

Community Empowerment Strategy Through Cultural Collaboration Counseling and Community Forest Utilization

Elvira Whulandary^{*1}, Sasmita Gazi Harmain²

^{1,2} Psychology Study Program, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Gorontalo, Gorontalo, Indonesia

^{*}Corresponding author, E-mail: elvirawhulan24@gmail.com

Abstract. Forest management aimed at maximizing forestry resources and empowering local communities is the focal point of production-oriented forest management. The Wana Tekat Mandiri Farmer Group Association oversees community forests, which are primarily intended to empower local residents. However, illegal logging conducted by external parties poses a significant challenge, undermining the support of these groups for regional government initiatives in guiding the Farmer Group Association in the Boalemo District. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Findings reveal that the community development and empowerment strategy in utilizing community forests has been effectively implemented, with coaching playing a pivotal role. The coaching strategy primarily focuses on developing skills, knowledge, and attitudes to enhance the community's capacity. It is anticipated that this coaching approach will positively impact community empowerment.

Keywords: Strategy, Development, HKM



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Introduction

Forests, as valuable natural assets, are governed by regulations ensuring their positive contributions to employment, regional development, economic growth, and global ecological balance. Beyond their regulatory framework, forests have long served as essential natural resources meeting society's fundamental needs, including food, shelter, medicine, and livelihoods. Consequently, communities advocate for sustainable forest management to ensure the availability of these resources for future generations (Asgar & Bonita, 2019).

Unregulated forest exploitation, coupled with insufficient conservation measures, can lead to disruptions in forest ecosystems, resulting in decreased productivity of natural resources (Has *et al.*, 2020). Forest Watch Indonesia (2015) reported a staggering rate of forest destruction, reaching 1.1 million hectares annually between 2009 and 2013, attributed to factors such as forest fires and growing human population encroaching on forested areas to meet their needs (Marpaung, 2017). One proposed solution to address the pressure on forest resources is the implementation of government programs aimed at engaging local communities in collaborative forest management initiatives, such as the Community Forestry or Community Forest Rights (HKM) program (Sari *et al.*, 2023).

Community forests refer to forested areas within a country primarily designated for the empowerment of local communities. Applicants for community forest designation typically include the community group chairperson, joint chairperson of forest farmer groups, and cooperative chairperson (Marpaung *et al.*, 2022). Community forest designation is restricted to protected forest areas and production forests. Social Forestry, as defined by the Minister of Environment Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia (2016), is a sustainable forest management approach conducted in state-owned or private/customary forest areas by local communities or customary law communities (Rahmila *et al.*, 2024). Its primary aim is to enhance welfare, environmental balance, and socio-

cultural dynamics through the establishment of forest villages, community forests, people's plantation forests, customary forests, and forestry partnerships (Hamka *et al.*, 2023).

In the Social Forestry program, regional governments have responsibilities and authorities, including conducting social forestry outreach to communities residing in and around forested areas within their jurisdiction. They are tasked with facilitating communities in submitting proposals for social forestry initiatives, as well as fostering cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders (Has *et al.*, 2023). There is a strong push to accelerate the management of the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program through various community forest schemes. However, despite progress, significant constraints persist. Assistance at the operational and logistical levels from local/regional governments is crucial, alongside support from legislative bodies regarding budget allocations and commitments to ensure forest rights management (Marpaung *et al.*, 2023). This entails strengthening the role of Government Forest Management Units (KPH) and stakeholders in coaching and empowering community forest farming communities (Has *et al.*, 2023). It is hoped that the commitment of regional governments, non-governmental organizations, communities, Forest Farmers Groups (KTH), community forest permit holders, and other stakeholders will facilitate this process (Marpaung *et al.*, 2023). Legitimacy and management certainty are crucial, demonstrated through the recognition and verification of Community Forestry Management Business Permits (IUPHkm) (Marpaung *et al.*, 2022).

The forest management approach that involves community participation is commonly referred to as community forestry or social forestry. According to Bangsawan & Effendi (2018), forest management, from a functional perspective focused on production, aims to utilize all potential forestry resources while empowering local communities. Thomson emphasizes that empowering local communities residing in or around forests aims to enhance their capabilities and self-reliance within the framework of social forestry. Agung further suggests that the objective is to enhance the welfare of local communities and achieve sustainable forest management. The issuance of Community Forest Management Permits in the Sendang Agung District of Gorontalo district marks the beginning of the empowerment process for the Wana Tekad Farmers Group Association. This process involves socialization, guidance, and empowerment of group members affiliated with the association. The Association of Farmer Groups Wana Tekat Mandiri oversees community forests, which are primarily intended to empower local communities, as outlined in various regulations such as those issued by the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Social Forestry (Has *et al.*, 2024).

The responsibilities and authority of the Regional Government include conducting social forestry outreach to communities in the surrounding forest areas of the Boalemo sub-district, as well as facilitating and assisting communities in submitting proposals for social forestry initiatives in the Boalemo District. However, between 2016 and 2019, farmer groups faced significant concerns due to widespread illegal logging activities conducted by external parties not affiliated with the combined farmer groups. Consequently, these community groups engaged in illegal logging did not support the Regional Government's efforts to provide guidance and coaching to the Farmer Group Association in the Boalemo sub-district. Additionally, the Regional Government encountered obstacles in providing guidance to the Farmer Group Association due to factors such as geographical distance, limited human resources, and budget constraints, as indicated by the results of the Prariset interview conducted on October 14, 2019.

Based on this, researchers want to research further about Strategy Community Development and Empowerment in Community Forest Utilization (Study at Tani in Boalemo District Agung, Gorontalo Regency).

Method

The research methodology employed in this study adopts a descriptive approach utilizing qualitative research methods. The primary aim of this investigation is to intricately delineate the procedural intricacies involved in the formulation of insightful public policy culture and the multifaceted roles played by various actors within this framework. Meanwhile, the spectrum of research data encompasses both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is garnered through interviews with key informants and direct observations conducted in the field, while secondary data is

sourced from printed materials, documentation, and online repositories pertinent to the research objectives. The analytical framework applied in this qualitative inquiry prioritizes comprehensive and in-depth exploration of information to decipher non-quantitative variables, delving into the nuances of phenomena rather than pursuing broad generalizations. Aligning with Mile and Huberman as referenced in Yusuf (2016), the data processing methodology in this study entails three sequential stages: data reduction, data presentation, and the derivation of conclusions, followed by verification.

Results and Discussions

The synergy between robust farmer groups and their autonomy is evident through the regular convening of board meetings and continuous implementation efforts guided by consensus among stakeholders. Each implementation phase concludes with a participatory evaluation process, characterized by established rules or norms mutually agreed upon and adhered to, alongside meticulous organizational record-keeping. These practices streamline collective business endeavors spanning both the upstream and downstream sectors, facilitating access to information and technology services essential for farmers' businesses. Moreover, the collaborative nature of these partnerships extends to engaging with external parties and leveraging capital infusion derived from member contributions or proceeds generated from group activities.

Internal Community Development Strategy Utilization of Community Forests in Boalemo District, Regency Gorontalo

The comprehensive strategy for community development involves the optimal utilization of community forests in the Boalemo District, Gorontalo Regency. Prior to initiating any programs or activities related to community forest utilization, it is imperative to undertake robust community development efforts orchestrated by the Forest Management Unit in collaboration with the chairperson of Gapoktan, subgroups, or local communities in the Boalemo District. This collaborative approach ensures that all stakeholders involved in the program are adequately prepared and informed to facilitate its successful implementation through collective discussions. The coaching strategies are designed with the primary objective of formulating an internal coaching plan tailored to the specific needs of the Tani Jaya Wijaya program. This plan focuses on skill development, knowledge enhancement, and attitude cultivation among participants. Effective planning is crucial before the implementation of any program or activity to ensure alignment with the expectations of extension workers and the community, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation.

Drawing from the coaching strategy implemented in the Forest Utilization Society in the Sendang Agung District of Gorontalo Regency, as outlined by Mathis (2001), several key objectives of coaching emerge:

1. Development of knowledge towards member of Tani Jaya Wijaya

Development of knowledge towards members of Tani Jaya Wijaya Determined Mandiri to provide and improve something knowledge to Gapoktan members given by the appointed instructor directly by KPH, such as knowledge regarding forestry regulations. Knowledge is provided in the form of outreach to the Gapoktan community Wana Determination Independent socialization given about forestry knowledge, forestry regulations that must be implemented to society. Skill development towards Gapoktan members are for improve abilities and also skills between members to know how important it is to do tasks are given in a organization. Skill development carried out by extension agents appointed by KPH or PKSM for the community Tani Jaya Wijaya Determined to be Independent. Skill development is carried out for train people to carry out tasks each.

Collaborative attitude toward fellow members Gapoktan is needed for the program or activities can run smoothly should. Because in an organization there is not just one person but more of 2 people, then according to what members had planned beforehand Gapoktan can implement development cooperative attitude. The importance of development cooperative attitude towards fellow members Tani Jaya Wijaya as groups in the organization get many benefits from other group members, guide and inspire everywhere all groups can influence the motivation of the members of Tani Jaya Wijaya Tekad Independent in using suitable methods.

2. Internal community empowerment strategy utilization of community forests in Boalemo District, Regency Gorontalo

The strategy of community empowerment, exemplified by the efforts of Tani Jaya Wijaya, aims to enhance the capabilities of individuals and communities to engage in purposeful activities with clear objectives. As highlighted by Yulia & Dian (2019), successful empowerment initiatives within society necessitate the development of specific strategies tailored to achieve predetermined goals. In this context, fostering independent communities residing around forested areas is essential to facilitate capacity building and enhance community welfare. Effective empowerment entails the provision of guidance and counseling services, which play a pivotal role in organizational development. Through guidance and training sessions, communities acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their designated tasks. Without proper guidance and counseling, communities may receive knowledge but lack direct support in its application. Therefore, the availability and efficacy of guidance and counseling services are integral to ensuring the successful implementation of empowerment initiatives, enabling communities to effectively utilize acquired knowledge and skills for the betterment of society.

Training to improve and knowledge of using strategies viz increased awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes of people within organization to have the capability to deal with how to do it later solve that problem faced him. Knowledge for solve problems in groups Tani Jaya Wijaya Determined to be Independent in the end help in solving the problem met, among other things, through the application of or implementation of deliberation activities for got a good solution. Training in policy strategy and community organizations towards

Tani Jaya Wijaya must carried out to achieve several goals which is suitable for an organization, Help solve problems operations quickly and precisely Tani Jaya Wijaya organization not a small organization but an organization which is quite large, consisting of 3,309 group members who join. Provides higher capabilities in carrying out tasks at work so that the results achieved will be maximum.

Conclusions

Based on the research results, it can be it was concluded that the coaching strategy community in forest use community in Sendang District Agung, Gorontalo Regency, namely: includes 3 points of coaching strategy community in forest use community in Boalemo District Gorontalo Regency. Knowledge development for members Tani Jaya Wijaya aims increase knowledge of members Tani Jaya Wijaya given by the appointed instructor directly by KPH as done outreach activities about innovation, as well knowledge of regulations forestry. Skills development for members of Tani Jaya Wijaya aims to provide training administrative and coaching improvements skills between Gapoktan members for know how important it is to do tasks are given in a organization.

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