



## **THE ROLE OF NORTH ACEH GOVERNMENT FOR BUILDING WOMEN'S CAPACITY BASED ON ISLAMIC VALUES IN VOCATIONAL VILLAGE**

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**Abstract:** Women have potential contributions to engage in productive activities and can help the family economy. A vocational village is a village setting a model for developing its local resources to improve inhabitants' quality of life, especially women in the village in North Aceh District, without leaving their Islamic values. This article described the role of government in enhancing women's capacity and local potentials in the vocational village with Islamic values using the empirical methodology. Data is obtained based on field research through purposive sampling collected by interviews with informants using qualitative analysis data. This study found that several training initiatives had been carried out to increase women's capacity, for example training in embroidery, handicrafts, and others. However, these initiatives were not based on the potential components that live in the village. Furthermore, Islamic values in the community in encouraging women in North Aceh have experienced a shift in Pande Village. This study recommends the need for more efforts to increase women's potential by promoting and exhibiting local products for empowering women in villages based on existing prospects without leaving Islamic values.

Perempuan memiliki potensi untuk terlibat dalam kegiatan produktif dan dapat membantu perekonomian keluarga. Desa kejuruan adalah desa yang menjadi model pengembangan sumber daya lokalnya untuk meningkatkan kualitas hidup penduduk, khususnya perempuan di desa di Kabupaten Aceh Utara tanpa meninggalkan nilai-nilai keislamannya. Artikel ini memaparkan peran pemerintah dalam meningkatkan kapasitas perempuan dan potensi lokal di desa vokasi yang bernuansa Islami dengan menggunakan metodologi empiris. Data diperoleh berdasarkan penelitian lapangan melalui *purposive sampling* yang dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan informan dengan menggunakan data analisis kualitatif. Studi ini menemukan bahwa beberapa inisiatif pelatihan telah dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas perempuan, misalnya pelatihan membordir, kerajinan tangan, dan lain-lain. Namun inisiatif tersebut tidak didasarkan pada potensi komponen yang ada di desa. Selanjutnya nilai-nilai Islam yang ada di masyarakat dalam mendorong proses pemberdayaan perempuan di Aceh Utara mengalami pergeseran

di Desa Pande. Kajian ini merekomendasikan perlunya lebih banyak upaya untuk meningkatkan potensi perempuan dengan cara mempromosikan dan memamerkan produk-produk lokal untuk pemberdayaan perempuan di desa berdasarkan potensi yang ada tanpa meninggalkan nilai-nilai keislaman.

**Keywords:** *Role of the Government; Empowerment; Women; Vocational Village.*

## INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment is a systematic, planned, and sustained effort in improving the condition (quality of life) and position (role) of women in the development of families, communities, and nations.<sup>1</sup> Efforts to optimize women's empowerment can be pursued by assisting women in increasing their existing potential.<sup>2</sup> Women have the potential for various productive activities that can support the family economy. Nowadays, the participation of women in helping the family economy is expected. Difficult economic conditions, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of capital have forced many Indonesian women to become female workers in other countries<sup>3</sup>. Such a situation occurs because they are not well equipped with education and skills. As a result, they have no choice but to work to fulfill their basic needs. Women can work to support the family economy without leaving the house. They can use natural resources and local wisdom to develop, have additional income, and not need to go far from their families.

One of the most significant challenges facing the world these days is to find a solution to the problem of hunger and poverty<sup>4</sup> in Indonesia. As a developing country, Indonesia has many development problems, such as poverty and unemployment, due to the gap between plans and achievements. There has not been an integrated and synergistic system to solve the problem of poverty.<sup>5</sup> To reduce the poverty rate, this is necessary to provide training in managing natural resources available and have not been processed, especially in villages.

One of the government's efforts through the national education ministry is implementing community education programs focused on providing vocational skills, which can be used as essential capital for work or business. The

<sup>1</sup> Aida Vitayala S.Hubeis, *Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dari Masa Ke Masa* (IPB Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Tri Siwi Nugrahani, Sri Rejeki, and Rosalia Indriyati Saptatiningsih, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan Desa Untuk Mengurangi Kemiskinan," *Seminar Nasional Universitas PGRI Yogyakarta*, 2015, 512-24.

<sup>3</sup> Lutfiyah Lutfiyah, "Pemberdayaan Wanita Berbasis Potensi Unggulan Lokal," *Sawwa: Jurnal Studi Gender* 8, no. 2 (2013): 213, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v8i2.653>.

<sup>4</sup> K I Ogbonna and E Okoroafor, "Enhancing The Capacity Of Women For Increased Participation In Nigeria Main -Streaming Agriculture : A Re-Designing Of Strategies," in *Farm Management Association of Nigeria Conference*, 2004, 33-48; Maseray Ngadie Rogers, "Capacity Building For Women in African Countries, A Case Study of Sierra Leone," *Ghana Journal Of Development Studies* 7, no. 1 (2010); Clare Castillejo, "Building a State That Works for Women: Integrating Gender into Post-Conflict State Building," 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Harlik, Amir Amir, and Hardiani, "Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kemiskinan Dan Pengangguran Di Kota Jambi," *Persepektif Pembiayaan Dan Pembangunan Daerah* 1, no. 2 (2013): 109-20, <https://online-journal.unja.ac.id/JES/article/view/1500>.

vocational village development program is then developed to solve the issues of unemployment and poverty. This program intends to provide vocational skills directing the participants to change their mindset, attitudes, and behavior to meet the market demand and community needs, which will eventually become solutions to social problems and unemployment.

The vocational village program is expected to prepare a village that can become the center of various vocational areas where women are empowered. Thus, community members can learn and practice the skills to create employment opportunities according to the existing resources in their area to improve the community's standard of living, especially women.

Besides, the low quality of human resources and poverty in Indonesia is also caused by inadequate education and health status. Deprivation is used to be seen as the inability to achieve a minimum standard of living. However, it is now seen as a more complex issue entailing powerlessness, lack of knowledge, skills, and access to capital and resources.<sup>6</sup>

Some studies show that the number of the poor in rural areas of Indonesia is still relatively large<sup>7</sup>. According to Central Agency on Statistics data, the percentage of poor people in rural areas increased by 333,9 thousand people (from 14,93 million people in September 2019 to 15,27 million people in March 2020)<sup>8</sup>. They become part of the community with rural culture and structure. Approximately half of that number is in the absolute low category<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, development activities need to be implemented to change their lives for the better. Several existing strategies and empowerment theories are carried out to develop human resources, including Mattoriq's writing, which explains five Islamic values in empowering people, all of which require involvement from the community itself.<sup>10</sup> In line with this, development planning and implementation

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<sup>6</sup> Yoghi Citra Pratama, "Analisis Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kemiskinan Di Indonesia," *Esensi* 4, no. 2 (2015): 210-23, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ess.v4i2.1966>; M Shabri Abd Majid, "Analisis Tingkat Pendidikan Dan Kemiskinan Di Aceh," *Jurnal Pencerahan* 8, no. 1 (2014): 15-37, <https://doi.org/10.13170/jp.8.1.2040>; Debrina Vita Ferezagia, "Analisis Tingkat Kemiskinan Di Indonesia Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Terapan," *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Terapan* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1-6; Harlik, Amir, and Hardiani, "Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kemiskinan Dan Pengangguran Di Kota Jambi."

<sup>7</sup> Noor Zuhdiyati and David, "Analisis Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kemiskinan Di Indonesia Selama Lima Tahun Terakhir (Studi Kasus Pada 33 Provinsi)," *Jibeka* 11, no. 2 (2017): 27-31.

<sup>8</sup> "Persentase Pendudukan Miskin Maret 2020 Naik Menjadi 9,78 persen" <https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2020/07/15/1744/persentase-penduduk-miskin-maret-2020-naik-menjadi-9-78-persen.html> accessed April 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Oong Komar Muhammad Asri, "Pemanfaatan Hasil Pelatihan Keterampilan Dan Peran Pendamping Dalam Meningkatkan Kemandirian Usaha (Studi Pada Program Desa Vokasi Di Desa Cisaat Kecamatan Ciater Kabupaten Subang Provinsi Jawa Barat)" (n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> Mochamad Rozikin Matthoriq, Suryadi, "Aktualisasi Nilai Islam Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Pesisir (Studi Pada Masyarakat Bajulmati, Gajahrejo, Kecamatan Gedangan, Kabupaten Malang)," *Jurnal Administrasi Publik* 2, no. 3 (2014): 426-32, <http://administrasipublik.studentjournal.ub.ac.id/index.php/jap/article/view/405>.

should contain efforts to empower them so that they, especially women, have access to economic resources.<sup>11</sup>

To overcome the problems, the government has made efforts to empower people through programs based on community needs such as the urban poverty alleviation program (P2KP), community self-help learning groups, underdeveloped village presidential instruction (IDT), innovation village<sup>12</sup>, community empowerment activities (PNPM)<sup>13</sup>, and creative home industry<sup>14</sup>. There is also a vocational village program, one of the government programs to alleviate poverty, and has already been implemented in many Indonesian villages<sup>15</sup>.

Vocational villages are vocational skills education areas aiming to develop human resources to produce high value and unique products/services by utilizing local potential. The programs' purposes are to help the community have product knowledge and skills that can be utilized to manage local resources and gain benefits for themselves and the community. The programs are also to possess entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors which are in line with the values or regulations in the region, to produce or market products/services that have high

<sup>11</sup> Zakiyah, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan Oleh Lajnah Wanita Dan Putri Al-Irsyad Surabaya," *Analisa XVII*, no. 01 (2010): 37-56.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad Sururi and Rahmi Mulyasih, "Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Inovasi Perencanaan Pembangunan Berbasis 4R ( Rembug , Rencana , Realisasi Dan Rawat ) Di Desa Cilangkap Kecamatan Wanasalam Sebagai Pilar Utama Kebijakan Partisipatif Dan Gotong Royong," *Engagement Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>13</sup> Zaki Mubarak, "Evaluasi Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Diitnjau Dari Proses Pengembangan Kpasitas Pada Kegiatan PNPM Mandiri Perkotaan Di Desa Sastrodirjan Kabupaten Pekalongan" (Universitas Diponegoro, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Dewi Nurul Qamariyah, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan , Kemandirian Finansial , Kemandirian Ekonomi , Home Industry," *An-Nisa* 11, no. 2 (2018): 145-58; Siti Nur Azizah, "Pengembangan Ekonomi Kreatif Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Pandanus Handicraft Dalam Menghadapi Pasar Modern Perspektif Ekonomi Syariah ( Study Case Di Pandanus Nusa Sambisari Yogyakarta )," *Aplikasia* 17, no. 2 (2017): 63-78.

<sup>15</sup> Rohmiati Amini, "Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Melalui Program Desa Vokasi Babussalam Untuk Menciptakan Desa Wirausaha," *Media Bina Ilmiah* 1, no. 2 (2018): 103-8; Piji Pakarti, "Potensi Pengembangan Industri Kecil Desa Vokasi ( Studi Pada Desa Vokasi Sojokerto Kecamatan Leksono Kabupaten Wonosobo )," *Infokam*, no. 1 (2016): 35-43; Dwi Yuwono Puji Sugiharto and Rafika Bayu Kusumandari, "Model Development in the Context of Vocational Village Community Empowerment in Central Java," *International Journal of Information and Education Technology* 6, no. 7 (2016): 564-69, <https://doi.org/10.7763/ijiet.2016.v6.752>; Paulla Ayuningrum, D & Dewi S, "Pengaruh Program Desa Vokasi Terhadap Perkembangan Perekonomian Masyarakat Desa Kopeng Kecamatan Getasan Kabupaten Semarang," *Jurnal Teknik PWWK* 2, no. 1 (2013): 76-84; Abdul Malik and Irene Astuti Dwiningrum, "Keberhasilan Program Desa Vokasi Terhadap Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Di Desa Gemawang Kabupaten Semarang the Success of the Vocational Program for Community Empowerment in Gemawang Village, Semarang Regency," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* 1, no. 2 (2014): 124-35; Rizky Viandari Astuti and Tri Suminar, "Model Kemitraan Desa Vokasi Dalam Pemasaran Produk Wirausaha Gemawang Kecamatan Jambu Kabupaten Semarang," *Jurnal Pendidikan Nonformal* 13, no. 2 (2018): 54-62; Sungkowo Edy Mulyono Siska Sakyawati, Joko Sutarto, "Kewirausahaan Masyarakat Melalui Desa Vokasi Di Desa Gemawang Kecamatan Jambu Kabupaten Semarang," *Journal of Non Formal Education and Community Empowerment* 1, no. 2 (2012): 33-39; Cdefor Panorama series; 103, "Towards a History of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Europe in a Comparative Perspective," in *Towards a History of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Europe in a Comparative Perspective*, vol. I, 2002, 1-169.

economic value and unique, as well as to have an active and positive comparative advantage towards the community, village, and regional development.<sup>16</sup>

Vocation is the mastery of specific applied skills to equip someone with ready-to-use skills or can work independently. Vocational villages are rural areas developing various skills that have comparative and competitive advantages based on local wisdom. The objectives of the vocational village are<sup>17</sup> 1) To create the harmony of education, economic, social, cultural, and environmental sectors in rural areas; 2) To provide education and training in skills and entrepreneurship; 3) To form small business groups; 4) To empower the ecological potential for productive business; 5) To strengthen the existing socio-cultural values; 6) To awaken the awareness and preserve the natural potential; and 7) To create a professional, creative, and innovative, yet wise community.

The potential in implementing a vocational village includes:<sup>18</sup> First, communities who participate actively in the implementation of vocational village program; Second, increasing the capacity of the community participating in the program to innovate, such as processing soybeans into tofu or tempeh or making bag crafts; Third, easy learning in the form of theory and practice to help the community understand easily; Fourth, having adequate facilities for the implementation of the vocational village program, such as the village hall.

North Aceh has 27 sub-districts and 852 villages. As one of the developing provinces, North Aceh faces significant problems regarding poverty and unemployment.<sup>19</sup> The vocational village program in North Aceh aims to create vocational skills in rural areas to enable the community to produce products or services. The program can increase family income and get out of poverty, especially women where they get to work without leaving their home country, ignoring their roles as women and Islamic values in North Aceh.

This study uses a qualitative approach using primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained through interviews. Research informants were the head of Education, Youth, and Sports of North Aceh, the head of the Social and Women's Empowerment of North Aceh, the head of Manpower and Population Mobility of North Aceh, female workers, and entrepreneurs. The interview aims

<sup>16</sup> Dinar Ayuningrum and S.P. Dewi, "Pengaruh Program Desa Vokasi Terhadap Pengembangan Perekonomian Masyarakat Desa Kopeng Kecamatan Getasan Kabupaten Semarang," *Jurnal Teknik PWK* 2, no. 1 (2013): 77.

<sup>17</sup> Fathurrohman Adib Afdholi, Aufferul Marom, "Implementasi Program Desa Vokasi Di Kota Semarang," *Journal of Public Policy and Management Review* 4, no. 3 (2015): 1-8.

<sup>18</sup> Sugiharto and Kusumandari, "Model Development in the Context of Vocational Village Community Empowerment in Central Java"; Entoh Tohani, Iis Prasetyo, and RB. Suharta, "Women Empowerment in Disaster Vulnerable Village Through Vocational Life Skill Education Based on Utilization of Local Potential," *Journal of Nonformal Education* 5, no. 1 (2019): 35-46, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jne.v5i1.18341>.

<sup>19</sup> Cut Rosana, Head of Industrial relation and work requirements of the investment, labor and transmigration office North Aceh District, Interview, May 2019.



to obtain a comprehensive description of the concept of workforce capacity improvement, which has been implemented through the Vocational Village program, particularly in North Aceh.

Primary and secondary data collection was carried out through structured interviews submitted to respondents and informants determined by purposive sampling. Observation and Focus Group Discussion were also conducted. Besides, literature study from various sources was also undertaken as secondary data.

Based on the above background, the formulation of the problem in this paper was to determine the North Aceh government's roles in increasing women's capacity based on Islamic values in vocational villages.

## **VOCATIONAL VILLAGE PROGRAM**

The vocational village program is a program by the Ministry of National Education, namely the Directorate of Course and Institutional Development, the Directorate General of Non-Formal and Informal Education. The emergence of this program was motivated by problems that emerged in rural areas, including (1) underdeveloped and limited access of rural communities to productive resources, land, capital, infrastructure and technology and public services/markets; (2) limited settlement, rural infrastructure, facilities, and services; (3) limited capacity of government institutions at the local level and socio-economic institutions; (4) lack of connection between urban and rural economic activities which results in an increasing economic gap and disparity in infrastructure services among regions.<sup>20</sup> It is expected that, through this program, new entrepreneurs will be born so that they can create job vacancies and support the development of creative and productive economic enterprises in a village that can be used as a source of economic potential and empowerment of rural communities.

Through the empowerment of vocational centers based on local potential, the vocational village is inspired by one of the theories of empowerment by David C Korten, namely people-centered development.<sup>21</sup> The theory states that all accumulated resources and assets are used to achieve the maximum increase in production. Hence, Korten attributes the people-centered approach to development. This development model focuses on 1) industry and not agriculture; 2) urban areas and not rural areas, whereas the majority of the population lives in rural areas; 3) centralized ownership of productive assets, not extensive productive assets so that development investments benefit the few groups rather than the large ones; 4) the optimal use of capital, not the optimal use of capital resources,

<sup>20</sup> Usman Dachlan and Piji Pakarti, "Potensi Pengembangan Industri Kecil Desa Vokasi (Studi Pada Desa Vokasi Sojokerto Kecamatan Leksono Kabupaten Wonosobo)," *Jurnal AMIK JTC Infokam* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2016): 37.

<sup>21</sup> David C Korten, *Pembangunan Yang Memihak Pada Rakyat* (Jakarta: LSP, 1984).

with the result that capital resources are utilized while human resources are not utilized optimally; 5) the use of natural and environmental resources to achieve a short-term increase in physical wealth without management to sustain and enlarge the yields of these resources, by causing environmental destruction and proper depletion of the natural resource; and 6) the efficiency of large-scale units of production which are interdependent and based on differences in international profits, leaving the diversity and adaptability of small-scale units organized to achieve local self-sufficiency.

Through community empowerment, the vocational village development model based on local potential is an alternative to provide an example. The advantages include:<sup>22</sup> 1) Improving the standard of living of rural communities; 2) The vocation type does not have to be the same as other villages. It is better to develop the village's superior potential; 3) Involving existing village resources; 4) Developing following the developing village resources; 5) Building entrepreneurship and reducing unemployment.

## **VOCATIONAL VILLAGE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

In real life, women seem not to play an active role in the family economy as they become housewives and depend on their husbands' income. Women's work in the household causes them to be considered as passive recipients of development.

The limitations cause the low level of women's participation in accessing resources, skills, and low education; women's ideological barriers related to the household; particular perspectives known as the "*triple burden of women*" implying that women should only perform reproductive, production, and social functions in the society. These unable women to be men's active partners in dealing with socio-economic problems.<sup>23</sup>

Women empowerment refers to efforts to develop the potentials and roles of women in all dimensions of life. The economic empowerment of women in Islam has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad through his wife, Siti Khadijah, a wealthy merchant with her merchandise at the time. The Prophet himself had become an agent who sold her merchandise. This story proves no gender imbalance in the economy because everyone who attempts will develop and grow.

The objectives of empowering women in development include 1) To increase women's participation in development programs as active participants

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Asri, "Pemanfaatan Hasil Pelatihan Keterampilan Dan Peran Pendamping Dalam Meningkatkan Kemandirian Usaha (Studi Pada Program Desa Vokasi Di Desa Cisaat Kecamatan Ciater Kabupaten Subang Provinsi Jawa Barat)."

<sup>23</sup> Marisatya Supriyanti, "Pemberdayaan Perempuan Pedesaan Dalam Meningkatkan Pendapatan Keluarga Perspektif Ekonomi Islam" (Skripsi, IAIN Purwokerto, 2017), 1.

so that they are not merely considered as objects of development; 2) To improve women's capacity in leadership, bargaining position, and involvement in every development program in terms of planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the activities; 3) To increase women's capacity in managing household-scale businesses, small and large industries in order to support household needs and to create productive and independent job opportunities; 4) To increase the role and function of women's organizations at the local level to be actively involved in development programs in their residential areas.<sup>24</sup>

The empowerment of women has become increasingly visible as development issues<sup>25</sup>, particularly in Indonesia. The women empowerment program will improve the family income and support family economic resilience. All the connections between women's empowerment and economic development are close and related to each other.<sup>26</sup> That empowerment is a strong incentive and motivation for women to work to increase income.<sup>27</sup>

Theoretically, empowerment means giving power, transferring power, or delegating authority to other parties.<sup>28</sup> It is also closely related to encouraging someone to make changes in life. Ideally, empowerment is a systemic process to be able to change certain circumstances. The first article about empowerment practice in social work is Solomon's *Black Empowerment*, for African Americans to improve their economic and political power to affect their lives. Many scholars expanded on Solomon's work to include empowerment, such as people with disabilities, women, etc.<sup>29</sup>

It generally applies to all elements that are considered less capable of alleviating the problems faced, not specific to a particular gender. The essential step is to change the mindset of all circles about the role of women. According to Hall, collective awareness can be achieved through strategic tools as follows:<sup>30</sup> a) Woman empowerment must be directed to define behavior, values, and actions

<sup>24</sup> Riant Nugroho, *Gender Dan Strategi Pengarus-Utamaannya Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1998), 164.

<sup>25</sup> Esther Duflo, "Women Empowerment and Economic Development," *Journal of Economic Literature* 50, no. 4 (2012): 1051-79, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.50.4.1051>.

<sup>26</sup> Andrea Cornwall and Nana Akua Anyidoho, "Introduction: Women's Empowerment: Contentions and Contestations," *Development* 53, no. 2 (2010): 144-49, <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2010.34>; Andrea Cornwall, "Women'S Empowerment: What Works," *Journal of International Development* 28 (2016): 341-59, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid>.

<sup>27</sup> Hafni Zahara, "Kapasitas Perempuan Dalam Pengembangan Usaha Ekonomi Kreatif Kerajinan Bordir Aceh Di Kabupaten Aceh Utara," *AGRIFO* 3, no. 1 (2018): 30-38.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Oakley and David Marsden, "Pemikiran Islam Terhadap Gender Dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan (Studi Pemikiran Dan Model Pemberdayaan Nyai Di Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jaded Paiton)," *Jurnal Akademika* Vol. 22, No. 02 (July 2017): 230.

<sup>29</sup> Noël Bridget Busch and Deborah Valentine, "Empowerment Practice: A Focus on Battered Women," *Affilia - Journal of Women and Social Work* 15, no. 1 (2000): 82-95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08861090022093840>.

<sup>30</sup> Oakley and Marsden, 232.



related to their interests. Freedom and independence must have a hierarchical value depending on the social value in which they live; whether it is in modern circles that have an open attitude or in customary conditions; b) Woman empowerment is directed at maintaining a mindset of equality, not fighting or confronting the domination possessed by a man because equality will balance the paradigm that a man against the woman herself builds; c) Women empowerment should integrate the religious values and housewife's responsibilities, not the other way around. The empowerment does not eliminate women's role at home or ignore religious activities carried out in the community.

### **VOCATIONAL VILLAGE IN NORTH ACEH**

Initially, vocational villages were proclaimed by the governor of Aceh in collaboration with the non-formal education office. The vocational village aims to explore human and natural resources' potential to improve the community's welfare. This vocational village's target is those in their productive age to become skilled, independent, and capable in entrepreneurship. Government agencies related to the vocational village program are the Education Office, Industry, Trade, Cooperative Services, and regional-owned enterprises.

The vocational village program implemented in North Aceh is an effort to improve human resources quality as part of village development in business independence. In the process, business independence is influenced by the utilization of training results.

Aceh government has been running a vocational village program that aims to develop human and environmental resources based on cultural values by utilizing local potential. This program is expected to form village areas that become centers of various vocations, utilizing the potential of natural resources and local wisdom. North Aceh has 382 vocational institutions expected to be partners of the government to increase the workforce's capacity in these vocational villages. However, in reality, the existing institutions are generally oriented towards market needs, neither local wisdom nor inclusive, which will provide higher competence and competitiveness in the AEC job market.

In its implementation, the vocational village program in North Aceh was made in an institution and given a decree by the Education, Youth and Sports Office and given an operational permit for two years. The support provided by the government of North Aceh, in this case, is only in the form of guidance such as consultation on efforts or steps being taken so that the business can continue to progress and develop.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Zulkifli, head of primary age section (PAUD) and non school section (PLS), Interview, April 15, 2018.

Before a village is determined to be a vocational village, there are several assessments; (a) a high number of low-income families, (b) high target life expectancy (PKH), (c) the availability of small business units that have many potentials to be developed, (d) resources that can be mobilized to support the vocational village, (e) adequate access (information, markets, capital, raw materials); and (f) prioritizing those who already have embryonic non-formal education programs.<sup>32</sup>

Efforts to increase the added value, competitiveness and marketing of products from vocational villages face several problems such as low processing technology, limited access to capital for artisans and processors, and lack of promotion of handicraft products. Community skills improvement is adjusted to their main livelihood. In various locations of vocational empowerment, local potentials can be developed from the local handicraft sector.

As for this research, four villages have implemented the vocational village program, namely:

1. *AlueLeuhob, Cot Girek* regency

*AlueLeuhob* located in *Cot Girek* sub-district, North Aceh, is one of the pilot projects that has been able to mobilize education, skills and improve the village community's economy. *AlueLeuhob* has a lot of local potentials that can be developed into objects of economic business. Its administration system and the community's social order are also quite useful because it used to be a "trans" area with many Javanese people. The existing industry is the processing of tofu and tempeh, which has been around since 1985. In its implementation, the program carried out by The North Aceh Government is providing sewing skills to people at *AlueLeuhob* in the form of a Learning Activity Center (known as SKB).<sup>33</sup> This SKB receives vocational village funds from the central government. According to the community, the implementation of this training is useful. However, the program has no sustainability not to be applied and developed for new business capital. Meanwhile, for the business potential that has been carried out for a long time, there has not been any improvement in skills or business capital assistance. The average tofu and tempeh business worker is a housewife. Because it helps the husband's economy, most husbands attempt to get to know tempeh and help his wife, which is usually only light work. Pak Na'i explained, "*Wash soybeans, soak them, grind them, that is all, light things, the tofu suppressor, weighs 20 kilos, I cannot do that*".<sup>34</sup> Various hand skills have been developed in *AlueLeuhob*. They cannot be

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Asri, "Pemanfaatan Hasil Pelatihan Keterampilan Dan Peran Pendamping Dalam Meningkatkan Kemandirian Usaha (Studi Pada Program Desa Vokasi Di Desa Cisaat Kecamatan Ciater Kabupaten Subang Provinsi Jawa Barat)."

<sup>33</sup> Syamsuddin, Former Village head (Keuchik) *Alue Leuhob*, Interview, April 12, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Pak Na'i, Tofu businessman, Interview, April 12, 2019.

developed to become economically valuable businesses yet. Instead, this can be a unique attraction for other villages to continue developing the natural potential in their respective villages.

2. *UleeMadonDewantara* Sub-district

Since a long ago, the local potential in the village of UleeMadon has always been the handicraft from pandan leaves. However, due to the difficulty in finding raw materials, many people switched to the handicraft business of Acehese motif embroidery bags. This craft has grown even to other villages outside *UleeMadon*.

The bag craft workers have divided into two; 1) The one to embroider bag motifs done by women, mostly housewives; 2) sewing the bags, mostly done by men. Some of these handicraft businesses already cooperate with Banda Bag's brand, whose marketing has reached the United States market. The implementation of the vocational program at UleeMadon, which the North Aceh Government carries out, provides several skills training that seems very different from the local potential that already exists. Based on the statement from the subdistrict of *UleeMadon*, the skills training provided is sewing carried out by *Pelita Souvenir* training center. As he said, "*Pelita souvenir, fashion design, I launched it, from the education office, it started a month ago.*"<sup>35</sup>

3. *Pande, Tanah Pasir* Regency

Local advantages in rural areas in the form of business groups that can produce human resources capable of creating products or services with high economic value, unique, and local wisdom can be seen at *Pande, Tanah Pasir* Regency, North Aceh. This village can allow local blacksmithing crafts such as making machetes, knives, samurai swords, hoes, etc. This business has been going on for decades, passed from generation to generation. In this case, women are also the workers who help run the business; as stated by Sri Wahyuni "*doing such hard work does not make me feel tired because I am used to it. I can also help the economy, rather than sitting uselessly. My job is to cut the iron, the hook, lift the hammer for the sword manufacturing. I am really tired ... the first time, I hit the iron and lift the hammer. This happens because we do not have a machine. If there is a machine, the job will be easier and less tiring.*"<sup>36</sup> *Pande* is also one of the vocational villages formed by the Decree of the Education, Youth and Sports Office of North Aceh, namely *Mandala* training center. The vocational program that has been carried out is sewing skills, similar to the two previous villages. The program does not match the potential for handicrafts in the village because the average family in this village is craftsmen of machetes, knives, and others.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Tgk. Salahuddin AB, Head Village (Keuchiek) Ulee Madon, Interview, April 11, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Sri Wahyuni, blacksmith worker, Interview, April 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Zulfikar Usman, blacksmith businessman, Interview, April 12, 2019.

4. *AlueCapli, Seunuddon* Sub-district

The vocational village aims to explore human and natural resources' potential to improve the community's welfare.<sup>38</sup> The targets are those of productive age so that later they become skilled, independent, and capable of entrepreneurship resources. It is said that there are no more human and natural resources that can be empowered for economic value in this village. The village was initially determined as a vocational village because of the handicraft from pandan leaves. Nevertheless, it turned out that the handicraft does not come from *AlueCapli*, but the village next to it, namely *Cot Petisah*. The people of this village have long been making handicrafts of woven pandanus mats. The institution formed by the Education, Youth, and Sports Office of North Aceh is the Tengku Markam training center, which only started in 2017. This center is located at *AlueCapli*, and the activities carried out are sewing, embroidery sewing, and training in welding skills for men. Besides, there is also training for making tissue box.<sup>39</sup> At *Cot Petisah*, most women have the skills to weave mats, which they do to spend their free time. Unfortunately, their products cannot be marketed because there is not much access and limited raw materials for *seuke* (pandan leaves for making mats).<sup>40</sup> The North Aceh Government has not maximally developed the local potential of *Cot Petisah*. This potential can be a mainstay of potential for improving the welfare of the community.

From the explanation above, this can be seen that there are several problems in the implementation of vocational village program: First, some people in the community prefer to focus on their primary work rather than having a side job from the vocational village program; Second, the training provided does not reach all communities in vocational villages; Third, the problematic market access the products after its implementation; Fourth, no capital assistance provided after its implementation as people find it hard to start a business due to the lack of capital; Fifth, there is no follow-up from the government, causing the ignorance of the people to re-start the business; Sixth, lack of encouragement or support to innovate so that people feel heavy to start new businesses.

Increasing the capacity of the workforce should be the primary concern of policymakers in Aceh. The goal is to reduce Acehnese female workers' desire to work abroad to not fall into inhuman jobs since they have low capacity and do not have competitiveness than female workers from other countries. The capacity building that has been carried out by the government, both central and regional,

<sup>38</sup> Usman Dachlan and Piji Pakarti, "Potensi Pengembangan Industri Kecil Desa Vokasi (Studi Pada Desa Vokasi Sojokerto Kecamatan Leksono Kabupaten Wonosobo)," 38.

<sup>39</sup> Tgk. Razali, Head of centre of community (PKM) Tengku Markam, Interview, April 13, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Nursaibah, handicraft worker (Pengrajin Tikar), Interview, April 19, 2019.

including the aforementioned *AlueLeuhob* vocational village, is considered successful. However, several other vocational villages still face obstacles in implementing and increasing human resources' capacity, especially women. These obstacles entail the community's social order, customs, the dominant patriarchal perception of society, and several other obstacles.

## **THE ROLE OF THE NORTH ACEH GOVERNMENT IN IMPROVING WOMEN'S CAPACITY IN VOCATIONAL VILLAGES BASED ON ISLAMIC VALUES**

The role of government in the economic sector is closely related to the government that has the authority to determine public policy because a program cannot be carried out without regulation from the government. Public policies are needed to improve the population's welfare by providing public goods and other consumer goods. Steven stated that women's capacity is divided into three stages; first, stating the policies to be implemented, second, how the policies are implemented in the community, last, what lesson learned from the experience.<sup>41</sup>

In this study, there were four vocational villages in North Aceh in the form of institutions based on Decree by the Education Office, namely LKP *Pelita Souvenir* for Aceh embroidery bag craft located at *UleeMadon, Muara Batu* Regency, Learning Activity Center of the Tofu, and *Tempeh* at *AlueLeuhob, Cot Girek* sub-district, PKPM *Mandala* for making matches at *Pande, Tanah Pasir*, PKM *Tengku Markam* at *AlueCapli* for pandan mat crafts. All existing institutions receive a direct ID number from Jakarta.<sup>42</sup>

The research in North Aceh found that the training program was not based on each village's superior potential, as stated by the respondents. The program causes the training skills cannot be done optimally to create the vocational village. Labor absorption is a consideration of the magnitude of the business's impact to be developed on labor absorption, which can reduce the unemployment rate.

One of the community development movements to change the community's standard of life towards a better and independent is entrepreneurship. To realize these hopes, the local government, as the person in charge of improving the economy and community welfare and reducing the unemployment rate, should roll out various kinds of community empowerment programs that can directly target the needs of the community, one of which is the vocational village program, if implemented optimally. One of the efforts that have been made is that women can do their work with hours that are adjusted to the busyness of the household.

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<sup>41</sup> Maseray Ngadie Rogers, "Capacity Building For Women in African Countries, A Case Study of Sierra Leone."

<sup>42</sup> Zulkifli, head of primary age section (PAUD) and non school section (PLS) Interview, April 24, 2019.



According to Abdul Azis<sup>43</sup>, the problem so far is the absence of a well-thought-out planning process... *"There are many villages with the existing potential and fund, yet the human resource does not address the village potential. So, we have many suggestions'. For example, if we go to the field and ask where the example is, the villagers are happy to see the results. If they see the results right away, they want to do it ... I think if this is written down later and the villages are informed, it can be used"*. Another obstacle comes from the stakeholder responsible for these activities, as quoted below *"Actually the stakeholder should guide and facilitate the villagers in the production. So far, the one who reports is the community. The stakeholder is the one who should do it. As a result, after producing the products, the community does not know where to market the product"*.

The North Aceh government's efforts to encourage the development of the community's creative economy include; 1) Conducting promotions via Web, online media, starting next year, a server loading data of the village will be installed to promote the excellence of their respective villages. 2) Exhibition of handicraft products in Aceh Utara Expo will be conducted every year, 3) Marketing at Malikussaleh Airport through Dekranasda.

According to Kartasasmita<sup>44</sup>, there are three efforts to empower the community, namely: (1) creating an atmosphere that allows the community to develop, (2) strengthening the potential of the people with concrete steps, (3) protecting and defending the interests of the weak, as has been done in North Aceh.

As a district that has a vision, namely the realization of a cultured, prosperous, independent, and Islamic society in North Aceh (BERSEMI), which is interpreted by the condition of a community that always applies religious values in the life of the government's role for women's empowerment carried out in vocational villages, namely most of the training that is done is for women and with a suitable time after the busyness of taking care of the household is over, such as in the villages of UleeMadon and AlueLeuhob. However, exploring the local potential and human resources while preserving Islamic values is not as easy as turning the palm, sometimes what happens is that women do jobs that are usually done by men as happened in Pande Village, women do blacksmith work, and according to interviews, village officials did not object to this, because it had been going on for a long time<sup>45</sup>. This is a job that is not following Islamic values that respect women. Regarding this situation, further research is needed to

<sup>43</sup> Abdul Azis, Regional Secretary of North Aceh District, Interview, April 23, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Sukmaniar, "Efektivitas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Dalam Pengelolaan Program Pengembangan Kecamatan (PPK) Pasca Tsunami Di Kecamatan Lhoknga Kabupaten Aceh" (Universitas Diponegoro, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> The elders ( Tuha Peut), Interview, April 2019

discuss the Pande Village community's perceptions of women's role. This article focuses on the role of the government in women's empowerment.

## CONCLUSION

The North Aceh government's roles in increasing women's capacity, especially in vocational villages, have not been optimally carried out due to several obstacles, especially the absence of a thorough planning process in every activity, program sustainability, and improper target of the program. Nonetheless, there are many potentials owned by villages in North Aceh that can be developed to increase the community's income and welfare according to Islamic values. The potentials include mats production, Acehese embroidered hijabs, which have been marketed globally, and the potential for existing furniture. All efforts in developing those potential still require special attention from both local and central governments.

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