

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF THE COASTAL SOCIETY:

A Case Study of Ujoeng Pacu Village, Muara Satu District,  
Lhokseumawe - Aceh

**Nirzalin**

Sociology Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences  
Universitas Malikussaleh-Aceh Indonesia

*Email: nirzalin@unimal.ac.id*

### Abstract

The various policies of the Indonesian government in the maritime sector have objectively succeeded in increasing the production and export value of the Indonesian fish trade in the world. The 2017 statistics, for example, show Indonesia's exports in the fisheries sector reached 979,910 tons of fish with a value of 4.09 billion US dollars. However, the amount of income in the fisheries sector only succeeded in making prosperous capital owners (*toke*) and contractors who obtained various infrastructure development projects. Fishermen and coastal communities actually remain in poverty. In 2017, 34% of fishermen and coastal communities were in poverty. The process of strengthening the welfare of fishermen and coastal communities can actually be done through economic empowerment programs by involving mentoring from academics across scientific disciplines. Based on the case of the empowerment of the coastal community of Ujoeng Pacu village, Lhokseumawe, this article shows the complexity of reality as well as the success of the Ujoeng Pacu community empowerment process that previously lived in the war economy and the drug economy turned into a productive economy through the cultivation of soft shell crabs and tiger shrimp with polyculture techniques.

**Keywords:** *Maritime Economic Policy Economic Empowerment Ujoeng Pacu Lhokseumawe Aceh*

### Abstrak

Pelbagai kebijakan pemerintah Indonesia di sektor kelautan secara objektif telah berhasil meningkatkan nilai produksi dan ekspor perdagangan ikan Indonesia di dunia. Statistik 2017, misalnya, menunjukkan ekspor Indonesia di sektor perikanan mencapai 979.910 ton ikan dengan nilai 4,09 miliar dolar AS. Namun, jumlah pendapatan di sektor perikanan yang melimpah itu secara objektif pula hanya berhasil memakmurkan pemilik modal (*toke*) dan kontraktor yang memperoleh pelbagai proyek pembangunan infrastruktur disektor maritim. Sementara, nelayan dan petani dikawasan pesisir tetap

miskin. Faktanya, pada 2017 pula, 34% masyarakat nelayan dan petani pesisir berada dalam kemiskinan. Proses penguatan kesejahteraan nelayan dan masyarakat pesisir sebenarnya dapat dilakukan melalui program pemberdayaan ekonomi dengan melibatkan pendampingan dari akademisi lintas disiplin ilmu. Berdasarkan kasus pemberdayaan masyarakat pesisir desa Ujoeng Pacu, Lhokseumawe- Aceh, artikel ini menunjukkan bagaimana melalui proses pemberdayaan yang dilakukan secara intensif, masyarakat Ujoeng Pacu yang sebelumnya hidup dalam ekonomi perang dan ekonomi narkoba perlahan berubah menjadi produktif melalui teknik budidaya polikultur kepiting cangkang lunak (Soka) dan udang windu.

**Kata kunci:** *Kebijakan Ekonomi Kelautan Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Ujoeng Pacu Lhokseumawe Aceh*

\* \* \*

## A. Introduction

*"Ocean, sea, strait and bay are the future of our civilization. We have for too long turned our backs on the sea, turned their backs on the ocean, strait and bay. So that Jalesveva Jayamahe, in our seas is glorious, as the motto of our ancestors in the past returned to form". (President Joko Widodo, October 20, 2014)*

At the global configuration level, Indonesia is one of the maritime countries in the world. As a maritime country, of course Indonesia has great potential in growing its economy through the fisheries and other coastal resources. However, the great potential of decades of not being managed properly even tends to be overlooked. With the exception of the brief Old Order government and was preoccupied with various political problems due to ideological disputes and separatist movements in various regions, the New Order government which ruled Indonesia from 1967 to 1998 tended to prioritize the exploration of the land sector in its development ideology and back its maritime economic resources. Only, after the New Order was attention to the maritime economy re-emerged and became part of the political vision of development.

The latest Indonesian government, led by President Joko Widodo, shows a serious attitude in managing Indonesian maritime affairs. The form of seriousness is symbolically marked by the nomenclature of the Maritime Coordinating Minister and the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and is practically demonstrated through various programs to strengthen the coastal economy. There are four main steps of maritime development initiated by the Joko Widodo government, namely, first, strengthening marine sovereignty, second, strengthening the management of maritime resources independently and sustainably, third, the development of infrastructure independently and integrated and fourth, the development of human resources and technology..

The strategic programs launched are objectively able to increase the growth of fish production. This was recorded in a significant increase in Indonesian fish exports. Between January and November 2017 Indonesian fish export products reached 979,910 tons with a value of 4.09 billion dollars. However, the significant increase in the number and value of exports does not provide significant benefits in improving the welfare of its economic actors, namely fishermen and coastal communities who host the maritime economy. In reality, 32 percent of fishermen in Indonesia are below the poverty line, (BPS: 2018).

This fact emphasizes that various policies to strengthen maritime economy in Indonesia objectively precisely give significant benefits to the owners of capital (toke) in the fishery sector and the contractors who control the development of infrastructure, not for fishermen and coastal communities. Knowledge weakness, fatalistic

mentality and low market access are fundamental weaknesses that do not allow the strengthening of their welfare if the development policies applied as general. Special development policies are needed as a strategic effort to improve the welfare of coastal communities. The right development policy for fishermen and coastal communities is economic empowerment.

Economic empowerment is a special policy because it is directly intervening in the weaknesses of the target community to be strengthened through changes in mentality, expertise, capital and assistance until the product is marketed. This paper places the Ujoeng Pacu village community in Lhokseumawe as a model of economic empowerment for coastal communities. Ujoeng Pacu was chosen because of its unique social context. Although, generally the Ujoeng Pacu community is a community of fish farmers in accordance with the geography of their area which is located near the coast of Krueng Geukuh Lhokseumawe, but the social dynamics that are full of waves contribute to the Ujoeng Pacu community in its vortex.

In 1984-2005 the Ujoeng Pacu society was a supporter of the Free Aceh Movement and lived through a war economy. After the conflict between 2007 and 2015, this village became a drug base on the east coast of Aceh, of course they lived from the drug economy. Now, after drugs they live from the economy of the ponds. This reality is an interesting foundation to be reviewed in this article.

## **B. Ujoeng Pacu: From the Economy of the Ponds to the War and Narcotics Economy**

Ujoeng Pacu is a village located in Muara Satu subdistrict Lhokseumawe town, Aceh-Indonesia. The population of this village

numbered 1293 people with 312 families. Almost 96% of the population is ethnic Acehnese, while the other 4% are Java and Minang (Demographic of Village Ujoeng Pacu 2015). The geography of Ujoeng Pacu village is the geography coastal and agriculture at once. Thus, the main source of economic income of the community is based on the agricultural and ponds culture. There are 230 hectares of plantations, 73 hectares of ponds and 35 hectares of paddy fields (Source: Monographic Data Village Ujoeng Pacu, 2009). The geographical reality of agriculture put the society of Ujoeng Pacu as a peasant society. It is from this farm and ponds that they start life, live and depend on life.

The historical fragment of the agricultural and ponds economy, though not entirely, was cut off during the period of intense conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement in 1976-2005. Penetration of Indonesian government soldiers implicated in civilian casualties gave rise to the anger of Ujoeng Pacu's community against the military. Meanwhile, the dispatch of Indonesian soldiers from outside Aceh opened space as well as the in disciplinary actions of military officers who straddled the social and cultural system of the local people as in the pattern of interrelationship of different types and the respect for religious manners. This gave raised the collective feelings of Ujoeng Pacu society against the Indonesian military (Aly, 2008: 73).

On the other hand, security disturbances triggered by guerilla GAM combat activities have obviously encouraged the Indonesian military to narrow GAM's separatist space through regional sterilization and construction of security posts in areas considered as

strategic hubs for combatants. Among the strategic areas are areas of swamps, ponds and plantations (Pane, 2001: 67). Then, the village of Ujoeng Pacu whose geography consists of swamps, ponds and plantations into one of the villages on the east coast of Aceh are heavily guarded and mushrooming with the military posts.

This reality has a direct consequence on the deteriorating economic condition of Ujoeng Pacu society which is based on agriculture sector. If the previous view of the green plantation with a variety of fruits and ponds full of fish and shrimp, now changed with the shirt and rifle. Thus, the penetration of soldiers making civilian casualties, defiance of local social and cultural values and the economic difficulties of Ujoeng Pacu society stimulated the emergence of hatred against the Indonesian military apparatus and in certain contexts identified as common enemies. On the contrary, the existence of GAM guerrillas (Free Aceh Movement) as Acehnese, their mastery in mingling with the community and GAM propaganda intelligence through the labeling of Islamic movement and for the self-esteem of the Acehnese people has clearly generated the sympathy of Ujoeng Pacu society against GAM. So, if the army and the government of Indonesia are considered enemies, on the contrary GAM is crowned as a brother of fate and then in arms, (Nirzalin, 2012: 273).

Along with the economic difficulties encountered by quietly cultivating rice fields, gardens and ponds, to meet the economic needs of the family, Ujong Pacu people shifted to GAM's military apparatus even some teenagers and young men into real GAM soldiers. This intimate emotional connection between the people and GAM is one of the reasons GAM has used Ujoeng Pacu village as one of the base

villages of their movement in Lhokseumawe. In accordance with the needs of guerrilla warfare, not all warfare devices are assigned to the army. GAM divides its apparatus into intelligence, logistics suppliers, medical teams, weapons hiding and Nanggroe (state) tax collectors<sup>2</sup>. Based on technical considerations, Ujoeng Pacu community occupies more non-army positions.

The high intensity of the war, high levels of activity required to support the guerrillas. Through intelligence activities, logistics supplies, medicines and weapons and bullet hide some Ujoeng Pacu people earn their economic income. Each performs a task according to its role, GAM rewards them<sup>3</sup>. Although far from the prosperous, but the wages earned from GAM enough to make families in Ujoeng Pacu can maintain their life. So, during the period of armed conflict between 1976 and 2005 the economy of Ujoeng Pacu society shifted from the agricultural economy to the economy of war. Almost 30 years in this conflict vortex society Ujoeng Pacu lives through war economy. The end of the conflict between GAM and the Indonesian government marked by the conclusion of the Helsinki peace agreement, Finland in 2005 not only ended the war in Aceh but also ended the economy of war.

Post conflict, it is not easy for Ujoeng Pacu people to re-transfer their economic resources from economy of war to agricultural economy. The problem lies in the much-differentiated habitus and economic mentality between the economy of war and the agricultural economy. The economy of war is a pragmatic economy while the

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview with ZR, 35 Years old, Former Logistics Staff of GAM, resident of Ujoeng Pacu 25 April 2018

agricultural economy is an economy that requires the perpetrator to have a mentality ready to proceed in anticipation of results. In a war economy what is done today directly get the result (wages), on the contrary to obtain results in farming takes time, so it requires patience and perseverance. It is not always what the good invested is being tackled and the plantations gets the expected result. Not infrequently, due to low technical knowledge, extreme weather and low capital owned, farmers fail to harvest.

the economic difficulties of the post-peace family become a door opener for the entry of the drug economy. The return of some fugitives from Malaysia in 2007 did not only mean the return of longing to relapse with the family and start a new life, but the return of some of the conflict leaders took part in bringing their economic acquisition behavior in *rantau* (migration), Malaysia. Practice to be a drug dealer in Malaysia brought home also to the village, Ujoeng Pacu<sup>4</sup>.

The international network drug mafia front man began in 2007 to make the village of Ujoeng Pacu as their drug distribution base, especially for Lhokseumawe, North Aceh and Bireuen. The mafia who had just returned to the village of Ujoeng Pacu attracted the attention of the citizens, especially teenagers and young children because of their friendly and generous attitude. Teenagers and young people who have economic difficulties due to unavailability of employment, they approach by giving souvenirs of new clothes brought back from

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Nuriman Daud, 53, Chairman of the Anti-Narcotics Movement, a resident of Ujoeng Pacu 21 May 2018

Malaysia and money<sup>5</sup>. This generosity attracts the hearts of teenagers and the youth of Ujoeng Pacu to always be close to them. As for drug mafia, the act of generosity is a hook-feeding strategy to make teenagers and youths of Ujoeng Pacu village as victims as well as their accomplices in getting double the profit from their drug business.

Mafia's close relationship with teenagers and youth village Ujoeng Pacu immediately gave an opportunity for the mafia to use them as agents of drug distributors. The existence of young people Ujoeng Pacu as accomplice of this drug mafia by society Ujoeng Pacu referred as *den dayang*<sup>6</sup>. In addition to consume their own *Den Dayang* are also in charge of selling and distributing drugs from the mafia to its customers. The high number of drug transactions and crowded drug consumers in 2007 to 2014, managed to make the village of Ujoeng Pacu as a drug village in the city of Lhokseumawe.

Teenagers and the youth Ujoeng Pacu earn adequate income from this drug business. The average of selling drugs of teenagers and youth Ujoeng Pacu get wages Rp. 5.000.000 (Five Million Rupiah) per month. The velocity of drug money in Ujoeng Pacu makes the drug economy a new economic source to replace the war economy. The stability of drug trafficking occurs not only supported by unscrupulous ex-combatants but also an unofficial source of income for local police and military personnel who act outside the command line. However, the rampant circulation of these drugs is slowly causing inconvenience among the majority of Ujoeng Pacu people,

---

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Nuriman Daud, 53, Chairman of the Drug Ujoeng Pacu Campaign, May 23, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Interview with RZ, activist of Ujoeng Pacu Drug Eradication Movement, July 23, 2017

especially the elderly and strong parties to uphold the values of Islamic and local cultural traditions.

### **C. Economic Empowerment and Welfare Change**

Society empowerment is a transformative process to make them free from intellectual (expertise), social and economic weaknesses. Community target empowerment is the subject of the focus to transfer of strength, competence and creativity in order to produce prosperity independently. Independence is a prerequisite for the growth of personal independence, so that creatively can fill the life in accordance with its aspirations. Thus, according to Freire empowerment should be understood as a social process rather than something that can be done instantly and pragmatically. Further, Freire (1993) says:

*“Empowerment is a personal and social process, a liberating sense of one’s own strengths, competence, creativity and freedom of action; to be empowered is to feel power surging into one from other people and from inside, specifically the power to act and grow, to become “More Fully Human”.*

In line with the mentioned Freire above, through the empowerment of a person or society will become fully human. Humans fully mean they have an autonomous ability to act creatively according to the competence they have. Consequently, empowerment must be understood as a process of developing, maintaining, managing, strengthening the bargaining position of lower-level society toward the suppressive forces in all areas and sectors of life (Eko, 2002). The concept of empowerment (village community) can be understood also with two ways of view. First, empowerment is interpreted in the context of placing the standing position of the

community. The position of society is not the object of beneficiaries which depends on the giving of outsiders such as the government, but in positions as subjects (agents or participants acting) who act independently.

Doing it independently does not mean free from the responsibility of the state. Second, the provision of public services (health, education, housing, transportation and so on) to the community is certainly a given duty (obligation) of the state. An independent society as a participant means the opening of space and capacity to develop potential-creations, controlling the environment and its own resources, solving problems independently, and contributing to the political process in the country's realm. The community participates in the process of development and governance (Eko, 2002).

The goal of community empowerment is to enable and empower the community especially from poverty and backwardness / gap / powerlessness. Poverty can be seen from the indicators of fulfillment of basic needs that are not sufficient / decent. These basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter, health, education, and transportation. While underdevelopment, such as low productivity, weak human resources, limited access to land whereas dependence on agriculture is still very strong, weakening local markets / traditional because it is used to supply the needs of international trade. In other words, the problem of backwardness concerns the structural (policy) and cultural (Usman, 2004).

To improve the economics of people living in coastal areas, especially in areas that have large shrimp farms is to optimize the

utilization of these ponds to improve their standard of living. Increased production of a fishery business can be increased again to the maximum by way of cultivating shrimp with other biota simultaneously or known by the term "Polyculture". Polyculture, the art and science of growing two or more compatible aquatic species together in the single pond, has the objective of maximizing production using organism with different feeding habits or spatial distribution.

Crab culture aimed to produce crab consumption. Cultivation activities are known as enlargement and fattening activities. In addition to the enlargement and fattening is also known the production of soft-shell crabs or soka crab and egg crab (Kordi, 2011). Soka crabs are mangrove crabs that are undergoing a skin phase (molting). The superiority of crab in this phase is to have soft shell mud crab so it can be consumed intact. In addition to not bother eating it because the skin does not need to be set aside, the nutritional value is also higher, especially the content of chitosan and carotenoids are usually found on the skin can be eaten (Rusmiyati, 2011).

Polyculture between tiger shrimp and Soft-shell crab will certainly increase people's income maximally. In addition to the price of very high shrimp can reach Rp100.000, soka crab prices are also very high usually reached Rp 85.000 / Kg. Another advantage to the polyculture of shrimp and soft shell crab polyculture is that if shrimp is harvested every 4 months, farmers will get additional income through polyculture activity that can harvest soft shell crab every 25 days, so that people have income every month, without

waiting for harvest shrimp every 4 months, or only harvest 2 times a year.

In the maintenance of soft-shell crabs, replacement of water is necessary. The important role in the success of crab and shrimp culture. Good water replacement is done as much as 50-70%. It aims to maintain water quality during maintenance. Conditions of water that are not feasible to use are characterized by cloudy water so many crabs will die.

Through the training of polyculture between tiger shrimp and soft-shell crabs, Ujoeng Pacu community has been able to do cultivation well. Although at the beginning of cultivation has not shown optimal yield. However, through hard work and unyielding spirit, the next harvest has yielded encouraging results. on average once every two weeks Ujoeng Pacu community has been able to harvest the sokanya crabs and once a month can harvest the tiger shrimp. Each time the harvest of soka crab with a weight of 50 kg on average the community can get the results of Rp. 4.250.000 (Four Million Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Rupiah) and every time the average tiger shrimp harvest can be 100 kg worth Rp. 10,000,000 (Ten Million Rupiah).

This fixed income has encouraged the economic prosperity of Ujoeng Pacu society. Thus, the drug business that had previously become a job has now been completely abandoned and the community has been able to live a normal life. Social integration strengthened, religious life re-lively and hospitality has now grown and become one of the social identity of society Ujoeng Pacu. Economic empowerment through this pond cultivation business,

encourages significant changes in the lives of the coastal communities of Ujoeng Pacu from the poor and vulnerable to contamination with the drug business to become economically strong communities.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Government policies in maritime development programs and coastal communities do not automatically encourage changes in welfare. The fundamental weakness of knowledge (expertise), capital and access to marketing makes them unable to access the economic droplets of various economic development activities arising from the results of Indonesian government policies in the maritime and coastal sectors. One of the coastal communities who have relatively not benefited greatly from various government policies is the Ujoeng Pacu community in Lhokseumawe City. Even after the post-Aceh peace period, they were unable to meet the economic needs of the family because they were unable to access work resulting from government policies in the coastal economy.

Thus, Peace Aceh 2005, did not fully bring happiness to the people of Aceh. For some Acehnese people, especially those who live decades of war economy like the Ujoeng Pacu society, the real peace makes them lose their jobs. The low level of expertise and the lack of network positioning some members of the living community from the war economy in Ujoeng Pacu cannot obtain the minimal available jobs in the formal economy work sector. Thus, unemployment and poverty has become the main reason for the growing motivation of drug business among Ujoeng Pacu community.

Effective economic empowerment is an empowerment that is consistent with local wisdom and geographic conditions in which the

target community is domiciled. Thus, the economic empowerment of the Ujoeng Pacu community through tiger shrimp farming and soft-shell crabs (polyculture) is right in improving their welfare. In accordance with the geography of Ujoeng Pacu village which is flooded with brackish water, Ujoeng Pacu community is basically a fish farming community. When conflict broke out between GAM and the Government of Indonesia, they switched professions to be part of GAM's military activities. Through this cultivation optimum pond utilization because the commodities are fully filled both below and above the pond surface. Below the surface of the tiger shrimp pond while on top of the soka crab. The availability of jobs and fixed economic income and sufficient family needs is the main reason for Ujoeng Pacu community not to go back to shabu-shabu business. Economic welfare is the key to social resilience of ex-drug-based people not interested in drug business again.

## References

- Adi, Isbandi Rukminto. 2003. *Pemberdayaan, Pengembangan Masyarakat dan Intervensi Komunitas*. Jakarta: FEUI
- Aly, Fachry. 2008. *Kalla & Perdamaian Aceh*. Jakarta: LSPEU Indonesia
- Dasgupta, Parta. 2000. *Social Capital, A Multifaceted Perspective*. Washington D.C: The World Bank
- Data Monografi Village Ujoeng Pacu, 2009
- Eko, Sutoro. 2002. *Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa, Materi Diklat Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa*. Samarinda: Badiklat Provinsi Kalimantan Timur
- Freire, Paulo. 1993. *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*, New York: Continuum
- Harian Jateng Time 5/3/2016
- Harian Jurnal Indonesia, 26-03-2016
- Kordi, M. G. H. 2011. *Kiat Sukses Budidaya Rumput Laut di laut dan Tambak*. Yogyakarta: Andi Offset
- Nirzalin. 2012. *Ulama dan Politik, Menelaah Hubungan Kekuasaan Teungku Dayah dan Negara di Aceh*. Yogyakarta: Maghza Pustaka
- Nirzalin. 2016. *Gerakan Kolektif Masyarakat Melawan Mafia Narkoba di Ujoeng Pacu*. Padang: Prosiding Konferensi Nasional APPSI
- Nugroho, Riant. 2003. *Reinventing Pembangunan*. Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo
- Pane, Neta. S. 2001. *Sejarah dan Kekuatan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Solusi, Harapan dan Impian*. Jakarta: Grasindo
- Priyono. Onny S. 1996. *Pemberdayaan Konsep Kebijakan dan Implementasi*. Jakarta: CSIS

Rusmiyati, Sri. 2011. *Sukses Budidaya Kepiting Soka dan KepitingTelur*. Jakarta: Pustaka

Soetomo. 2008. *Strategi-Strategi Pembangunan Masyarakat*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar

Usman, Sunyoto. 2004. *Pembangunan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*. Yogyakarta : Pustaka Pelajar.

### INFORMANT

Abu Bakar Thaib, Geuchiek (Village Head) Ujoeng Pacu

ZR, 35 Years old, Former Logistic Staff of GAM (Free Aceh Movement)

Nuriman Daud, 53, Chairman of the Drug Ujoeng Pacu Movement

Nuriman Daud, 53 Tahun, Ketua Gerakan Anti Narkoba Ujoeng Pacu