



Community Empowerment as a National Priority in Development

Wafa Adila^{1*}, Ernita Puspa Dewi², Hosnul Khotimah Lestari³

¹⁻³Ilmu Administrasi Lancang Kuning, Dumai, Indonesia

*Correspondence author: wafaadila7@gmail.com

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Abstract: Community empowerment is a fundamental pillar of national development aimed at enhancing social welfare, social justice, and active public participation in the development process. This Community Service Program aims to strengthen community understanding and capacity, particularly among women members of the PKK organization in Rimba Sekampung Village, regarding the strategic role of community empowerment as a national development priority. The activity was conducted on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at Jalan Belimbing, Rimba Sekampung Village, Dumai City. The implementation method employed socialization through counseling and persuasive guidance using a non-formal and participatory educational approach. The program focuses on women's empowerment, community participation in development, and the prevention of social issues such as sexual violence and bullying among children and adolescents. The results indicate an improvement in participants' awareness, understanding, and active involvement during discussions, as well as a strengthened commitment to act as agents of change within their communities. This program contributes positively to reinforcing the role of women as strategic partners of the government in promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable national development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is one of the main pillars of national development that is oriented towards improving welfare and social justice. In the Indonesian context, the state's commitment to fulfilling basic community rights is affirmed in Article 27 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which states that every citizen has the right to work and a decent living for humanity. This constitutional provision implies that development is not solely oriented towards economic growth, but must also ensure the active involvement of the community as the subject of development.

The strengthening of the community's role in development is further emphasized through Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, which positions villages as strategic entities with the authority to independently manage local potential and resources. This law emphasizes the importance of village community empowerment as the foundation for sustainable, inclusive, and locally based national development. Thus, villages are no longer positioned as objects of policy, but rather as key actors in the development process (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014).

Conceptually, community empowerment is closely related to increasing the capacity of individuals and groups to make life choices, access resources, and participate in decisions that affect their lives. Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) explain that empowerment encompasses the ability of communities to influence social, economic, and political processes through increased capacity and access to opportunities. This view is reinforced by Narayan (2002), who asserts that empowerment is a key strategy in poverty reduction and achieving sustainable well-being.

From a development perspective, Amartya Sen views development as a process of expanding human freedom, in which communities are empowered to live meaningful lives in accordance with their own values and choices (Sen, 1999). Sen (2001) also emphasized that active community participation in development not only increases policy effectiveness but also strengthens sustainability and social justice. Therefore, community empowerment cannot be separated from efforts to create democratic and people-oriented development.

A participatory approach is an important framework for realizing community empowerment. Chambers (1994) emphasized that sustainable development can only be achieved if communities are actively involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development programs. Community participation allows for the utilization of local knowledge, strengthens ownership, and increases accountability for development programs. Similarly, the World Bank emphasizes that community empowerment plays a strategic role in creating inclusive development that is responsive to the needs of vulnerable groups (World Bank, 2017).

Based on this normative and theoretical framework, the Community Service activity with the theme "Community Empowerment as a National Priority in Development" is relevant and strategic to implement. Through this activity, it is hoped that collective awareness of the importance of active participation in development will be built in the community, while strengthening the capacity of the community—particularly women's groups and the Family Welfare Movement (PKK)—as strategic partners of the government in creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable social environment. This activity also demonstrates the concrete role of universities in supporting the national development agenda based on community empowerment.

2. METHOD

This Community Service activity was held on Thursday, January 18, 2024, on Jalan Belimbing, Rimba Sekampung Village, Dumai City. The activity began at 2:00 PM WIB and continued until completion, involving PKK women as the main participants. This activity was designed as a form of education and social development to strengthen the community's understanding, especially women's, regarding their strategic role in development and efforts to prevent various social problems that arise in the family and community.

The method used in this activity is outreach through counseling and persuasive coaching using a non-formal educational approach. The material is delivered in a communicative and interactive manner so that participants can easily understand the content presented. The persuasive approach is applied to encourage the growth of awareness and change in participants' attitudes, so that the knowledge gained is not only limited to the level of understanding but can also be applied in everyday life. The material presented focuses on current social conditions, particularly related to the increasing cases of sexual violence and bullying against children and adolescents, as well as the role of mothers and families in prevention and protection efforts.

Throughout the event, participants demonstrated active participation, evident in their enthusiasm for the presentations and their involvement in the discussion sessions. The two-way interaction between the presenters and participants provided a valuable opportunity to explore experiences, perspectives, and real-world issues faced by their communities. The discussions also provided a shared learning space, strengthening participants' understanding of the importance of empowering women as strategic partners with the government in creating a safe and conducive social environment.

As part of the series of activities, certificates were presented to participants at the end of the event as a token of appreciation for their involvement and active participation. The event concluded with the presentation of souvenirs, documentation, and a group photo, culminating in a friendly gathering between the implementation team and participants. Through this activity, it is hoped that collective awareness and a shared commitment to supporting community empowerment as part of a national development priority will be fostered.

3. RESULTS

As a speaker in the Community Service (PKM) activity entitled "Community Empowerment as a National Priority in Development," I was very pleased to be able to interact with the audience consisting of PKK mothers from Rimba Sekampung Village. The activity began with a discussion on the importance of the community's role in national development, especially in the context of women's empowerment through PKK. In order to achieve the goal of community empowerment, this activity involved a series of workshops and skills training. Participants were encouraged to actively participate in learning, gain new knowledge, and share experiences and positive ideas. The workshop covered various aspects, such as improving entrepreneurial skills, health training, and educational capacity building.

The importance of economic empowerment and entrepreneurship is explained through practical strategies that PKK women can implement to develop their economic potential. This training not only helps improve families' standard of living but also empowers women to actively contribute to local economic development. Furthermore, discussions about health cover information on healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and access to healthcare. This aims to raise public awareness of the importance of health as a key asset in contributing to national development.

Educational capacity building was also a focus of the activity, emphasizing the importance of access to education for children and the role of Family Welfare Movement (PKK) women in supporting education in their communities. Through education, communities can be more actively involved in decision-making processes that impact sustainable development. During the activity, there were also question-and-answer sessions and group discussions, allowing participants to share their views, experiences, and constructive ideas. Thus, it is hoped that this activity will inspire and motivate the PKK women of Rimba Sekampung Village to actively participate in community empowerment efforts, in line with the national development vision.

4. DISCUSSION

Community empowerment is a crucial foundation for achieving national development goals. In this context, the Community Service (PKM) activity, titled "Community Empowerment as a National Priority in Development," serves as a platform to discuss and encourage the active participation of the community, particularly the PKK women of Rimba Sekampung Village, in sustainable development. First and foremost, the importance of

community empowerment as a national priority needs to be understood as a strategic step in building the foundation for inclusive and sustainable development. Communities that actively participate in the development process will become agents of change capable of addressing local challenges with solutions based on local wisdom.

Within the context of this Community Service Program (PKM) activity, women's empowerment through the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) is the focus. The role of PKK women as the backbone of the family and agents of change in society plays a crucial role in driving development. Improving women's capacity in various aspects, such as economics, health, and education, can be key to achieving sustainable development. Entrepreneurship skills training is an integral part of this activity, given the economic role of supporting family stability. PKK women are encouraged to develop their economic potential through micro and small businesses, with the hope of making a positive contribution to the local economy.

Furthermore, the emphasis on public health provides a holistic picture of the importance of health as a key asset in empowerment efforts. Information on healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and access to healthcare services are instruments for improving the quality of life and productivity of the community. Education, as a pillar of human development, is also a focus of discussion. By increasing educational capacity, both for children and for PKK mothers, it is hoped that an environment that supports optimal child development and increases active community participation in the development process can be created.

Throughout the interactive and participatory activities, there are opportunities to raise community awareness of their roles and responsibilities in the development process. Thus, these PKM activities serve not only as information forums but also as catalysts for sustainable positive change in local communities. Through community empowerment, the hope is to foster independence and high levels of participation, in line with the vision of inclusive and sustainable national development. sustainable.

5. CONCLUSION

Community Empowerment as a National Priority in Development is that community empowerment, especially through the key role of the PKK Women of Rimba Sekampung Village, has a strategic role in achieving sustainable national development goals. Through a series of participatory-based activities, such as entrepreneurial skills training, health improvement, and educational capacity building, it is hoped that the community can become active and empowered agents of change. The importance of economic empowerment, health,

and education is the foundation for improving the quality of life of the community as a whole. Women, as a key element in the social structure, can make significant contributions through their role in the PKK. Women's empowerment not only improves family welfare but also strengthens the foundation of national development.

This PKM activity not only provides information but also creates momentum for positive social change. By motivating and empowering PKK women, it is hoped that they can become agents of change in their respective communities. Awareness of their roles and responsibilities in national development is also at the heart of this activity, inviting the community to work together to realize the vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

Thus, the conclusion of this activity is that community empowerment is not only a national priority but also a key step towards a more independent, healthy, and actively engaged society in the development process. Through close collaboration between presenters, participants, and local community elements, it is hoped that the positive impact of this activity will continue to be felt and develop in the long term.

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