

Socio-economic Empowerment of Womens through Enterprise Handicraft Activities "Meronce" in the Framework of Family Economics at Dolok Merawan Village, Dolok Merawan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, Province of Sumatera Utara

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Abstract: Women often become marginalized in society because of their powerlessness in contributing to family income sources, particularly to poor families. The socio-economic empowerment of women, especially housewives, becomes important in order to raise the dignity of women as well as to sustain family income. This community service activity aims to make women, especially housewives become more empowered, in the sense of better understanding the importance of organizing, having skills as an alternative to job diversification, and bettering the level of their economic welfare. To achieve these objectives, the method of devotion used is lecture and discussion techniques, handicrafts training "meronce" by providing tools and equipment, and strengthening management of existing organizations of existing business groups. The results of the devotion show that women belonging to two Joint Business Groups can understand the lectures conveyed in relation to organizational matters which can be seen from the questions they raised in the discussion sessions. In addition, some members of the women's group also possessed the "meronce" skills where they had gained in training conducted by the Village Administration. Limited capital they have, making them have not been able to pass it on to members of the group. In addition to limited capital, access to marketing of handicrafts is also a major obstacle.

1 INTRODUCTION

Basically, development is a conscious and sustainable process that covers various aspects of community life. Development should also be enjoyed by every class, including women. However, today the development process is felt to be still less touched women groups, especially in rural areas. One source of the problem is that women are only considered as housewives, and not as agents of development. The role of women is always identified with the role of educating children and taking care of the household. This situation causes women to have no access to actualize themselves in the process of community development, especially the development of rural communities. It is in these circumstances that the empowerment of women becomes necessary.

Empowering women is essentially an effort to enable women to gain access and control over economic, political, social and cultural resources in order for women to be self-regularized, and to increase their confidence to participate actively in solving development problems and building themselves. Simon in (Widjajanti, 2011) mentions empowerment can be interpreted as a delegation or giving power that will result in a hierarchy of strength and lack of power; empowerment is an activity of reflection, a process that is maintained only by agents or subjects who seek strength or self-determination.

At present, women's empowerment programs in the socio-economic field are crucial in addressing challenges while taking advantage of opportunities in the increasingly fierce competition for household income. The main reason for the empowerment of women in general is to overcome the lack of income

of head of household by involving women to work and increase family income (diversification occupation).

Dolok Merawan Village, Dolok Merawan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatera Province is a village whose area is squeezed by oil palm plantation and rubber plantation owned by government and swata. This geographical condition makes Dolok Merawan people have very limited job opportunities. The agricultural sector which is the livelihood of most of the villagers of Dolok Merawan is in a condition that can not provide an encouraging hope, and even tends to decrease due to the conversion of agricultural land into a settlement. Therefore, diversification of work becomes important done by the people of Dolok Merawan Village, including women.

In line with the ongoing development program in Dolok Merawan Village, women, especially housewives in this village have also been touched by the development programs in the village. From the results of initial observations and interviews with women in this village, it can be seen that some housewives in the village of Dolok Merawan have been trained in handicraft skills (*meronce*) conducted by officials from the district, and they have been able to do it though it still needs to improve the skill. Figure 1. shows the results they have received from the training made by the District Official.



Picture 1: Results of "Meronce" Training Activities Ever Provided Member of Partner Group From Serdang Bedagai Regency Official

When they talk to them it is known that they still want the "meronce" training so they can be more skilled. Another problem they think is how to market the results later if they are able to produce the craft items, and how to manage the associations they have created in the form of Joint Business Group (*KUBE*).

The problem is equally important is the issue of capital to be able to buy materials and equipment (tools) handicrafts.

Limited employment available in Dolok Merawan Village, especially for women workers, which can be done to sustain the household economy (income) is a problem also faced by Dolok Merawan Villagers. On the other hand, women, especially housewives, have no other skills except to conduct their husbands' business activities as farmers. While housewives who do not have agricultural land, can not do anything except rely on her husband's income. This is what makes women helpless in sustaining the family economy. Socio-economic empowerment activities through "*meronce*" activity is expected to be an alternative solution for the helplessness. Choice of "*meronce*" activities as one of the solutions because these housewives have already done this activity, but not sustainable because of lack of knowledge in terms of organization, and still low skills in the process, and limited capital owned.

Geographically, Dolok Merawan Village is surrounded by plantation area (State plantation and private plantation). Such geographic conditions make access to economic resources very limited, especially women. This situation makes people have difficulty in terms of job opportunities, so it is necessary alternative work that is able to sustain the family economy.

The description and condition of the people of Dolok Merawan Village, especially the women who have been presented, indicate the need for a touch for women in this village. This touch is done in an effort to empower women in the village, both social and economic empowerment. On the basis of situational analysis as described above the author is called to perform community service through entitled "Women Social Economic Empowerment Through Merchandise Handicraft Business" Meronce "In Order To Support Family Economics In Dolok Merawan Village Dolok Merawan District, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatera Province"

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Rahardjo and Rinakit, 1996) the powerlessness of the community becomes more severe due to the involvement of several factors, such as institutional and educational weaknesses. Therefore, the efforts of institutional activation and improvement of education are expected to increase community empowerment. One of the successful efforts of community empowerment can be seen from

the utilization of social capital in an effort to solve problems that arise in individuals and community groups through the establishment of institutions. Research results (Badaruddin, 2016) indicates that villagers actually have potential social capital that can be utilized and utilized in the development effort of rural communities. Efforts that can be made in the framework of village community development is to empower the socio-economic community of the village.

(Moeljarto, 1996) argued that community empowerment can be done by giving people the freedom to develop an idea so that they can actualize all their potentials. Meanwhile, according to (Salman, 2001), "participatory approach" is one approach that can be operationalized in development work for community empowerment. The essence of a participatory approach actually lies in the learning process based on experience to the local people through the cultivation of critical awareness, organizational development and capacity building in terms of knowledge, attitude and skills (Ohama, 2001). There are several steps that must be taken in a participatory approach. These steps include (1) awareness process and (2) community organizing formation (Salman, 2001).

3 METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

Methods of community service is done by way of counseling, discussion, tasks and training "*meronce*" by involving instructors who have experience in handicrafts, especially "*meronce*". The lecture method is done by giving explanation of the material about empowerment and capacity building of Partner Group which serve as Community Service Partners, especially related to organizational, building socio-economic network in product marketing effort, and exploring the economic potency in village.

Discussion method is done after the lecture and explanation method is given and then give opportunity to the participants devotion to question and answer and solve the problems that exist in the middle of society. The task is carried out by asking participants to identify the economic potentials of the village that may be developed into alternative activities in the effort to diversify the work.

Training is done by an experienced instructor in handicrafts, especially "*meronce*". In this "*meronce*" training, tools and materials will be provided. The instructor will teach the Partner Group, and the

Partner Group will practice its creation. Hopefully, Participants Group Group also has their own idea about the design that will be produced.

In this devotional activity, the Partner Group (Joint Business Group "*PERTIWI*" and Joint Business Group "*MELATI*") will contribute to preparing the venue for lectures and discussions and inviting people to be involved in this activity. Participants are also expected to participate fully in each activity (discussion and training), so they can understand the counseling and training provided. In order to know the level of participants' understanding of the materials and training that have been given, an evaluation will be conducted which includes: (1) Participant's response to the material presented by the speaker, (2) The participant's participation in the discussion, and (3) The participant's ability in practicing decoration meronce.

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Evaluation of the implementation of this activity simultaneously continues to be done, from the beginning to the end of the activity. A through evaluation will be undertaken at the time all activities are undertaken, so it can be seen what still requires follow-up for similar activities in the future.

To ensure the sustainability of this empowerment effort an agreement will be made at the end of the activity with village officials to establish a system or mechanism of continuous monitoring and communication mechanisms.

4 RESULTS

In line with the method of implementing the devotion that has been described in the previous section, which is to conduct extension activities and discussions with the partner groups as well as provide financial delivery in the form of the provision of materials and equipment necessary for the "*meronce*" activity to the partner group, the first step taken on this community service activity is the arrangement of permission to carry out community service activities to the village administration in this case to the village officials.

4.1 Capacity Building and Organizational Leadership

Implementation of counseling is done by community service team with lecture method and discussion. The participants of the discussion are members of 2 (two) partner groups namely Joint Business Group "PERTIWI" and Joint Business Group "MELATI" plus the Village Head and its officials and also management of Dolok Merawan Village. There are two extension materials that are submitted are: 1). Capacity Building and Group Empowerment; 2). Leadership in Organizations.

The first material was presented by the Team Leader, discussing the importance of the organization to achieve group goals, and the need for strong and solid groups to achieve group goals. While the second material delivered by the team members with the main content of lecture content revolves around how the role of a leader in an organization. Leaders are the main motors to move the wheel of the organization or group in achieving its goals.

After the submission of the finished material, followed by a discussion of the material that has been submitted. In the discussion revealed various problems which, according to the residents become problems and obstacles in running the group so far. Issues that arise from members of the partner group is the issue of lack of capital, and marketing of handicrafts. However, from a fairly relaxed discussion, there are indeed many brilliant ideas from group members about how the group should go forward in order to achieve their goals. The delivered lectures have opened their horizons of thinking about what exactly they can do to diversify

their occupations. Their hope that such lectures and discussions can be done in a sustainable manner.

One participant (village apparatus), offers that in the future North Sumatera University can conduct similar activities for other economic fields and related to the marketing strategy of the community's production, including the handicrafts of the citizens. Especially for women, according to him, women have more free time at home, so it needs to be empowered to sustain family income.

After the lecture and discussion have been done, it is continued with the delivery of materials and equipment needed by the group to practice "meronce". Prior to the delivery of materials and equipment to the group leader, a handover ceremony was first signed by the group leader and several members of the group present and witnessed by the Village Chief of Dolok Merawan.

Furthermore, each group leader distributes materials and equipment for each member to start learning and practice "meronce". This "meronce" practice is guided by one of the members who are already skilled at doing this job with various types of motifs and types of items such as wallets and purses. Once the "meronce" practice is completed, it is agreed with the group leader that they will continue their work in their respective homes, and if there are obstacles they can be conveyed to the group leader so that each member will be able to "meronce". It was also agreed that the handicrafts would belong to the group and be entirely handed over to the group leader in the management.

The result of this dedication shows that women actually have the ability and skill to diversify their business in sustaining the family economy, but there needs to be assistance for them, so that they have higher self confidence to be able to rise in the effort to improve their household economy. Increasing the capacity of women groups, both individually and in groups, needs to be done so that women become women who are truly empowered.

5 CONCLUSIONS

From the description that has been described above can be drawn some conclusions, namely:

1. Villagers of Dolok Merawan in general and members of the partner groups in particular are very welcome to the community service activities conducted by the team of University of North Sumatera.
2. Knowledge of partner group members is increasing especially in relation to leadership knowledge and organizational/group strengthening. In other words, the group's capacity is getting better.
3. The horizon of thinking that members of the group of partners is more open in view of the economic opportunities that exist in the midst of their environment that can be utilized for economic empowerment of rural communities.
4. Through the help of materials and equipment "meronce" to the group of partners, the group's economic assets become increasing and this makes their motivation to succeed to be higher.

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