

# Women Farmers Group Participation in Empowering Local Food Security

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## Abstract.

*Women's participation in socio-economic development at the local level is important and strategic because women have two roles as actors in developing a household by taking care of children and helping in the family economy. This study aims to the participation of farmer women's groups in empowering local food security as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program in Cilacap Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. This study used the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) method to involve 20 informants from members and administrators of the Women Farmers Group (WFG) of Sumber Pathedan and 14 academics, namely lecturers and students. Data were collected through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), observation, and documentation with participatory analysis to produce natural and sustainable reality constructions. The results showed that WFG had the motivation and cohesiveness to become an entrepreneur after receiving socio-economic empowerment in the form of cultivating food security for vegetables and post-harvest processed products from the CSR program. However, it requires program sustainability such as assistance to continue to be able to harvest productively in the dry season. Then it requires the support of home production equipment and supplies to increase the productivity of postharvest products.*

**Keywords:** *Women farmers group, food security, participation, rural development, and community empowerment.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is an effective participatory development strategy for designing and implementing socio-economic programs that are following the potential resources, problems, and needs of local or rural communities. Development requires the participation and cooperation of all parties, starting from the government, the private sector, and the community as development stakeholders, through empowerment programs based on the needs and potential of local resources. The hope is that the process and results of development belong to, care, participate and share responsibility for advancing and prospering together. Especially in rural communities with various business groups, the agricultural economy is strategic and important as the foundation for regional, urban, and even national development. Because rural areas have important resource potential and can be developed such as natural or environmental resources, economic resources, and socio-cultural resources with local wisdom or local wisdom that is original, natural, and unique (indigenous). Public policies that support the development of autonomy in the countryside have been stipulated in Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, it is stated that Village Development is an effort to improve the quality of life and life for the greatest possible welfare of the Village community. Then regarding community empowerment in Article 1 (8) that Village Community Empowerment is an activity program to create community welfare and independence through increasing awareness, knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and skills by utilizing resources supported by the implementation of relevant policies, programs, as well as assistance with the problems and priority needs of the village community itself.

Community empowerment in carrying out socio-economic development, one of which is through programs and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a form of company collaboration with the surrounding community which is supported and required by the government. The company's CSR requires sustainability in business, then it is better to carry out the 3P concept namely profit, people, and planet, meaning that the company does not only collect profits (profit) but also needs to contribute to

people's lives (people. ) and actively maintain, care for, and preserve the surrounding environment (planet) [1-3] Ideally, the formulation of the CSR program is carried out in a participatory manner by involving socio-economic institutions in the surrounding community so that it is relevant to the problems, needs, and potential of local resources owned by the community. The CSR program is implemented based on Law Number 40 of 2007 concerning Limited Liability Companies which is implemented through Government Regulation Number 47 of 2012 concerning the Social and environmental responsibility of limited liability companies. Participation of all parties is an important key in empowering community socio-economic institutions from CSR programs to formulate, agree on and implement programs from the surrounding community, companies that have programs, and local governments that have policies. Participation is a process of growing awareness of interrelationships among stakeholders in society, namely social groups and communities by adopting policies and other institutions. Then participatory development is a process that involves community activities in all substantial decisions relating to people's lives [4-7]

The development paradigm is currently experiencing a shift, where development emphasizes empowerment, which is known as people-centered development, resource-based development, and institutional development. Community empowerment can be interpreted as a process that builds people or society through developing community capabilities, changing people's behavior, and community organizing. Empowerment can grow and develop the ability to try, the ability to seek information, and the ability to manage activities [8-11]. Representation of the participation of socio-economic institutional groups that have successfully implemented the CSR program, namely the Women Farmers Group (WFG) of Sumber Pathedan in Lomanis Village, Cilacap District, Cilacap Regency, Central Java Province with local food security through cultivating vegetables and postharvest products from PT. Pertamina of Cilacap LPG Depot. This study is very important and interesting to study as an implementation of the empowerment of Women Farmer Groups in the socio-economic field in the company's CSR program. The empowerment functions to increase the empowerment of the disadvantaged, so there are elements of individual and group power that have or use opportunities to gain and distribute between perspectives on power, views on power which will determine the characteristic form of empowerment. The perspective is pluralist, elitist, structuralist, and poststructuralist [12-15] The results of research that constructs the reality of WFG of Sumber Pathedan in Lomanis Village, Cilacap Regency, and studies of several other research results, that: (1) The CSR empowerment program in the formulation of its planning has not been participatory by involving all WFG members, then young women in rural areas who have the potential to become creative, productive and innovative human resources to join as members and or administrators of WFGs to become young entrepreneurs who are successors to digital-based village development, especially in product promotion and marketing.

(2) WFG still lacks knowledge and skills in financial administration management, so report recording is still manual with written records or has not been managed digitally. (3) Implementation of policies to increase local crop production has not been optimal so there is still a large gap between production and the potential of local food crops. Some of the basic problems that need attention are the problem of the lack of involvement of implementers at the operational level, the problem of implementation coordination between units, and the problem of adequate budget for programs to increase local food crop production. (6) Policies in the field of food security are only assessed as physical development, by providing material assistance that is only of temporary benefit. It is necessary to examine the problems that always arise, namely socio-cultural factors, and pay attention to the local wisdom of the community as development capital. (4) WFG of Sumber Pathedan has high motivation and cohesiveness to carry out food security empowerment programs with vegetable cultivation and post-harvest WFG products are sufficient to meet the needs of the group, and are used as additional income so that they can be developed again into superior commodities with the help of increasing quality standardization as well as digital marketing promotions. The research used the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) method as a form of qualitative research to identify community problems and potentials and gain an in-depth understanding of the situation of a community. Then the community as a community worker analyzes and makes decisions on the problems faced.

PLA is an assessment, and learning process, optimizing aspirations and participation from conditions or problems faced by, with, and for the community [16-17] the main principles are: (1) Prioritizing the less fortunate to know the real reality of the problem; (2) Emphasizing the assessment process as an empowerment process (learning and strengthening) for the community and community workers; (3) Principles of learning and respecting differences. (4) The process of re-checking or triangulation or checking and re-checking the data obtained both from observations, documentation, and interviews as well as FGDs. (5) Implementation is informal, optimizes results, is sustainable, and is open. Research data collection originates from (1) Secondary data is the result of the identification and analysis of documents concerning project reports, program notes, research results, laws and regulations as well as the mass media. (2) Primary data from the results of reconstructing direct observations, distributing questionnaires, and interviews with brainstorming to accommodate various aspirations, ideas, and suggestions. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to discuss a problem in a focused manner, Participatory Decision Making to make decisions. The research location is in WFG of Sumber Pathedan in Lomanis Village, Cilacap District, Cilacap Regency, Central Java Province. Determination of informants for qualitative research using purposive sampling consisted of administrators and members of the Women Farmers Group (WFG) of Sumber Pathedan and as many as 30 people, practitioners, empowerment activists, and academics. Participatory research analysis with the stages of collecting and reducing data, identifying and categorizing, constructing results, objectives, and solutions, verifying and triangulating data, then designing programs that are relevant, implementable, and sustainable.

## II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1. Development of WFG in Local Food Security

Empowering the role of WFG, the Research Team conducted a study at WFG of Sumber Patedhan, Lomanis Village, Central Cilacap District, Cilacap Regency. The study and input from the research team are expected to further increase the productivity of WFG members. On the other hand, PT. Pertamina of Cilacap LPG Depot is expected to provide more Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) assistance to WFG SP in the form of equipment for production houses. According to the Head of WFG stated that "We are happy and thank the Unsoed Team, which has conducted studies, provided input and motivation for the progress of WFG of Sumber Patedhan". CSR is a community empowerment program that creates socio-economic institutions through small and medium business groups to develop their potential so that they can increase their activities, and income, and increase their welfare and self-sufficiency. CSR needs to be realized with the functions of control, monitoring, and evaluation of the local government so that it can be realized following the needs of the community around the company [18-20] WFG of Sumber Pathedan which is located close to PT. Pertamina of Cilacap LPG Depot in Lomanis Village, established in December 2018, now has 30 housewives as members spread across the Citizens Association 01 and RW 03 areas. Thanks to CSR in the form of a socio-economic empowerment program from PT. Pertamina of Cilacap LPG Depot, WFG SP is currently actively and productively carrying out activities. Socio-economic empowerment from its CSR program is utilizing the garden next to the member's house for cultivating vegetable crops such as caisim, eggplant, cayenne pepper, and kale to support local food security.

The location for cultivating food security crops is in the neighborhood unit 01 area with a garden area of 379 square meters, while in the neighborhood area 03 the land for vegetable cultivation is 512 square meters. In addition to cultivating vegetable crops, WFG members also make processed food products in the form of spinach leaf chips, peanut chips, breadfruit chips, and powdered red ginger and ginger emprit drinks. All of these processed products comply with halal standards and have received a Cilacap Regency Household Industry Food Production Certificate. The selling price of the product per package averages 10.000 IDR to 15.000 IDR per pack weighing 0,25 kilogram. The most popular is the spinach leaf cracker, which has a savory and crunchy taste. These chips and ginger products are capable of producing up to 50 kilograms per month at a price of around 80.000 IDR per kilogram. But on the eve of holidays such as Eid, production can increase five times. According to one WFG management, "For the cultivation of vegetable crops, we pick them to process ourselves, and we also sell them to the market to supplement our income. Meanwhile, the processed food that we make, so far, has been marketed besides Cilacap and its surroundings,

also to Jakarta. and Bandung. Even, to Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and China".Based on WFG's role in empowering the CSR program, the Research Team from Jenderal Soedirman University, totaling 3 lecturers and 5 students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences from Jenderal Soedirman University conducted a study on the implementation of the Women Farmer Group empowerment model in productive socio-economic fields.

This research is also a practicum implementation that involves 11 students of the Agricultural Extension Masters Study Program and the Postgraduate Agribusiness Masters Program at Jenderal Soedirman University. Research and practicum activities are set up with participatory dialogic activities in the form of workshops with the Women Farmers Group. Community empowerment studies are very much in line with the participatory method which is dialogical, egalitarian, and open for all groups to work together and collaborate starting from the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating joint programs. Community empowerment should become the focus of local government development programs, private companies with their CSR programs, and academics with their practicum and research activities [21-25] The head of the research team said that "his party is interested in learning a lot from WFG SP's experience in managing Pertamina's CSR program in food security and food products which are very useful for increasing people's income".The workshop activity started with a connecting activity with the introduction of all participants from the research team and the student practicum team with WFG of Sumber Pathedan which was very lively and intimate interspersed with jokes from the distribution of prizes for answering questions that the participants were able to answer. Then the second session was divided into two dialogue groups, namely the human resources and economic resources group, and another group on socio-cultural resources and environmental resources. The purpose of dividing the discussion groups is so that the research team and the student practicum team can directly construct a real reality for direct learning through participatory dialogue, identify, analyze, and design the WFG empowerment program from the CSR program.

Empowerment programs can be developed based on problems, needs, and potentials that originate from human resources and economic resources, another group of socio-cultural resources, and environmental resources. The next session was a discussion of the results of participatory dialogue from the identification and analysis of socio-economic empowerment programs which became recommendations for findings as well as input for the continuation of the WFG of Sumber Pathedan program. Based on the opinion of workshop participants who are active members of WFG, emphasized that "hopefully there will be a continuation of counseling, training and mentoring activities for him to be able to develop the cultivation of vegetables and their processed products. Because during the dry season, WFG's garden and green-house land for cultivating food security from vegetable crops cannot produce, because many plants die. We are confused, about how to solve this. For that, we still need training and assistance, especially assistance in the form of equipment and production houses to produce more post-harvest products. The production house equipment includes frying pans, dryers, packaging sealer equipment, or packaging and labeling. Socio-economic community institutions such as WFG of for cultivating vegetables and processed products are a necessity in helping the daily and monthly needs of families, so they need to continue to be developed through assistance and sustainability of empowerment programs [26-28] According to one of the students participating in the workshop on empowerment studies, "The enthusiasm and cohesiveness of WFG is extraordinary and can be good social capital to continue its business and institutional activities.

In this case, it is necessary to involve more WFG management and members in the process of formulating empowerment programs so that they are following the problems, potentials, and needs of the WFG itself. Ending the workshop, an evaluation of the activities of the research team and practicum students was held by providing reviews and explanations of the results of the dialogue about the core issues and needs of WFG which then need to be followed up by the CSR program so that it is sustainable. The stages of empowerment are building motivation, cohesiveness in institutions, and increasing knowledge and skills for productive businesses, to create self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, independence still requires ongoing assistance from various parties such as companies, local governments, and universities so that they can increase production, product quality, product promotion, and marketing [29-32]

## 2.2. WFG Participation in Socio-Economic Empowerment

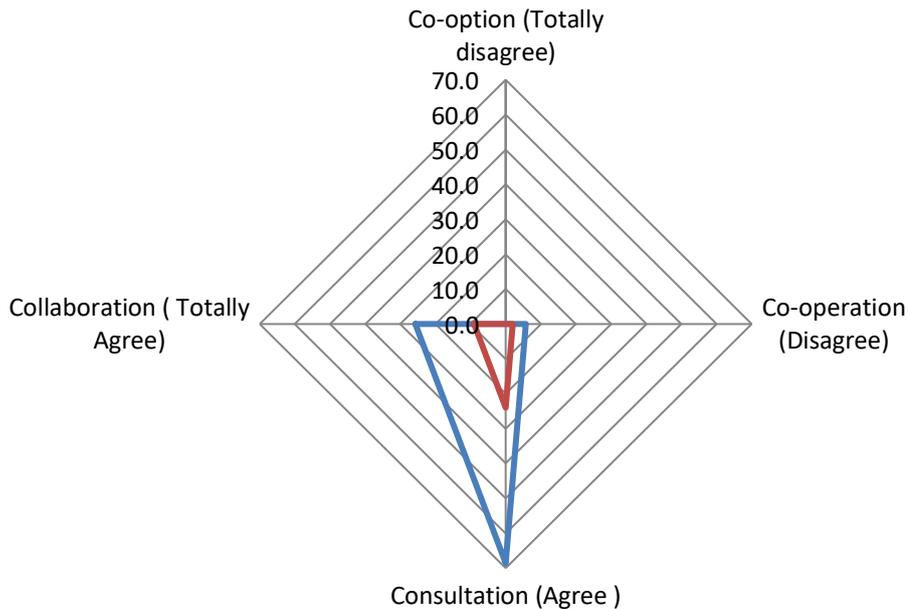
WFG after receiving an empowerment program from the company's CSR, namely being able to cultivate vegetable food security plants and produce postharvest products as a form of entrepreneurship that can meet the economic needs of both himself and his group. The research uses Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) which jointly between the community as the subject of research and researchers identify, analyze and create program solutions, even researchers also learn from the experience of the community and its socio-economic activities [33-34] Based on the analysis of the PLA method, the involvement of the research subjects, namely the members and administrators of the WFG with the research team and students who were doing practical work, were all involved in the learning process together to provide motivation and ideas for developing empowerment programs as shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Participation in WFG Empowerment

Subjects & Methods of Participation	Members & Management of WFG	Student Team	Research Team
(1) Brainstorming & Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Methods:	Problems, potential, and needs	Identify & Analyze	Priority of problems, potentials, and needs
(2) Case-Based Learning (CBL) Method	Productivity in the cultivation of vegetables and postharvest products	Standardization of food & product security cultivation	Product quality improvement and innovation adoption
(3) Project-Based Learning Method	Expectations for the continuation of the post-harvest production house program	Inventory of production house equipment and supplies	Effective and efficient production house innovation

Community empowerment, especially for women, is important to continue to fight for the mainstreaming of women's gender rights which are allowed to participate in the socio-economic field. Women as actors have a dual role as domestic workers taking care of children or family at home and can also look for additional activities, income, and family welfare by working as entrepreneurs [35-40] The socio-economic empowerment carried out by WFG can increase the knowledge and skills of members, who agree 72.7% and 27.3% strongly agree. This shows the importance of community empowerment that can open a business as an economic activity and meet personal and group needs. The implementation of the empowerment program can become a superior entrepreneur or the main job according to WFG members who agreed 51.5%, disagreed 33.3% and strongly agreed 15.2%. Community empowerment has the potential and opportunities to become leading economic entrepreneurs who can be relied upon to become jobs for WFG members and groups. Implementation of empowerment programs can become part-time entrepreneurs according to WFG members who agreed 78.8%, disagreed 6.1%, and strongly agreed 15.2%.

This shows that economic empowerment for WFG members can also become part-time entrepreneurial land for additional family and group income. WFG members as research respondents in Figure 24 stated that the implementation of the socio-economic empowerment program could create prosperity which stated that 72.7% agreed, 21.2% strongly agreed and 6.1% disagreed. WFG members who work as farmer groups, entrepreneurs, and organizational administrators are very relevant to receive economic empowerment to become part-time or top-notch entrepreneurs who can also add to meeting the needs of the household and their groups. Compilation results of the four indicators of the ability to do business and meet economic needs In Figure 1, it can be concluded that WFG is included in the Consultation participation category of 68.6%, meaning that many WFG members argue or argue in carrying out socio-economic empowerment as a client role, but still, outsiders such as the village government and Pertamina's CSR or extension workers do analyze information and making decisions. Then 25.7% is included in the collaboration participation category, meaning that WFGs as local community collaborators can work together with outsiders who are also responsible for socio-economic empowerment activities.



**Fig 1.** Participation in Business and Meeting Economic Needs

Figure 1 shows an indicator of empowerment, the ability to do business and meet economic needs, that the empowerment activities carried out at WFG according to the members as respondents and more research subjects answered that they could become part-time entrepreneurs, then increase knowledge and skills, increase welfare, add friendships, look for activities and become a major entrepreneur. Empowerment programs from CSR have been successful because of motivational factors or the strong desire of members of the community's socio-economic institutions to move forward and develop into entrepreneurship [41-44] Then the company factor that is responsible for carrying out CSR programs for the surrounding community, not only in the form of donations for celebrations or ceremonial grants but in the form of counseling and productive entrepreneurship training. The local government also provides support in the form of policy implementation for the company's CSR which can be used for the socio-economic empowerment of the community to improve welfare as well as self-reliance.

### III. CONCLUSION

Empowerment of WFG in the ability to do business and meet economic needs then the level of empowerment is quite high and is included in the type of Consultation participation. Empowerment activities carried out at WFG according to members as respondents and research subjects mostly answered that they could become part-time entrepreneurs, then increase knowledge and skills, improve welfare, add friendships, seek busyness, and could become main entrepreneurs. Empowerment WFGs have the support of intense access to information from group leaders or administrators, cohesiveness in friendship between members and administrators, having motivation in every socio-economic empowerment activity to increase knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurship. The active role of extension workers and village government support in collaboration with empowerment programs.

WFG has inhibiting factors, namely program planning and socio-economic empowerment budgets are formulated and determined not in a participatory manner, but are dominated by Pertamina's CSR facilitators and the village government. Socio-economic empowerment requires support and participation from stakeholders such as civil society parties such as the community, empowerment groups in this case WFG, facilitators, and extension workers as empowerment actors, then the government with policy and budget support, as well as the private sector or companies with empowerment programs. The WFG socio-economic empowerment program needs to be designed based on participatory and dialogic communication

between stakeholders so that it is following the needs, potential resources, and needs of the community. So that the empowerment program belongs to and is a shared responsibility for the welfare of the community's economy.

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