

# Community Development: Social Capital in Women's Empowerment in the Dieng Highlands of Indonesia

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Women's empowerment needs to be the main goal of community development activities. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of social capital in empowering women in the Dieng highlands, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The results showed that the behavioural characteristics of women in the Dieng highland was able to emerge trust which was used as social capital in every activity related to women empowerment. Women in Dieng highland have unique behavioural characteristics like solidarity, religiosity, and openness which can increase social bonds between them. A high level of trust can drive entrepreneurial activities of agricultural groups facilitated by various stakeholders. This social capital makes it easier for various stakeholders to succeed in community development programs. A qualitative approach is used in this study.

**Keywords:** *Social Capital, Community Development, Women's Empowerment*

## Introduction

The Dieng area has a high soil fertility so that the agricultural sector dominates the livelihoods of its people. Various problems surrounding environmental damage began to emerge along with the agricultural activities that were not environmentally friendly. Excessive land exploitation causes the condition of the land to become increasingly critical (Setiawan, 2012). Massive new land conversion also causes the decrease of existing forest. Almost all land in the Dieng highlands has suffered severe environmental damage.

Environmental damage requires serious handling from various stakeholders because it is related to the survival of the people in the Dieng highlands. Government programs that have been implemented include physical programs such as road construction, reforestation of Dieng plateau, and community empowerment programs based on farmer groups. This program



involves farmer groups, village governments, district governments as well as donor agencies. However, special programs for women have not been developed much. Programs that involve women need to be built from the grass root level so that they are more optimal and sustainable.

In the context of community development at the grass root level, it needs to have the participation of women. The involvement of women is very important in the development programs. In fact, women can play a role in many sectors in the middle of society (Giuliano, 2014). Women can be directly involved in optimising the various potentials of the village, as well as being directly involved in decision making and policy making.

The involvement of women in the decision-making process, both in the process of making and implementing village development programs, is indirectly an articulation of aspirations of the needs expected by the village community concerned (Mawara, 2014). This study examines how social capital plays a role in empowering women in the Dieng highlands. This study is related to the programs implemented by the government and stakeholders who are members of the “Save Dieng” program.

## **Literature Review**

### **Community Development**

Development has many definitions. Several academics have explained that development is related to modernisation. In the concept of modernisation, the idea of development is an effort to improve the welfare of society in all fields. Aspects such as economic, social and environmental are the main concerns of the development concept. Various development programs are made by the state for the purpose of nation progress (Melkote and Steeves, 2001).

The key to successful development lies in community awareness for whom development is being carried out and lies in community involvement in supporting various ongoing development processes. Including the community is an effort to form a dynamic group that becomes the driving actor for any change effort (Abdullah, 1997).

Culture can be a source for the formation of ideas and practice of life in general. In relation to development, it can be seen from the interaction dimension between local culture and development itself. First, development ideas can be influenced by local culture where culture becomes a guide in the formation of development ideas. Second, community development involves new values and norms that replace old norms to serve new social change (Abdullah, 1997). Religious-based organisations also play a role in community development in village areas (Akhda et.al., 2019).

This culture-based community development cannot be separated from the role of social capital such as local knowledge, local culture, local skills, and social processes that are already running



in the community. These factors need to be emphasised in the community development process with a bottom up approach (Ife and Tesoriero, 2006). Through this bottom up approach, the community can be independent in determining their own future. The challenge of a bottom up approach is the existence of various stakeholders who have not supported the creation of integration among them. The existence of social capital will help strengthen community development programs, especially in the village area.

So far, the approach that has been taken has emphasised more the top down approach, in which the government has initiated community development programs by the government and not from the community (Ife and Tesoriero, 2006). The weakness of the top-down approach is that the government does not understand exactly what problems exist in society and what needs are the community's priorities. The bottom up approach is more effective because the community better understands their problems and needs.

### **Social Capital**

Capital can be divided into five types, in the form of financial capital, natural capital, physical capital, human capital, and social capital (Goodwind, 2003). Social capital is basically the ability of society to work together, in order to achieve common goals, within various groups and organisations. Social capital is a relationship that occurs and is bound by trust, mutual understanding, and trust in the importance of shared values that bind the group to make the possibility for collective action effectively and efficiently (Coleman, 1999 cit. Marfai et. Al., 2015).

The discussion of social capital itself cannot be separated from the typology of social capital (Woolcock, 1998). This typology helps explain the differences in networks and interactions that are formed from each social capital. According to Woolcock (1998) the typology of social capital can be divided into three dimensions, namely social bonding capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital. Bonding social capital can be demonstrated through values, culture, perceptions, and customs. This typology will be of high quality if a single individual has the ability to interact and communicate with other individuals in order to achieve common goals. Bridging social capital is a social bond that arises as a reaction to various characteristics of different groups. Linking social capital is social network that characterised with relation among social status in the society (Woolcock, 1998).

In general, social capital, which is widely studied by academics, consists of two components, namely trust and social bonds. The social capital that exists in society describes the character of social relations in that society. Trust appears in society when a community raises moral values which will form community attitudes (Fukuyama, 1995 cit. Kwon et. Al., 2013). Trust can also play a role in building business relationships, especially in entrepreneurial activities. This role includes increasing the flow of information among social groups and recognition for entrepreneurs. Social capital at the community level is a public good that can be accessed by

all members. The results of the research by Kwon et. al. (2013) show that it is easier to develop entrepreneurship in individuals in communities with a high level of trust.

### **Women's empowerment**

One critique of the development concept is gender bias (Melkote and Steeves, 2001). Many development programs ignore the role of women in society, whereas on the other hand women's empowerment and economic development are closely related. Empowering women will improve children's welfare such as health and improved nutrition. Therefore it takes efforts from various parties to provide space for women in the framework of economic development in society (Duflo, 2012). One example of empowering women is to invite women to be directly involved in mapping the potential that exists around them. This role can be performed by anyone who wants to help the community, be it social workers or the government.

The results of the study (Suardana, 2010) show that even though women's income is not very high, it is enough to make them proud because as women they have their own income that can help support the family. According to Alire et. al. (2013) women's empowerment in agriculture can be seen from several domains, namely (1) decision making in agricultural production, (2) access in determining production resources, (3) income management, (4) leadership in society, (5) time allocation. Women can play a role in community development in their area. The existence of this women's role can reduce gender discrimination and balance the roles of men and women (Allahdadi, 2011).

### **Methodologies**

To find out the role of social capital in empowering women in the Dieng highland, researchers used a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2009). This perspective is used to better understand the role of social capital in society, making it easy to analyse. This research was conducted in Keajar District, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia.

Observation, interview, documentation and focus group discussion methods were used to collect data. A snowball sampling technique was used to determine informants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Snowball sampling is done to make it easier to find key informants who can be interviewed related to research problems. After the data is collected, it is followed with an in-depth analysis.

### **Results**

The majority of highland communities work as farmers and have low educational backgrounds. On average, they only have elementary school education. They prefer to work on their land rather than attend school. The age of marriage for mountain women is relatively early in the age of 16 years. Besides that, highland women have more activities than men, because in

addition to working on the land, they have to take care of the household such as cooking, cleaning the house and caring for children. In Wonosobo District, the majority of working women are primary school graduates.

Table 1: The population of women (15 years and over) who work according to education in Wonosobo Regency

Education	Year			
	2015	2017	2018	2019
No / Never been to school	7,577	4,951	4,527	5,759
No / Not finished elementary school	41,812	35,394	41,784	28,731
Primary school	80,307	76,982	68,272	71,052
Junior High School	18,793	20,271	24,870	22,808
High school	17,714	15,634	20,486	23,420
University	5,710	11,926	12,258	11,579

Sources: BPS 2020

The table shows that women's education still needs the attention of local governments. The level of education and skills possessed by women is much lower than that of men, so that their chances of working in the formal sector are very small. As a result, they generally work in the informal sectors (Lutfiddin, 2011).

Although there are still many women's groups who have not yet received higher education and work in the agricultural sector, women in the Dieng highlands have a strong character which becomes their capital in society and develops the potential in their agricultural sector. These behaviour characteristics include diligence in work, high solidarity, being open, religious, active in organisations, and willing to accept change. The following will explain how social capital plays a role in community development activities.

### **Social Capital in the SCBFWM Program**

The results showed a relationship between social capital and women's empowerment. The relation link between social capital and women's empowerment is manifested in the *Strengthening Community Based Forest and Watershed Management (SCBFWM)* program, initiated by the government, donor agencies and NGOs. This program is a long-term program involving many parties from 2005 to 2010. The objective of this program is to assist government programs in reducing land degradation by increasing the carrying capacity of the river flow area, as well as improving the welfare of the community.

In an effort to increase the value of agricultural products in Dieng, women's groups work together in the SCBFWM program to develop the potential of agricultural products that are

around them. The level of community participation, especially women's groups, is very high because it is in accordance with what they need. Social capital related to empowering women in the SCBFWM program consists of bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital (Woolcock, 1998).

*First, bonding social capital.* Woman in the Dieng Highland have a high solidarity characteristic that enables the increase of social ties between them. They are also devout Muslims who have many religious activities. Almost every day from morning to evening groups of women can interact with each other. Some of the places that become a means of interaction include religious meetings, places of worship, land and home yards.

"Meetings are usually held based on the worship place area to facilitate the distribution of meeting turns" (interview with religious leader, 2018).

Having regular intensive meetings makes it easier for the community to discuss various things including what activities they will do. This social capital bonding makes it easier for SCBFWM stakeholders to start their activities. The idea of new activities was easier to convey because the women's group leaders were able to absorb information well and convey it to members. This facilitates program socialisation and program evaluation.

*Second, bridging social capital.* Bridging social capital will be realised when the bonds that exist in the community are very strong through various interactions on issues of increasing community welfare. The groups that have been formed interact to share information on opportunities to increase their knowledge and experiences. This group is not only in one village, but also with other villages.

"*Bridging.* This can be seen from the formation of a CBO (Community Base Organisation) where in this organisation there are regular meetings as well as informal meetings for women's groups and other stakeholders "(interview with NGO)

The SCBFWM program facilitates women's groups between villages and sub-districts to discuss each other. Although they come from different villages and sub-districts, the characteristics of Dieng highland women who have high solidarity and easily mingle make communication between groups easier. They do not hesitate to share ideas and experiences in agricultural product processing, even though they come from different villages or sub-districts.

*Third, linking social capital.* In order to realise and implement community development, cooperation between various parties is needed. The cooperation that will be established is a form of mutually beneficial cooperation. An example is the cooperation between the government and companies, both private and public, in order to build society. One form of networking in Dieng is the involvement of the government, NGOs and university in the SCBFWM program.

"Now many stakeholders have researched and developed ideas related to the Dieng highland. They take advantage of social groups, especially women, to provide an assistance "(interview with NGO)

Women's groups that have been formed in the SCBFWM program, convey ideas and opinion for agricultural product development to the private sector and the government. The private sector partners include PT Geo Dipa, PLN, and PDAM. Apart from that, the group was also allowed to go to universities such as the Bogor Agricultural Institute and Gadjah Mada University. This cross-sectoral collaboration increases self-confidence among group members and between groups to continue to develop the potential that exists in their village.

### Social Capital and Entrepreneurial Activities

Another form of social capital is trust. The social ties that exist in society make trust easy to form and be used to improve relations between group members and between groups in society. One of the implications of this trust is to create group activities in the field of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial activities that have developed in Dieng from the existence of trust include the development of agricultural product processing especially with the *Carica papaya* plant. This product has been widely known by the wider community and marketing has started. The marketing of these processed products is carried out at exhibitions, orders for people from outside the city and also marketed to tourist sites in the Dieng area. *Carica* is a superior plant besides potatoes which brings high profits. The average profit per month can reach 69 million IDR. Domestic industries that process *Carica* are also scattered in almost every village in the Dieng highlands.

Table 2: The number of home industries that manage *Carica* and the average profit in Kejajar Sub-District, Wonosobo

No.	Village	Total	Average Profit (IDR) / month
1	Sembungan	5	10,862,000
2	Dieng	13	39,858,000
3	Igir Manak	1	7,500,000
4	Serang	3	34,000,000
5	Jojogan	3	19,750,000
6	Parikesit	3	69,250,000
7	Tieng	2	24,000,000
8	Patak Banteng	17	32,650,000
9	Sikunang	2	4,000,000

Sources: Data processed (KKL UGM, 2018)

Although the area of the plant is not as large as a potato crop and most of it is only a companion crop, the productivity of this plant is quite high. The yield per month reached 587 tons of *Carica*. This production is sufficient to meet market demand in Wonosobo and its surroundings.

Table 3: Total plant area and productivity of *Carica* plants

No.	Village	Plant Area (ha)	Productivity (ton / ha)	Number of Trees	1 Tree (8 kg)	Production/ Month
1	Igirmanak	1	1	189	1,512	3,024
2	Tieng	1	1	185	1,480	2,960
3	Parikesit	25	1.5	7,030	56,240	112,480
4	Patakbanteng	35	1.5	9,840	78,720	157,440
5	Jojogan	6	1.5	1,690	13,520	27,040
6	Dieng	19	1.5	5,200	41,600	83,200
7	Sikunang	16	1.5	4,500	36,000	72,000
8	Burst	19	2	7,130	57,040	114,080
9	Campursari	5	1	930	7,440	14,880
<b>total</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>36,694</b>	<b>293,552</b>	<b>587,104</b>

Sources: Field Survey (KKL UGM, 2018)

Agricultural product processing activities, especially *Carica*, involve many women's groups. This involvement starts from the harvesting of *Carica*, stripping, making *Carica* syrup, and the packing process. The existence of a home industry community that is followed by women in the Dieng highlands, has led to the mushrooming of *Carica* products around the Dieng mountains. Apart from earning income from potato farming, Dieng highland women also get additional income from this *Carica* processing. The trust value that is maintained among group members and stakeholders has increased social bonds and gives benefits to women's groups.

## Discussion

In the dimension of linking social capital, there is a discussion about relations between women's groups and business networks. In the buying and selling transactions, women who are industrial players are not able to optimise the selling price of their products. Home industry players cannot do much because they really need money from sales to meet their daily needs immediately. This pressure causes producers to sell their products directly through collectors' services. They believe the price given is a fair price and is cheaper than the market price. The patron-client relationships between producer and distributors are generally strong and enduring. Patrons try to maintain this pattern of relationship to maintain their existence in

carrying out economic activities. Clients get price guarantees from distributors or collectors (Rustinsyah, 2011).

With the existence of this phenomenon, there is social capital owned by producers and distributors in an economic community. In this interaction there is a relationship of trust and mutual understanding which forms a bond. In its development, now the patron client relationship that seems exploitative is changing along with the rapid development of information and communication technology that has entered the countryside.

Now almost every village in Indonesia has internet coverage. The community also has sophisticated communication tools. In the village, smartphones, laptops, and internet are not a luxury anymore. Even in some villages it is a necessity for the community. If in the past the community only had limited networks with fellow producers and distributors, now with the use of information technology, producers have the opportunity to develop networks and access any information needed by consumers.

Research results by Subejo et. al. (2018) show that the use of information and communication technology media can support agricultural activities and can increase food security in rural areas. Farmers, most of whom still use conventional media such as radio, television, and cell phones, can use this technology to access some information, although it is still very limited for educational information. Meanwhile, youth groups are able to take advantage of the use of smartphones through internet access to support their agricultural activities.

Technology makes it easier for people in all activities. Internet users are now not only looking for entertainment but also looking for information and networking with anyone, anywhere. The ways in which people interact are diverse and increasingly dynamic, resulting in new social bonds. The existence of new social ties will also produce new networks.

For people in villages who are majority farmers, they are also getting used to using the internet, especially with their smartphones. Some women's groups have also started using internet applications to market the products they make. Social media that is widely used includes Facebook and WhatsApp. The existence of these social networks form their own social bonds (bonding) and bridges (bridging) farmers to a new network that they cannot find in their village. The results of the study by Phua et.al. (2017) show that social media can create bridging and the bonding of new social capital.

In this virtual interaction, there is a strong trust and bond between each member in the group. Now home industry players are free to network with anyone without exploitation from patrons. They have the right to sell production and processed agricultural products to anyone, not only at the district and provincial level, but are also able to sell their agricultural products abroad. The challenge going forward is how to socialise the use of the internet to develop networks in



the context of community development, especially women's groups, to make them more prosperous.

### **Conclusion**

Social capital has an important role in empowering women in the Dieng highlands. Trust between members of women's groups is easily formed both in the dimensions of social bonding capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital. Women in the Dieng highlands have unique behaviour characteristics like solidarity, religiosity, and openness which can increase social bonds between them. A high trust of trust can drive entrepreneurial activities of agricultural groups facilitated by various stakeholders.



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