

## Research article

# Empowering Women Through Entrepreneurship Based on Local Resources in North Konawe, Indonesia

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This study aimed to address the problem of agricultural land damage caused by mining activities, which reduces the income from agricultural products. When this occurs, women in the community who work as farmers have to work even harder to meet the family's needs. It was identified that it is therefore necessary to support the empowerment of women in such areas in order to improve their standard of living. Communities of women need skills and education to increase their knowledge and life skills so that they can contribute to the family's income. Empowerment activities to improve the livelihood of the women in the studied area included building entrepreneurial motivation, training in processing sago flour into vermicelli, building a partnership network, and forming a business group.

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## 1. Introduction

The female population in Indonesia reaches 118,010,413 people BPS 2015. By this amount, it is very potential for them to perform various productive activities that can help the family's economy. However, in reality, women are often less able to play an active role in the family's economy. Women only work as housewives and depend on the income of their husbands [1]. Women's work within the household causes women to be considered passive recipients of development.

Many entrepreneurial projects in Indonesia make women the target, especially as the unemployment rate among women is higher than that of men. According to BPS 2010, the unemployment rate among women was 3.6% compared to males was about 2.0% [2]. This fact indicates that women's work enrollment rate in Indonesia is still low compared to the male labor participation rate. The low level of participation is caused by the

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limitations faced by women, such as limited opportunities in accessing and controlling the resources, skills, and low education, the ideological barriers of women related to households [3], and other obstacles, such as women must perform reproductive functions, production and social functions that simultaneously in the community [4]. Therefore, to make women who have low quality involved, it needed an honest and continuous effort. One of them is by doing the empowerment for women [5]. Women's empowerment is essential for them, but it is essential for the achievement of human development that provides opportunities for the development of women's talents and benefits from their skills and productivity [6].

The women in Lembo Sub-North Konawe District is a community where women mostly work as farmers as the foundation of their lives. Women's lives in this area depend on agricultural land and plantations. The inclusion of several mining companies in the last 10-15 years has brought a long-lasting disaster to the community, especially the women's community in this area, where exploitation occurs on a large scale to the natural resources, which is terrible for people's lives, especially for women. The results obtained are not enough to fulfill the basic needs of families. Consequently, the demands of family life are filled with borrowing to the middlemen, which is not much to improve the welfare. According to Said-Allsopp & Tallontire [7], the weak bargaining position of women in this region is caused by economic factors and the insufficient quality of human resources.

The community village of women in the District of Lembo is a settlement with a simple condition. Their residential building is a house with a thatched roof with the walls of sago stems that have been processed as a typical home model of Konawe generally [8]. The main occupation of men is a miner, while the women as casual laborers on some agricultural land that is quite far from the mining location with 30,000 wages per day from 08.00 to 17.00. This job is chosen because there is no other job that they can do. This is because they have no other skills to earn money to live their daily lives. The women's community in this area is aware that working as freelance laborers cannot afford enough money to live their daily lives and send their children to school.

The expectation of getting a job that can help them fulfill their everyday basic needs is a dream for them. But such expectations are difficult to realize because they have no skills; they also do not have the fund. Therefore, it needs transformation effort for women community in this area by conducting women empowerment activities to improve their living standard by utilizing sago flour to be processed into other products with various variants such as vermicelli. The potential sago plant is very abundant in this

area, and then the efforts to empower women through the utilization of local resources are expected to increase their income continuously [9].

Women's participation in entrepreneurial activity has attracted the attention of academics to assist the women entrepreneurship activities. However, the barriers of women entrepreneurship are caused by several things such as personal characteristics that caused by the workload due to a woman's multiple roles, and structural characteristics, namely barriers to the access of fund and marketing access in which women have low marketing information access [10]. Therefore, this study will illustrate education and training in improving women's skills by making vermicelli in North Konawe.

## 2. Research Methods

This research is participatory action research (PAR) with qualitative and quantitative approaches. PAR is a type of research that prioritizes the participation or the participation of the community in the overall process. This research refers to the Model Participatory Action Research (PAR), the action research model [11]. PAR includes a self-reflective self-cycle spiral consisting of 4 aspects, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This research was conducted in women's communities in Boongolusu and Lapulu villages, Lembo sub-district, North Konawe District, Southeast Sulawesi province. The research procedure began with observation and interviews on the women's community, creating a women's group of 10-15 people. A community-based researcher created this group to be the initiator of women's empowerment programs in this area. In the implementation, the group that has been created is a process of planning, action, observation, and reflection cyclical to the purpose of the process of improvement.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Community Profile of Women

The members of the Women's Community in Lembo Sub-district of North Konawe District are women who do not have the skills to be able to conduct business activities. The minimal environmental condition of the village with productive economic activities causes women to engage in activities to fulfill the family needs rarely. The lack of skills for women in this village affects the empowerment activities conducted because education will provide awareness, confidence, and knowledge for women who help them improve their standard of living [12]. The results of observations conducted to

the residents and community leaders showed the problems faced by the women's community is a low innovation due to the educational factors of residents, so that women are more expected at the rough job. Sago flour that existed in this area is sold at low prices due to the lack of skills of women in processing food. In addition, other problems found on women in this area are the limitations in looking at business opportunities and the lack of information about marketing the products that have been produced. Based on these data, the program was conducted to be the choice and the needs of women, namely the empowerment of women through the training in sago flour processing to make it become vermicelli.

The economic conditions of Bonggolousu and Lapulu illustrate that some plantation products have been utilized by society. One of the plantations that are pretty abundant in this area is sago plants that are often processed by the community as a staple food for the fulfillment of daily needs. Although this village has a lot of plantation yields, the way of processing the crop has not been innovative; it is still limited to the processed traditional or sold traditionally. Moreover, a variety of food processing can increase the selling value of a product [13]. Food diversification is an effort to vary food consumption through new food processing findings [14]. Like sago plants that can be processed into other forms of food that can increase the sale value of the food.

North Konawe regency is one of the areas with the potential of sago plant, which is wide enough with the planting area estimated at 2,039 hectares BPS, 2015. Residents in this area make sago plants a staple food or other food [15]. Based on the potential of this area, the effort of empowering women's community by utilizing sago plants is very potential to be conducted. In addition, the utilization of sago plants has several advantages. The harvest does not depend on the season, resistant and easy to store, and sago trees can release saplings so that the harvest can be sustainable without replanting [16]. Based on the potential of this area, the empowerment of women that will be conducted needs to be equipped with skills training in processing sago flour into vermicelli regularly to improve their ability and skills.

The economic empowerment of women in Bonggolousu and Lapulu villages will begin with processing sago flour into vermicelli, which is expected to be a hallmark of the food of this region because in Southeast Sulawesi, there is no business activity of making vermicelli. Women's community development activities will be framed in the form of life skill mining, which improves the living standards of women's communities [17]—through systematic and sustainable empowerment activities, utilizing natural resource potentials optimally to increase their incomes continuously [18].

### 3.2. Building Entrepreneurship Motivation

The women's empowerment program for communities in North Konawe is a series of activities conducted to train, provide skills, and empower women so that they can participate and contribute to alleviating poverty [18]. To maximize the empowerment activities conducted, the first step is to increase entrepreneurship motivation to manage the business well. This entrepreneurial motivation is the first and foremost aspect that must be given to the learners through the education and training process to create an entrepreneurial society [19]. This entrepreneurial motivation is seen as the foundation for becoming an entrepreneur [18]. This activity begins by creating a women's business group that consists of 10-20 people. This activity aims to build group dynamics by research teams on women's groups. The creation of this group is an early stage that aims to give a touch and evoke the motivation about how to do entrepreneurship [19]. Next, this activity is conducted by presenting business people as speakers of entrepreneurship, which explains entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial profits, and the ease and challenges faced in the business world. The purpose of providing entrepreneurial materials is to evoke and build the thought and willingness to do entrepreneurship. In addition, this activity is conducted to describe to the community of women in the North Konawe area to build the market network so that when there is an effort that conducted and be occupied will be easy to be marketed so that will ease the market access in developing the business that they do.

The formation of women's business groups that conducted in the women's community in North Konawe is at the forefront of the formation of women entrepreneurial spirit so that this activity is expected to help the family economy and improve the welfare of women through the business group that is formed [20]. In building motivation strengthening entrepreneurship, the community of women also introduced the potential of natural resources that can be processed by utilizing existing resources. This stage also introduced the management of sago flour, which will be processed into vermicelli products. This activity will significantly help the women community to understand the potential of natural resources that will be managed and can provide benefits for the community of women, especially in fostering entrepreneurship motivation.

### 3.3. Training on Making Vermicelli

The skills training to make vermicelli from the sago plant aims to empower the women's community in Bonggolousu and Lapulu villages. Skills training that is conducted requires

a process that is not short, so it is expected that this activity can improve women's life skills and women empowerment based on sustainability on independence. In this skill training process, the strategy conducted by the research team in solving the problems is done through participatory activities with planned steps so that the training objectives can be achieved [18].

Vermicelli is a processed food product made from food sources that produce flour, such as palm tapioca or other products. However, in the North Konawe region, the potential of this plant is very abundant and has not been widely processed by the community. Therefore, making vermicelli of sago flour is one of the potential business activities and potential economic value to be developed. Training activities of making vermicelli from sago flour begin with providing materials on how to make vermicelli, followed by the community of women in this village. This activity is divided into several stages: (1) preparing the equipment that will be used in the production activity, (2) perform the washing process and soaking the sago flour as the material that will be used to make the vermicelli by using water which is done repeatedly to clean the dirt contained in the sago flour, (3) filtration of sago flour to separate the remaining impurities so that the good quality of sago flour can be obtained, (4) Make the porridge or sago flour gel with hot water poured on sago flour, (5) Molding the sago vermicelli by using a molding tool which has been modified, (6) drying the molded product by using solar heat to dry, and (7) packaging the resulting vermicelli [21].

The training process involving the women's community in North Konawe is expected to empower the women by combining the individual and group processes in developing women's capacity to enhance their abilities and impact their surrounding environment. Through this training, the collective work of women will be built together to overcome the things that limit their activities in society.

### 3.4. Building The Partnership Network

The problem faced by a small business so far there has been no systematic effort in empowerment. One of them is to build a partnership network to market the resulting product [22]. In maximizing the assistance activities conducted, the next step is to build a network of partnerships conducted by the government and private parties. The partnerships that were built include the partnerships with villages, the Department of Industry and Commerce, and sellers of products produced. This partnership is a part of the society's participation to establish relationships with parties that support women's business groups.

The development of partnership networks requires continuity so that the production of vermicelli made by the women's community can be marketed. Therefore, I conducted the house-made vermicelli as the production house used as a place of production and storage of products and as a condition of production permit. Production houses are made by self-help and have been approved by the village head. Therefore, the vermicelli production house is an initiative of the women's group and becomes a valuable asset for this program's sustainability. Furthermore, with the production house, the women's community becomes more dare to market and widen the marketing range.

### 3.5. The Formation of Business Groups

Making vermicelli products requires a good and directed work team so that it will produce a quality production. The implementation of production requires several teams that play a role in the working group to run well [23]. To maximize the teamwork, conducted the training on group management to make business groups more focused, with excellent and effective management [24]. Institutional management is the initial capital to conduct business partners either to banks or microfinance institutions that are expected to facilitate the business conducted [25]. The business unit team formed in the women's community is a part of a very important women's empowerment program. The sustainability of a most effective empowerment program is forming a group managed by the community itself. The establishment of a joint venture group will further enhance the production and marketing of vermicelli in the North Konawe and other areas of South East Sulawesi Landmarks.

### 3.6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The training program of sago cultivation processing into vermicelli is a program that is designed because of the needs of the community based on the potential of natural resources that are owned. The character program is initiated by the community that makes this community-based program. Furthermore, this program is devoted to empowering the women's community [18]. Over time, the team monitors and evaluates all stages of mentoring activities that are conducted. The team's evaluation results will be accompanied to the community of women through independent training with a focus on making the vermicelli from sago flour. This mentoring enhances the knowledge and skills of preparation, production process, and the packing of vermicelli [25].

## 4. Conclusion

Empowerment activities conducted in women's communities in Bonggolousu and Lapulu village in the sub-districts of North Konawe indicate that skills education for women's communities is vital in increasing their knowledge and life skill it can contribute to the family's economic income. In addition, participative, creative, and innovative learning patterns and local potentials significantly improve the motivation and knowledge of women's communities so that the mentoring activities conducted can be successful. In addition, evaluation and monitoring effectively increase women's involvement in the conducted empowerment programs.

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