustainable community development is a deliberate and directed process, prioritizing utilizing local potential and resources and prioritizing creativity, initiative, and community participation (Purnomo, 1996).

The following is a description of *People-Centered* community empowerment (human-centered) with 3 (three) approaches consisting:

1) *Participatory*

Participatory proximity allows us to understand better and manage the potential conflicts that exist so that they do not become confrontations and crises. The results of the participatory approach include the following:

- a. An approach to providing space for the public to participate directly in the decision-making process related to public affairs so that the decisions taken are based on *near-perfect information with high acceptability*,
- b. Since the participation form is direct participation (not representative), the participatory approach plays more on a micro-scale (RT, RW, hamlets, and villages).
- c. The space given to the community to participate must also be accompanied by the adequate authority so that the participatory approach also includes *the redistribution of power*, not just pseudo-participation,
- d. Nonetheless, the community is not left alone in utilizing the space opened and the authority distributed. For its use to be more responsible and quality, it is necessary to carry out processes of organizing, mentoring, strengthening, and empowering carried out by *outsiders*,
- e. Involvement of outsiders in a participatory approach is to organize, accompany, strengthen, and empower with the goal being community empowerment,
- f. Thus, there is a *necessary condition* for the participatory approach to be meaningful and not mere empty participation. The essential condition is the willingness of the government to redistribute power (*willingness to power-sharing*) so that citizen participation is accompanied by adequate authority,
- g. Eligibility needs to run parallel with the organizing, mentoring, strengthening, and empowering processes.

2) *Empowering*

Empower the community can be seen from three sides, namely (Sumodiningrat, 1999);

- a. First, creating an atmosphere or climate that allows the potential of the community to develop (*enabling*). The starting point is that every human being, every society, has potential that can be developed. No organization is entirely helpless because it would be extinct if so. Empowerment is an effort to build that power by encouraging, motivating, raising awareness of its potential, and striving to develop it.
- b. Second, strengthening the potential or potential of the community (*empowering*). These positive measures are needed, apart from simply creating a climate and atmosphere. This strengthening includes concrete steps and concerns the provision of various inputs and opening access to multiple opportunities that will empower the community. Empowerment includes not only strengthening individual community members but also their institutions. Instilling modern cultural values, such as hard work, thrift, openness, and accountability is central to this empowerment effort. The most important thing here is to increase people's participation in decision-making that concerns themselves and their communities. Therefore, community empowerment is closely related to the strengthening, cultivation, and practice of democracy.
- c. Third, empowering also means protecting. Therefore, the protection and protection of the vulnerable is fundamental to the concept of community empowerment. Saving does not mean isolating or masking from the interaction because it will dwarf the small and neglect the weak. Community empowerment does not make the community more dependent on various charity programs. Because basically, everything enjoyed must be produced on its efforts (the results of which can be articulated with the other party). Thus, the goal is to bathe society, enable it, and build the ability to advance towards a better life on an ongoing basis.

The primary approach in the concept of empowerment is that the community is not made the object of various development projects but is the subject of its development efforts. Based on this concept, community empowerment must follow the following approach (Sumodiningrat, 1999):

- a. First, the effort must be directed. It is what it is popularly called. These efforts are aimed directly at the needy, with programs designed to address their problems and as needed.
- b. Second, this program must directly include or even be implemented by the targeted community. Involving the people who will be assisted has several goals, namely, to make the assistance effective because it is by their wishes and recognizes their

abilities and needs. In addition, it also improves the power of the community with experience in designing, implementing, managing, and accounting for efforts to improve themselves and their economy.

- c. Third, using a group approach, because individually, the poor struggle to solve the problems they face. Also, the scope of assistance becomes too wide if the handling is carried out separately. This group approach is the most effective, and judging using resources is also more efficient.

### 3) *Sustainable*

In addition to problems regarding business governance, business development strategies, especially SMEs (Small and medium-sized enterprises) in Indonesia, are faced with significant challenges that cannot be ruled out, namely aspects of business sustainability or *sustainable business*. Sustainability can be briefly defined as carrying out activities to preserve the environment for future generations. In general, business sustainability or *sustainable business* has three essential components: a triple bottom line consisting of profit, people, and the planet, and an independent economy (Brinkmann, 2016).

MSME (Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) development can be analyzed by innovation and development sustainability (economic, social, and environmental sustainability) towards sustainable performance. The innovation strategy carried out by Micro, Small Enterprises in the form of product, process, and market innovations will impact the performance of MSMEs in sustainable development in an area. Therefore, business actors are expected to be able to carry out a suitable variety of innovations, ranging from products, processes, and marketing, according to the needs of sustainable environmental sustainability. It is a challenge for the government to continue improving MSME actors' abilities (skills). One of them is conducting training for MSME actors with limited education to increase MSME innovation. Innovation is not necessarily for-profit purposes but must pay more attention to environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

## METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research method used in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research methods descriptively aim to describe and explain phenomena related to human relationships and behavior under certain conditions through the perspective individuals and groups. In qualitative research, the methods used are interviews, observations, and documents to study and understand an individual's attitudes, views, feelings, and behaviors (Moleong, 2012).

The location of this study is Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency. The research location is selected because it is of the research theme carried out by the research team, namely about the development of a business group of women processing salted fish, where the Southwest Aceh Regency is one of the salted fish production areas. Therefore, the selected area is selected in Southwest Aceh Regency, focusing on the women's business group 'Sepakat' salted fish processor Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh Subdistrict. In data collection, there are primary data and secondary data. Primary data collection techniques were obtained through observation and interviews. It is a method of collecting data by observing and recording research procedures and the systematics of the phenomenon under study.

Meanwhile, interviews are conducted to obtain information through question and answer and face-to-face between researchers and informants. Interviews are conducted with pre-prepared guidelines. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from books, journals, articles, and media reports.

Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman models is performed after collecting the data. Data analysis is carried out through three stages. First, data reduction refers to the process of simplification. The data that have been obtained are classified, recorded in detail, and meticulously based on a particular classification. Second is the presentation of data. The data display shows the unity of meaning based on the informant's experience. Through the presentation of data, researchers will easily understand what is happening. This stage

requires creating a step that connects one data with another so that it becomes one. Third, conclude. This stage is the last.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined in the previous literature review, empowering women's groups 'Sepakat' salted fish processors in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency, which focuses on *People-Centered* (human-centered) communities, is carried out with 3 (three) strategies, including: *participatory*, *empowering*, and *sustainable* (Chambers, 1995).

This community empowerment focuses on the concept of "*people-centered*." Every member of the women's group is involved in every process of developing their business group, which starts from the planning, implementation, to evaluation stages of the program that has been carried out. It is essential to do this because the women's business group 'Sepaka' is the leading actor and not just a passive recipient.

From the research carried out, the women's business group 'Sepakat' has begun to be involved in the planning process. The research team interacts directly with the women's business group to know their needs to empower women's groups' businesses right on target. Furthermore, in the implementation stage, women's business groups are also directly involved in improving the ability to process salted fish. Meanwhile, in the end, the women's business group also jointly evaluated the form of empowerment activities that have been carried out to find a better pattern of improvement in the future.

In empowering the women's business group 'Sepakat' in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency. There are 3 (three) strategies that can be carried out so that the problems faced in the processing of salted fish so far as a form of helping in increasing family income can be resolved, including:

### **Empowerment of Women's Business Groups 'Sepakat' through the Concept of Participatory**

The concept of participatory in the empowerment of women's business groups 'Sepakat' in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency aims to be in the empowerment activities. Therefore, carried out can provide space for the target group to participate directly, starting from the decision-making process related to their needs based on information with high acceptability. Therefore, the form of participation in women's business groups that is carried out is direct participation, not just pseudo-participation. The implementation of direct participation that has been carried out can be seen from the performance of empowerment activities such as technical training provided by involving several related agencies.

Based on the results of an interview conducted with one of the women's business group members in this research activity. It is explained that empowering the Pulau Kayu Village women's business group needs various training in processing salted fish when members can participate directly in the activity. Improving their skills will be the initial capital in developing a salted fish processing business, and the marketing that will be targeted later also covers a broader aspect (Mardiani, 2022).

By involving the involvement of outside parties in the development of women's business groups 'Agreed' on salted fish processors such as related agencies such as the Office of Community Empowerment, Population Control, and Empowerment Female (DPMP4) Southwest Aceh Regency and the Marine and Fisheries Service of Southwest Aceh Regency in accompanying, strengthening, and empowering in the form of providing technical training, the approach with this participatory concept becomes stronger.

As outlined by the Head of DPMP4, Southwest Aceh Regency explained that through the training activities carried out. As a result, women's business group members can participate directly in realizing group capacity building, especially in salted fish processing, where increasing the capacity of this group will be beneficial for increasing family income in the future (Nur Afni Muliana, 2022).

### **Empowerment of Women's Business Groups 'Agreed' through the Concept of Empowering**

The empowerment of women's business groups 'Sepakat' through the concept of *empowering* is based on the introduction that every human being, every community, has potential that can be developed. That is, no society is entirely helpless. Therefore, empowerment is carried out by encouraging, motivating, raising awareness of its potential, and striving to create it.

The primary approach in this concept of empowerment, women's business groups, is the subject of the empowerment section. The women's business group 'Sepakat' empowerment efforts are directed at them to overcome the problems experienced during this and her needs. The women's business group has experienced 'Sepakat' issues, including production techniques still using traditional methods. In addition, limited facilities and infrastructure, fixed capital, inadequate understanding of group management and finance, and constraints in expanding market access are factors in the narrow scope of marketing. Therefore, the empowerment of women's business groups 'Sepakat' ini carried out through the concept of *empowering* is to include them directly in the provision of assistance such as salted fish processing training, to management and techniques for expanding market networks, all of which aim to provide the service provided. Therefore, according to their will, abilities, and needs, which in the end has implications for improving the power of women's business groups with experience in designing, implementing, managing, and accounting efforts to enhance the self and its economy.

Not only is direct empowerment given to each team of group members, but empowerment is also carried out in groups where they jointly become *problem solvers* in solving their problems. This group approach is essential so that the problem-solving carried out is also centered on the common interest.

Based on the results of an interview with one of the members of the women's group, 'Agreed. They hope that there will be assistance in the form of empowerment to their women's business group, not only trained in the development of salted fish processing capacity but can also be assisted in the management and techniques of market network expansion (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). Therefore, through training activities provided by the Marine and Fisheries Service of Southwest Aceh Regency, the empowerment strategy carried out is limited to solely technical training and management techniques for expanding the market network. The Head of the DPMP4 (Institutional Division of Southwest Aceh Regency) said that the empowerment strategy given to the 'Sepakat' women's group was not just training salted fish management techniques, but also institutional management techniques and expansion of market access. It is essential because empowerment strategies will become mutually integrated when the overall aspects of empowerment can be given to the target group, and problem-solving is also given focused on the common interests of the entire group (Maschi et al., 2021).

### **Empowerment of Women's Business Groups 'Unanimous' through the Concept of Sustainability**

The concept of *sustainability* in empowering women's business groups 'Sepakat' includes three essential components known as the *triple bottom line*: profit, people, and the planet. In the assistance that the research team has carried out and technical training provided by related agencies such as the Office of Community Empowerment, Population Control, and Women's Empowerment (DPMP4) of Southwest Aceh Regency and the Marine and Fisheries Service of Southwest Aceh Regency, the business development of the women's group 'Sepakat' was analyzed with innovation and development sustainability (economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability). The innovation strategy carried out by the women's business group 'Sepakat' includes product innovation, processes, and market expansion. All of these will impact the performance of MSMEs in sustainable development in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, and Regency Southwest Aceh while still paying attention to sustainable environmental sustainability.

The sustainability strategy also includes the sustainability aspect of the women's business group 'Agreed.' Therefore, the empowerment strategy provided only in the form of technical training and market expansion is not only sufficient if there is no sustainability in the women's business group itself. Head Village of Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency stated that empowerment of women's business groups must also be accompanied by sustainability from his business group (Feiock et al., 2013). The same thing was also conveyed by the Secretary Village of Pulau Kayu Village, that the sustainability of the business group is an essential aspect of maintaining the vision and mission of a business group established. Therefore, the empowerment strategy includes empowerment starting from the planning stage to the results of the sustainability of the business group. So that in this case, the purpose of establishing a women's business group, of processing salted fish to help improve the family economy, can be realized to the maximum and as expected.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the description of the study results above, it can be concluded that there are three approaches to the empowerment of the women's group of 'Sepakat' salted fish processors in Pulau Kayu Village, Susoh District, Southwest Aceh Regency. Through *people-centered*, namely *participatory*, *empowering*, and *sustainable*. Meanwhile, the challenge is that the women's business group 'Sepakat' has not been optimal in processing and marketing the production of salted fish business, so it has not been maximized to increase family economic income. Therefore, it is important for empowerment strategies that include participation, empowerment, and sustainability to be applied to women's business groups 'Sepakat' so that the objectives of helping to improve the family economy can be realized.

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