

Women's Empowerment and Development in Southwest Sumba

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Abstract: The border area becomes the main development focus of the Indonesian government. The acceleration of development in border areas is constrained by several factors, including the role gap between men and women. Gender equality, as one of the point in Sustainable Development Goals, is considered crucial to build a strong society. Southwest Sumba, as one of the outermost areas, has included women's empowerment programs and activities in their development policy. This study aims to provide an overview of women's empowerment and development in Southwest Sumba as a part of Indonesian border areas.

1 INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of his administration, President Joko Widodo has emphasized the commitment to build the nation from the border. He has also invited stakeholders to support and address the border development comprehensively, while strengthening territorial security simultaneously. However, there are several challenges in managing border areas, such as the poor condition of people who live there and the high numbers of cross-border crime (Wu, 1998). Developmental Studies suggests the social construction is eminently influential in society's attitude towards development, in which gender construction becomes a significant one. Most developed countries recognize and apply gender equality and justice in various aspects of community life (Steady, 1998). The Sustainable Development Goals specifically emphasize the importance of gender issue (Brand, 1996). This research will provide an overview of the importance of women's empowerment in the framework of border development.

This research has several specific purposes: a) providing an international perspective about partnerships between sub-national actors and international organizations in increasing awareness about gender equality; b) mapping the characteristics of Southwest Sumba and its major development issue; c) understanding the people of Southwest Sumba's

perception about development, gender equality, and men involvement in women's empowerment; d) mapping the women's empowerment in Southwest Sumba; e) analyzing the significance of women's empowerment in the outer island development; f) providing recommendations for the central government to build partnerships with local governments in terms of border development.

2 BORDER DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

There are three commonly-used terms in addressing the border, namely boundary, frontier and border per se. According to Prescott and Triggs, boundary is a line, while frontier and border are areas. Border per se is defined as the region between two countries that is bind to each side by national borders. Lapradelle explains the term border as the area of *le voisinage*, means neighborhood or adjacent territory and territories *limitrophe* means neighboring or territorial land (Prescott & Triggs, 2008). The concept of border covers not only the administrative authority, but also territorial one. Thus, 'border' will further be used in this research.

Indonesian border areas generally encounter various problems, such as irrelevant policies, tendency to grow more slowly, interest conflicts

between regions and the disunity in the planning of the border development. These problems have created inconsistencies, which lead to disruption of development programs (Budianta, 2010). Outer Island, like Southwest Sumba, is also categorized as border area. The detrimental characteristic of the outer islands is usually one of the main challenges to develop those area. In addition to geographically distant from the capital of the country, outer islands are generally isolated and have limited access to facilities (Sciascia, 2013). From socio-cultural perspective, the people who live there are generally very bind to their traditional identity and often resistant to change. Under such circumstances, transnational crime is most likely to occur.

President Jokowi seems to understand the problems of the people of outer islands. His government has prioritized the construction of connecting infrastructure, such as port harbors and airports, in outer islands, including Sumba Island. In the past, Sumba received renovation and expansion projects of several ports and two airports. Nowadays, Tambolaka Airport in Southwest Sumba can be landed by large-bodied aircraft. Besides economic development, the government has also emphasized the importance of education since education can accelerate the development and overcome various problems in the outer island borders.

3 WOMEN EMPOWEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Gender difference is not an issue if it doesn't lead to gender inequality. Gender inequality per se is the system and structure in which both men and women are potential in becoming victim of injustice (Fakih, 2008). The understanding about gender inequality can be deepened through existing manifestations (Soekanto, 2002). There are five forms of gender discrimination according to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment (2010): marginalization, subordination, stereotype, violence and workload.

The first form of gender discrimination is women marginalization. It is a term to describe the low status, access and control of a person to economic political resources in terms of decision-making (Hafidz, 1995). Marginalization, though is related to gender injustice, is caused by gender difference. Many jobs, namely kindergarten teachers or secretaries, are claimed to be inferior to men's work and often affect the salary differentials between men and women. Besides marginalization, subordination is also

considered as gender discrimination. It is commonly believed that one sex is considered more important than the other. Tradition, religion and bureaucracy often place women under men's domination. The fact also shows there are still community values that limit the space and movement of women.

Marginalization and subordination are highly correlated with the third form, stereotype, which defined as a standard image of an entity inconsistent with existing empirical reality. The stereotype based on the gender notion shows that one particular sex is inferior to the other. This condition leads to higher number of discrimination and injustice. Stereotypes can be found not only in the household level but also in the workplace and society, even the government and state level. The standard of value about the women and men is quite different, yet such standard is much detrimental to women. Women being labeled as "housewives", are greatly disadvantaged once they involve in men's activities, such as politics and business. On the other hand, men being labeled as the "breadwinner" tend to be overlooked.

The stereotypical view usually leads to the forth form of gender discrimination, violence. The word "violence" means an attack on the both physical and psychological integrity of a person. Therefore, violence is not only about physical attacks, such as rape, beatings and torture, but also non-physical, such as sexual and emotional harassment. The perpetrator(s) can be any individual or group coming from the household or society. The last form of marginalization is in equal workload between men and women. In a typical household, some types of activities are performed by men, and the rest are done by women. Current studies show women do almost 90% of the household work, but receive in equal treatment when engaged in public sector (KemenPPA, 2010).

The discussion above shows that gender discrimination has spawned various inequalities in family, society, nation and state. Apparently, women experience inequality much more than men do. As a result of gender discrimination, women's economic, socio-cultural and political conditions are at a disadvantage. This unfavorable condition will still exist unless the people do something about it (Lingam, 1994). According to the study of Gender and Development, the important concept that must be studied is women's empowerment. Women who undergo structural subordination are often hampered in developing innovations. Therefore, in the context of social relationships laden with gender construction, women's empowerment often has to be supported by empowerment itself (Ebrahimi-far, 2007).

The concept of gender developed since there was dissatisfaction with the concept of Women in Development (WID) in the 1970s, which basically viewed women apart from men. This approach aims to provide the greatest opportunity for women to participate in development. However, after approximately a decade, critics started to emerge (Darahim, 2003). The data from World Survey on Women in Development shows that at the global level, the constitutional expectations on women's standing in society and their role in development, have not been fully achieved.

At the national level, a situation analysis of women has been conducted to monitor women's position in society and their role in development (Tjokrowinoto, 1996). The reality of the position and role of women in the future is summarized in Tjokrowinoto's work. It is expected that years from now the demand for women in employment will increase, both in quantity and quality, due to the advancement of women's education. The agricultural sector will still be a place of female labor force. However, there will be a tendency of a decreasing proportion of female labor in the overall labor input per unit of agricultural land, i.e. from 65% in the 1920s, to 53% in the 1960s, and down again to 37% in 1970s. Consequently, there are two alternatives that can be done to overcome the decrease: first, diversification of farm business and increasing agricultural processing industries which absorb many female labor; second, preparing women in non-traditional occupations. Nevertheless, the main obstacle in pursuing the second alternative is the disparity in educational levels between men and women. Data show that women tend to work mainly in low productivity sectors.

One thing that seems quite positive is that, in many other developing countries, the global economic crisis, the debt crisis, and the policy adjustment have become obstacles to increase the position and role of women. In Indonesia, the global economic crisis has made some adjustments (devaluation, tax reform, etc.), which accelerated potential structural transformation of new employment opportunities for women in non-traditional sectors. Women's participation in the field of health and politics is enormous.

The WID approach has finally shifted its direction and policy objectives into Women and Development (WAD) by empowering women to play more active role (Fakih, 2008). WAD contributes significantly to increase concerns about women's issues and to develop better-off national and international networks for women's organizations. Through this

concept, it is expected that male dominance in public space can be reduced. As the concept progresses, criticism re-emerges since WAD is considered sharpening the boundary between men and women (Primariantari & Hardy, 1998). WAD later developed into the concept of Gender and Development (GAD), which is a more comprehensive and comprehensive approach since it does not release women's studies from the context of its social role.

According to Hubeis, in developing countries, GAD raises three perspectives on women's roles related to their position as household managers and development participants or wage earners, they are the traditional, transitional, and contemporary roles (Ahmadi, 1999). The traditional role or domestic role engage all the household work, namely cleaning, cooking, washing, nurturing children and many more as women's responsibilities. The role of transition can be explained through following examples: in agricultural areas, women are used to working on family farms, when in town work in the family business. While contemporary role is related to more independent choices for women in expressing their existence. The goal of GAD is to increase understanding that promotes capacity building and equality as well as to arrange an applicative approach that empowers women through strong local institutions.

In this research, women's empowerment becomes an important element in the border development. The problem of empowerment, which is inseparable from the gender justice and socio-cultural values, have become the identity of the people in the outer border of the outer islands. This gender insight also contains a very strong international dimension. Indonesia has specifically ratified various conventions on the protection of women as well as supporting gender equality in various fields.

4 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION AND GENDER JUSTICE ISSUES

Archer argues that international organizations give meaningful contribution to the norm system of international politics. Gender issues become one of the norms, which eventually turned to be the vision and mission of various international organizations (Archer, 2001). UN Women was established as a serious commitment toward gender injustice in the world. This function is closely linked to systematically attempt in transferring the values to all

members. This socialization is done through a special programs "He for She" campaign. In this process, UN Women will require the cooperation from all relevant elements. This campaign has become inspirations for Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment to initiate the programs that encourage men's involvement in women's empowerment.

5 SOUTHWEST SUMBA CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL

The border concept will be the basis to understand the characteristics of Southwest Sumba. Southwest Sumba's special characters can be a guide for development strategy in this region including those related to aspects of women's empowerment. Southwest Sumba is a district in Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia, formed by Law no. 16 of 2007, which previously was part of West Sumba. Its total area is 1.445,77 Km², covering 8 sub-districts that are divided into 94 villages (Kemendesa, 2016). With more than 319 thousand inhabitants, this region has become the most densely populated on the island of Sumba (BPS, 2015). With 97 kilometers of beach in length, this area has given the rise of potential as well as challenges depending on how the government and people of Southwest Sumba deal with this.

The interesting part of this region is the deeply entrenched ancestral tradition. This tradition does not only poses the main force of society, but also many challenges. Women's empowerment in this region has been initiated by local governments through women's groups that are engaged in the conservation of Ikat Sumba, which is traditional cloth from Southwest Sumba. Ikat Sumba is a rich traditional weaving technique as well as tremendous economic potential.

As one of the areas located on the outer islands, there are some interesting features of Southwest Sumba. The first feature is that the community of Sumba Island highly upholds tolerance and harmony among people with different religions. Albeit the Indonesian government only recognizes 6 official religions as a condition of civil registration identity, the majority of Sumbanese still follow Marapu as an ancestral religion. In the 2015, Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) data about the composition of Southwest Sumbanese population are only listed based on official religions. The population who follow the Protestant Catholics became the second majority in Southwest Sumba, while Islam became the third

major religion. It is interesting to observe how the religious festivities of Marapu, Catholic, Protestant, and Islam become a common celebration for the whole society. The condition is recognized to be conducive to implement various development programs.

The high agrarian conflicts and crimes have become a meaningful challenge for the people of Southwest Sumba. Poverty, low education and in availability of relevant jobs are considered to be the major reasons of this unfortunate condition. Besides, transnational criminal activities, like human trafficking, are often experienced by less educated women, who are the breadwinners of the family. The BPS data also shows the poverty rates comparison between Southwest Sumba District and Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) Province. As a new region, Southwest Sumba is considered to be more promising.

The local government has been actively cooperating with ministerial office in Jakarta to create some programs to empower women through gender partnership. The gender awareness and capacity building are expected to involve both women and men. One of their programs is promoting traditional Ikat Sumba produced by women in collaboration with men in Kampung Adat. This program tries to eliminate the marginalization, subordination, violence and workload. The economic effects from the program give an alternative choice for the job seeker and minimize the victims of human trafficking.

The government has also played an important role to increase the enrollment rate of school. There is a very interesting trend that more women enroll in higher level of education than men. Furthermore, from the interview with several key persons from both the government and community show some interesting findings. First, Sumba society traditionally does not distinguish access for women and men to education. This encourages women, especially those with good economic background, to pursue education to the highest level. Second, that educated women are respected and considered to be very influential. In this context, the Sumbanese women are allowed to choose their own role. Both of these facts become very important for Southwest Sumba to optimize women's contribution to development. The women in this region have unique characteristics that encompass both transitional and contemporary roles.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This study has found more supporting evidences that women's empowerment has become an important part of development. Men's involvement in women's empowerment is also crucial in implementing more successful development programs that are relevant to the needs of the community per se. Besides, empowering women is indeed a way to achieve more effective and equal distribution of development. Southwest Sumba local government and community have showed great efforts to support the government commitment on well-distributed development without removing socio-cultural identity. Southwest Sumba is a potential area of a pivot project of women's empowerment in the Indonesian border development as one of President Joko Widodo main policies.

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