
EMPOWERMENT OF THE COMMUNITY OF GADING SARI VILLAGE THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE OF MANGO AND AVOCADO SEEDS FOR FOOD SECURITY

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Abstract: The community empowerment program through plant seed assistance in Gading Sari Village is carried out to optimize the use of unproductive land. This activity was carried out by distributing 1500 mango seeds and 1500 avocado seedlings to the community, most of whom work as farmers. The method used is qualitative descriptive through observation, interviews and documentation. The results of the activity show that the enthusiasm of the community is quite high, although obstacles such as lack of cultivation knowledge and lack of participation of some residents are still found. This program has great potential in improving food security and the economy of village communities.

Keywords: Community empowerment, Seed Assistance, Food Security, Village, Gading Sari.

INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment is one of the main strategies in participation-based development. In this approach, society is not positioned as an object of development, but as a subject who has the ability to identify problems, design solutions, and carry out actions independently to improve their quality of life. As stated by (Suharto 2005) Empowerment is a social development process that places the community as the main actor in every stage of social, economic and cultural change.

The Government of Indonesia has paid serious attention to empowerment-based village development, as stated in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages (Judiciary 2015). In this regulation, it is explicitly emphasized that the empowerment of village communities is a systematic effort to develop independence and welfare

through capacity building and utilization of local resources. This law not only mandates the village government to implement empowerment programs (Article 67 Paragraph 2), but also gives the community the right to be actively involved, supervise and provide aspirations in its implementation (Article 68 Paragraph 1).

One of the community empowerment practices that is interesting to study is the plant seed assistance program in Gading Sari Village, Pakem District, Bondowoso Regency. The village, which consists of nine hamlets and is located in a highland area with moderate rainfall, has great potential for land resources, but has not been optimally utilized. Of the total area of 456.84 hectares, around 321.84 hectares are dry land that is mostly still left abandoned. In fact, according to (Sari et al. 2024) Land is a complex and strategic system, which can be the main driver of people's economic activities if managed properly.

Seeing these conditions, the Gading Sari Village Government took the initiative to allocate Village Funds for seed assistance programs in the form of mango and avocado trees. This program will be carried out on March 17, 2024 at the Village Head's residence, by involving farmers who own land but have not managed it productively. The selection of this type of fruit crop is based on considerations of economic value, durability, and local climate suitability. In addition, this step is also part of the village development strategy towards sustainable food security.

Normatively, this program is based on Law Number 18 of 2012 concerning Food (Ardani 2020), which states that food security is a condition for meeting the need for food that is sufficient, safe, nutritious, equitable, and affordable. This principle is also in line with the definition of food security according to (FAO. 2009) which includes four main dimensions: food availability, access, utilization, and stability. By providing plant seeds to residents, the village government is actually building two important foundations of food security: namely increasing local food availability and expanding the community's economic access to agricultural products.

The community's response to this program has been very positive. Many residents, especially small farmers, welcome this assistance because they have been struggling to get superior seeds. In addition, this program also builds the spirit of mutual cooperation through joint planting community service, sharing information between residents, and collaboration with community leaders and farmer groups. Thus, this program not only has an impact on the economic side, but also strengthens social capital which is an important asset in village development.

In terms of household economics, this program provides bright prospects. Mango and avocado plants, if managed properly, can provide significant results. One avocado tree, for example, can produce more than 100 kg per year. If the selling price is around IDR 10,000 per kg, then one tree has the potential to provide additional income of around one million rupiah per year. In the long run, if all the seedlings grow and bear fruit, the community will get a stable and sustainable source of additional income.

Another impact that is no less important is from the environmental side. Planting trees on vacant land indirectly helps in soil and water conservation, reduces the risk of erosion, absorbs carbon emissions, and creates a cooler microenvironment. This shows that the plant seed assistance program in Gading Sari is also part of the sustainable development agenda, where the economic, social, and environmental dimensions run synergistically.

However, the success of this program is inseparable from challenges. Among them are the availability of water for watering in the dry season, the limited technical knowledge of some residents about horticultural cultivation, and the need for a stable marketing system. To overcome these challenges, the village government needs to work with agricultural extension workers, local Agriculture Offices, and higher education institutions that can provide ongoing training, research, and mentoring.

As a form of follow-up, the formation of institutions such as farmer groups and village cooperatives is important. This institution acts as a forum for

coordination, product management, and market network development. In this context, Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) can be strategic partners in helping to market crops and open access to the small-scale food processing industry based on local products.

The seed assistance program in Gading Sari Village has provided an important lesson that village development does not always have to start with big things. By recognizing local potential, understanding community needs, and managing resources with a participatory approach, villages can become centers of new economic growth that are independent and competitive. Community empowerment is not just about giving, but about fostering citizens' awareness, responsibility, and capacity to build their own future.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method (Moleong 2010). The researcher seeks to describe the process and results of community empowerment activities through the distribution of plant seeds in Gading Sari Village. Data collection techniques include observation of land conditions and community involvement (Creswell, John, 2016), interviews with the village head and some beneficiary residents (Quantitative 2016) as well as documentation of seed distribution activities (Indriantoro and Supomo 2002).

The research was carried out in March 2024, coinciding with the implementation of the annual plant seed feeding program. The village government provides 3000 mango and avocado seedlings, consisting of 1500 mango seedlings and 1500 avocado seedlings. This study also examines the obstacles and opportunities of these activities in encouraging food security and empowering village communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are based on a community empowerment program through the distribution of mango and avocado plant seeds in Gading Sari Village, Pakem District, Bondowoso Regency. This research was conducted to analyze the

extent to which the program has succeeded in increasing the use of sleeping land and providing an economic impact to the village community.

1. Early Land Conditions and Problems

Based on observations and interviews with the village, it was found that many lands in Gading Sari Village were left abandoned. The main cause of this condition is low community motivation to manage land and limited access to superior seeds. In this context, the seed assistance program is a relevant solution. This program has been implemented consistently since the last three years by providing free seeds to the community every March.

According to (Radhi 2008) The success of the empowerment program is influenced by the active participation of citizens, local institutional capacity and the sustainability of the program. Therefore, strengthening community capacity is one of the main keys in the management of this seed assistance program. Meanwhile, (Mubyarto 2000) emphasized that empowerment must touch the aspect of community self-reliance so that it does not depend on assistance alone.

The unproductive land situation in Gading Sari Village is also related to the lack of agricultural literacy and limited access to information about horticultural crop cultivation. There are still many villagers who depend on traditional planting patterns and are unfamiliar with modern techniques that can increase productivity. These challenges are also exacerbated by unpredictable weather and climate factors, as well as low access to agricultural tools and technologies.

In the long term, this condition not only has an impact on land productivity, but also on the economic competitiveness of rural communities. Without systematic intervention, these lands have the potential to become a source of conflict, environmental degradation, and even a breeding ground for disease. Therefore, the empowerment approach through horticultural agriculture is seen as a strategy that is able to answer these multidimensional problems simultaneously.

2. Plant Seed Assistance Data

This program includes the distribution of 3000 plant seedlings to the residents of Gading Sari Village. Its composition consists of:

Table I.
Data on plant seed assistance in 2024.

| Yes | Plant Type | Number of Seeds | Documentation |
|-----|------------|-----------------|---|
| 1. | Mango | 1500 seeds |  |
| 2. | Avocado | 1500 seeds |  |

The distribution of seeds aims to revive unproductive land and increase the economic potential of the village through the use of high-value horticultural commodities. In addition, mango and avocado plants are chosen because they have good adaptation to local agroclimatic conditions and stable market demand, both at the local and national levels.

The selection of this commodity also considers the potential for value *chain* development from upstream to downstream, which involves production, post-harvest, processing, distribution and marketing processes. With such an economic structure, it is hoped that this program can create a multiplier effect on other

sectors, including transportation, trade, and local tourism services based on agro-tourism.

3. Distribution of Seeds per Hamlet

Gading Sari Village consists of several hamlets and the distribution of seeds is carried out evenly as follows:

Table 2.
Distribution of seed assistance per hamlet in Gading Sari Village.

| Yes | Hamlet | Mango Seeds | Avocado Seeds | Total Seeds |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. | Krajan | 200 | 200 | 400 |
| 2. | Setapai | 180 | 180 | 360 |
| 3. | Kemiri | 180 | 180 | 360 |
| 4. | Pinangatap | 200 | 200 | 400 |
| 5. | Kebunan | 180 | 180 | 360 |
| 6. | Krajan II | 220 | 220 | 440 |
| 7. | Setapai II | 180 | 180 | 360 |
| 8. | Pinangatap II | 80 | 80 | 160 |
| 9. | Kebunan II | 80 | 80 | 160 |
| Total | | | | 3.000 |

The distribution is carried out based on the land area and the number of heads of families per hamlet. The higher the level of readiness and community participation, the greater the distribution of seeds. This distribution model also considers the potential of the land, the social structure of the community and their history of involvement in previous programs.

This participatory distribution strategy is in line with the principles of participatory development planning where the community is the main subject in determining development needs and solutions. Thus, this approach is not only *top-*

down but also bottom-up, creating synergy between the village government and the community.

4. Economic Benefits and Empowerment

The community receiving the seeds admitted that the assistance was very helpful, especially in the medium and long term. The planted mangoes and avocados can be consumed directly sold at the local market or processed into food products such as cakes, juices or other processed foods that have added value. Increasing the value of products through processing also opens up new household business opportunities and expands employment opportunities in the village.

In more detail, the processing of fruit into derivative products such as avocado dodol, mango chips and jam is a promising form of economic diversification. This is a great potential for the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the village level. The existence of processed products also increases the competitiveness of local products in markets outside the village, including opportunities to enter souvenir shops and digital markets.

According to (Mardikanto and Soebianto 2012) Effective community empowerment is an empowerment that is able to create changes in individual and collective behavior in utilizing available resources to improve their quality of life. In this case, the ability of the people of Gading Sari Village to process and market horticultural products is evidence of social and economic transformation.

In addition, according to (Chambers 1997) True empowerment is when people can make their own decisions based on adequate information. Counseling and training are vital elements in supporting this. In this context, entrepreneurship training, business financial management, and digital marketing are important parts of the series of empowerment carried out by the village government.

In addition to direct economic benefits, there are also significant social benefits. Several groups of women farmers formed a community of processed mangoes and avocados. This community is not only a place to share knowledge

and experience, but also a forum for women's empowerment who have been less involved in village economic activities.

5. Participatory Approach and Local Wisdom

The success of the empowerment program in Gading Sari Village cannot be separated from a participatory approach that prioritizes active community involvement from the planning stage to evaluation. In the decision-making process, village deliberations are the main forum to formulate seed distribution policies and determine the priorities of beneficiaries. The involvement of community leaders, youth, and women's groups ensures that the aspirations of various elements of the village can be accommodated.

More than that, the application of the principle of local wisdom is also an important part of the implementation of this program. Villagers take advantage of traditional knowledge in plant maintenance such as the use of organic fertilizers from livestock waste and foliage. The intercropping planting pattern that has been known for a long time has been modified to suit the character of mango and avocado plants, so that it remains in harmony with the farming habits of the community.

According to (Jahns 1967) A development approach that respects local wisdom will be more sustainable because it is in line with the values and norms of the local community. Thus, the seed assistance program in Gading Sari Village not only increases land productivity, but also strengthens the community's cultural identity as an independent and adaptive agrarian community.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the plant seed assistance program in Gading Sari Village was well implemented and received a positive response from residents. The community feels helped in utilizing

unproductive land. The main obstacles are the participation of some residents and the lack of cultivation skills.

Suggestion

The village government needs to map the interests of residents before distributing seeds, provide cultivation training and provide post-planting assistance so that the program is more optimal and sustainable.

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