

Empowerment of Women to Support Family Economy in Sukamukti Ciamis Indonesia

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Abstract— Women have a significant role in maintaining families' economic stability. This study aims to be able to empower women's potency to work and to run a business in order to support their family's economy in Sukamukti village, Pamarican of Ciamis District, West Java, Indonesia. This is a sustained study for three years based on action research, which has been going since 2015 till 2017. In the third year, 2017, this study focused to monitor the development of the business models initiated back in 2015 to 2016. The monitoring itself was done by conducting participative observation, holding entrepreneurship training, providing books to improve knowledge and skills, and focus group discussion with the two business groups, namely, "Wanita Mandiri" and "Dewi Catering", currently operating with 30 women members. This study results show the increasing knowledge and skills of Sukamukti women, also the income they received from working and that running a business can help supporting their husband and increasing their family's economy. This study might contribute in developing a micro economy based on women's empowerment in the villages.

Keywords— *Women's Empowerment; Families' Economy*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment is defined as women's ability to produce strategic choices in their life [1]. The concept of empowerment involves various aspects, including cognitive aspect, psychology, politic and economic. Cognitively, women need to understand their role and position in society; psychologically, women need to believe in their success; politically, women have to be able to manage and mobilize social changes; and economically, women need to have activities to gain financial independence [2].

Socially and traditionally speaking, in Indonesia and most of the countries around the world, household needs are the responsibility of men, thus they work to comply with this. However, women play a significant role to keep the stability of the family's economy. In Sukamukti village, Pamarican-Ciamis district, many men are jobless and have low-level family economy, thus it needs women's participation in supporting the family's economy. On the other hand, there are also many established families where the women also work. This indicates the village people's openness by giving women opportunities to work or in running a business. This accepted structure becomes social capital in supporting women's empowerment. Social capital indicates a relationship in the social network based on the belief and reciprocal norm in the structure [3]. Social capital contributes in amplifying

interaction amongst individuals in the social system. In Sukamukti village, both men and women tend to try every type of business successfully run by others. The willingness to work or run a business indicates the accessibility of job sources and productivity needed in women's empowerment. The World Bank suggests that accessibility of sources and jobs, productivity and higher income level, as well as asset and consumption control are needed in establishing women's empowerment [4].

II. RESEARCH PURPOSES

This study aims at empowering women's potential to work and run a business in the attempt to help the family economy. The research questions include women's potential and obstacles to work or to run a business in Sukamukti village, women's information about access of job and business opportunities in Sukamukti, and the role of business community to empower women in the family economy. This study might contribute in developing a micro economy based on women's empowerment in the villages.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a sustained study for three years based on action research, which has been going since 2015 till 2017. Action research is an approach used to produce a solution of a particular problem [5]. Briefly, several stages of action research include identifying problems, collecting and organizing data, interpreting data, acting based on data, and evaluating the results or reflection [6]. In this study, our team leader initiated the establishment of business groups in Sukamukti village with the participation of the people. Among these business groups, there are two groups under our direct guidance, namely "Wanita Mandiri" and "Dewi Catering" business group, which currently operate with 30 women members. These business groups do not necessarily represent its business type, but serve as a means to accommodate the women's creativity and ability to work and to establish a business. In the third year, 2017, this study focused to monitor the development of the business models initiated back in 2015 to 2016. The monitoring itself was done by conducting participative observation, holding entrepreneurship training, providing books to improve knowledge and skills, and focus group discussion with the two business groups previously mentioned. The monitoring results were then analyzed. Study triangulations include sources triangulation by interviewing

four village officers in Pamarican – Ciamis district, inter-researcher triangulation and theory triangulation.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Women's Potencies and Obstacles to Work and Run a Business in Sukamukti*

Sukamukti has abundant natural products from farming, husbandry, plantation and fishery, thus, most of Sukamukti people are farmers and breeders. Besides agribusiness, there are also various types of businesses, such as cracker business, convection, catering, internet cafe, online shop, tailor, workshop, etc., where some are individual business or joined in a group business. The capital source for individual business is from individuals, while business groups collect money from each member or by applying debt to a third party as the capital to run the business together.

Job and business opportunities must be supported by the readiness of human resources. Sukamukti women have a varied education level, from primary school graduated to bachelor degree, although most of them are only junior high school graduated. Considering the low level of education, it is necessary to improve their knowledge and skills in order to be able to work skillfully based on the interest and opportunity. The practice of existing knowledge and skills improvement includes learning by doing or sharing experiences informally. For instance, when they have skill to do laundry and cooking then they work as a housemaid, when they have skill to make brown sugar then they produce brown sugar to be sold, while some of them accept orders to produce handcraft for a third party, etc. This indicates that, although there is many obstacles faced, Sukamukti women have great willingness to work or run a business. Meanwhile, another mentioned obstacle is business capital.

B. *Sukamukti Women's Information Access of Job and Business Opportunities*

Since the Sukamukti people are religious, the women always have daily, weekly and monthly religious meeting, or *pengajian*. During these routine meetings, they share their daily activities including information regarding job or business opportunities. Usually business opportunities are generated when one shares her story about her successful business then it is followed by several women who attempt the same business in order to gain the same success. This phenomenon then produces many competitors for the same market and causes the business a short life cycle. Other occasions to share stories and business experience is when they meet in the market. They also obtain job and business information from their families. Some of the young women use the internet to access current developments. However, information technology can help the women gain access to information and develop their entrepreneurial spirit.

C. *The Role Of The Business Community To Empower Women In The Family Economy*

As explained before, women's empowerment is not only about job and business opportunities, but also about how women are able to maximize their potencies to generate strategic choices in various aspects of their life. Women's

empowerment places women in a stronger position and gives them power along with men to develop the society and play the role in decision-making for their family's welfare. Women's empowerment demands qualification of quality sources, access of economy opportunities and control of economic benefits that can be used to make positive changes [7] [4].

The village government has established a village-owned enterprise. or Badan Usaha Milik Desa (known as BUM Des) and a Prosperous Family Income Increasing Venture, or Usaha Peningkatan Pendapatan Keluarga Sejahtera (known as UPPKS) to improve the village's entrepreneurship.

Business groups have been established in Sukamukti village in order to bridge the weaknesses mentioned above. Both the "Wanita Mandiri" and "Dewi Catering" business groups admitted they gain benefits from the business group, which are increased knowledge, skill and business opportunity. Through one of our programs for the society, we hold entrepreneurship trainings to improve their knowledge and skills. We also continuously provide books and other reading sources in the village library in the attempt to provide informal education for the village society. The village government also provides internet access which can be used to access information needed. Beside energy and capital use needed to work and run a business, knowledge use is also significantly important [8].

Considering the education level and skills of Sukamukti women, business groups do not serve to develop a particular business type, but serve as a means to accommodate the women's creativity and ability to work and to establish a business. In this business group, the women are guided to be able to work and run a business based on their interest and ability, both in the formal and informal sector. For instance, when they can teach, then they are directed to be a teacher; when they have skills to organize the household, then they are directed to be housemaid; when they can do farming but do not have lands, then they are directed to be farm workers; when they can produce processed foods, then they are directed to sell it in the market; when they have skill to sell, then they are directed to be salesman; when they have skills to cook various menu, then they are directed to start a catering business, etc. With the guidance provided for the business groups, Sukamukti women not only have access of job or business opportunities, but also access towards working performance improvement with adequate skills. The profits from women's empowerment economically are able to increase their family income. Thus, women also have role in deciding family financials. Successful women's empowerment is able to provide educational and broader professional opportunities access for women, added value to women's work and also to change the value system and cultural attitude that limit women in gender equality [9]. Gender equality in Sukamukti village is still based on the religion and local customs.

V. CONCLUSION

This study results show the increasing knowledge and skills of Sukamukti women, also that the income they obtain from working and running a business can help in supporting

their husband and increasing the family economy. This study results might give direct contribution in increasing the society's economy and recommendation for the local government in developing a village economy based on women's empowerment.

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