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A Descriptive Analysis of Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), Community Empowerment, and The Participatory Rural Appraisal Approach

Boge Triatmanto
University of Merdeka Malang
boge.triatmanto@unmer.ac.id

Mokhamad Natsir
University of Merdeka Malang

Abstract. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and the empowerment of human resources employing the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach. This study provides input to local governments in regards to accelerating the achievement of SDGs as well as harmonizing them with government regulations and programs of community empowerment. The research method was conducted through observations on community organizations related to poverty alleviation policies and the implementation of SDGs in the local government. The research was conducted by interviewing, distributing questionnaires, and having Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the members of community organizations performing program activities related to SDGs' achievements. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative method by combining frequency analysis to obtain an understanding of the questionnaire's responses. The results of this study indicate that some of the goals listed in SDGs' documents have been achieved successfully; in terms of sustainable economic development, however, they are still not optimal. This encourages regional governments to put more effort into achieving economic equality for the lower classes of society.

Keywords: *community empowerment, SDGs, poverty alleviation, participatory rural appraisal*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability Development Goals is an effort to accelerate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target achievement of being both nationally and regionally prioritized for development. Therefore, planning policies at the national and provincial as well as district or municipal levels need to be synergic [1]. At the regional level, Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) targets must be integrated into the *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah* (RPJMD) or Regional Medium Term Development Plan in the form

of measurable programs, indicators, and targets as well as funding supports. In implementing the SDGs target, regional road maps need to be formulated. Furthermore, the roadmap needs to be elaborated in the form of an SDG Action Plan in accordance with the conditions and problems in the area. The action plan is expected to show commitment and clarity in the program's planning and budgeting, as well as the activities for implementing the SDGs target [2].

On another note, poverty alleviation programs remain relevant at all times. The regional government emphasizes the efforts of human development programs to minimize social inequalities through various creative steps, which include providing employment opportunities for the community. Therefore, the human development program will be conducted periodically and continuously. Pertaining to this, the Human Development Index (HDI) rate of 76.50 indicates that the condition of human development status is in the upper middle level. A high HDI indicates that the human development experienced significant changes although it is in the middle to upper levels within the 2015-2019 period. In the past 3 years, it has shown higher quality and more competitive human development.

The progress of human development, in general, can be viewed from the HDI which reflects the achievement of progress in the fields of education, health, and economics [3]. The increase in HDI is on account of improvements in education and health programs, as well as the increase in people's purchasing power [4]. The government has sought to increase the HDI rate, such as conducting programs in the fields of health, education, and economy, along with improving the quality of other community infrastructures. In addition, the success of the program is determined by the community's mindset in utilizing existing facilities. Human development illustrated by HDI results does not immediately show a direct effect in the following year, but it reveals in several years later [5].

This research is essential for reconstruction in the form of developing a community empowerment program model based on Participatory Rural Appraisal, which adapts to the characteristics of the community and local

culture, and is integratedly planned in respect of the local resource potential. It starts from the coordination of institutions involving in poverty alleviation programs. They are *Tim Koordinasi Penanggulangan Kemiskinan Daerah* (TKPKD) or the Regional Poverty Alleviation Coordination Team and the local governments (sub-district/village), making relations with the stakeholders, and other concerning groups (the private sector or state/regional owned enterprises, non-governmental organization and universities). The research question is formulated to explore the essential factors conforming to non-governmental organizations and community culture characteristics as a basis for developing or reformulating human resource empowerment program models of non-governmental organizations, which employ the concept of participatory rural appraisal aligned with SDGs' goals.

The Concept of SDGs

SDGs consist of a set of transformative objectives that are agreed upon and apply to all nations without exception [6]. SDGs have 17 objectives, one of which is a goal that regulates procedures including peaceful and non-discriminating community, community's participation, open governance, and multi-stakeholder partnership. The processes of formulating SDGs is dissimilar to the MDGs. SDGs bring one of the fundamental changes which are the principle of "no one is left behind". They also have principles emphasizing equality among countries and citizens. They apply to all UN member states (universal), whether they are developed, poor or developing countries [2].

Indonesia has decided on its development priorities, according to the program and priorities in *Nawacita* (a general term originated from Sanskrit – 'nawa' means nine and 'cita' means hope/desire) and *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah* (RPJMN) or the Medium Term Development Plan in 2015-2019. There are convergence and divergence between SDGs and *Nawacita* [1].

The Concept of Human Resource & Community Empowerment

The main problem in the field of empowering human resources is related to the resignation of power/authority. In practice, however, empowerment is usually seen as a form of human resource involvement planned by management aiming to generate commitment and to increase human resources' contribution to the organization [7]. Accordingly, the empowerment of human resources has a role that greatly affects an organization and individual performance, and for this reason, efforts are needed to improve human resource ability and to develop an empowerment culture.

Improving human resource ability is done through training and development (which is also called human resource development) while developing an empowerment culture is carried out by setting up a conducive environment for empowerment efforts [8]. Organizations that wish to develop an empowerment culture must find ways to establish systems and

processes that do not limit human resources [9]. By concentrating on behaviors that are considered ideal for human resources and things they have done well, the management can adapt, develop, and change organizational structures to generate better behavior.

Empowerment helps eliminate the conditions leading to inefficacy while increasing self-efficacy, which is the feeling of a person when he can complete any works assigned to him [9]. Thereby, it is a process to make people more empowered or capable to solve their own problems by granting trust and authority, so it fosters a sense of responsibility [10].

The Concept of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Participatory Rural Appraisal is a set of approaches and methods promoting rural communities to participate in improving and analyzing their lives and conditions so that they can make plans and actions [11]. Substantially, PRA is a group of approaches or methods enabling rural communities to share, improve, and analyze their knowledge of the village's conditions and life, as well as to make plans and concrete actions [12]. Some basic principles that must meet the PRA method include mutual learning and sharing experiences, involving all group members and information, involving outsiders as facilitators, utilizing the concept of triangulation and result optimization, and offering practical orientation and program sustainability [13].

The method is deemed to have quite operational technicalities utilizing the concept that community involvement is needed in all activities [14]. The PRA approach aspires to make people become development planners and implementers, not just objects of development. The approach and technique application can provide greater as well as more targeted opportunities in involving the community [15]. Furthermore, through the PRA approach, a program suitable for the community needs can be generated, so it ensures the program's sustainability.

METHOD

This is a descriptive qualitative research combined with confirmatory exploration. The research variables are derived from the concept of Empowerment, Participatory Rural Appraisal, and the four dimensions of the SDG concept which can be the basis to determine a competitive and sustainable empowerment management scheme.

The population of this research is the members of community organization implementing programs related to the achievement of SDGs. The research employed proportional sampling and documentation techniques. From the questionnaires distributed to respondents of community membership institutions, 179 responses were analyzed.

The data analysis utilizes the descriptive qualitative technique. It is to explain the variables based on the respondents' opinions or ideas to explore the existing

programs and according to the community’s expectations towards the SDGs achievement program.

RESULT

Overall, the analysis results of each variable in this study are presented in the following table:

Table. Variables and Mean Indicators

Variable	Indicator	Mean Indicator
Community Empowerment	Participation	4.24
	Initiative	4.09
	Commitment	4.09
	Responsibility	4.29
	Mean Variable	4.177
Participatory Rural Appraisal	Attitude & Behavior	4.175
	Involvement	4.137
	Facilitation	3.98
	Result optimization	3.97
	Program sustainability	4.15
	Mean Variable	4.0824
MDG achievements	Human Development	3.88
	Welfare and education	3.91
	Sustainable economy	3.57
	Energy access	3.92
	Mean Variable	3.82

In the variable of community empowerment, the indicator that has the highest value is the responsibility with a value of 4.29. Secondly, it is the participation with an average value of 4.24. Third, the commitment and initiative have the same value with an average value of 4.09. From this analysis, it can be concluded that the empowerment of non-governmental organizations in achieving SDGs is excellent. It is indicated by the value of the variable mean of 4.18. Nevertheless, empowerment still needs to be optimized. The optimization of community empowerment is in the form of sustainable empowerment. Considering the more complex future challenges, people are required to be more creative in financing the programs to achieve SDGs.

Next, the participatory rural appraisal has an average value of 4.08. This value presents that poverty alleviation activities conducted by the members of non-governmental organizations are generally PRA-based. This is shown from the mean of each indicator in the PRA variable. The first indicator of attitude and behavior has a mean value of 4,175, which is the highest among other indicators. In general, this indicator explores the attitude and behavior of non-governmental organization members in their activities to achieve SDGs on their obligation to be facilitators in the facilitated areas. This mean value indicates that the average attitude and behavior of non-governmental organization members in implementing poverty reduction programs are in accordance with the provisions of the PRA model, but they can still be more optimized. It is due to the paradigm of the non-governmental organization members who consider poverty alleviation programs as a project.

Moreover, the SDGs achievement variable has an average value of 3.74. Overall, this variable has a value

above 3.82, which is fairly good according to respondents’ perceptions towards the SDGs’ performance. This variable has four indicators, of which the lowest mean value is the indicator of SDGs’ sustainable economy. This illustrates that the sustainable economic development is still not optimal as the results of economic development have not yet been evenly reached and benefited by the community at large. Thus, this indicator needs to receive a special attention. The second lowest mean value is the human development indicator with a mean of 3.88. This shows that human development has not reached the whole community, especially the poor, as there are still rights discriminations in obtaining the education, health, and income-increase opportunities. Based on this issue, the regional government needs to be more serious in the equitable distribution program of the development outcomes; particularly the development of the middle to lower economy which can be more benefited by most of the population. A more accurate formula is essential to increase people's income along with the increased economic growth. Thereby, an equitable economic growth can reach most of the population, especially in accessing education, health, and other fields.

CONCLUSION

The role of regional governments in accelerating the achievement of SDGs still needs to be optimized, particularly in funding support for the implementation of poverty alleviation programs. It is expected that the funding support from the regional budget will be able to accelerate the goals' achievement in the SDGs' agreement [16].

The community empowerment utilizing the Participatory Rural Appraisal approach has been implemented although it is still not optimal. It is applied in almost all activities oriented towards accelerating the achievement of the goals in SDGs. Some poverty alleviation activities conducted by the local governments are still charitable and have not been essentially empowering communities. Thus, we need a good example of the PRA method application to empower the community in accelerating the achievement of SDGs.

The respondents’ perceptions of the achievement of SDGs assert that it still needs to be optimized, especially sustainable economic development. Based on the descriptive analysis, it found that the achievement of SDGs on economic development still did not reach the community evenly. New economic growth can only benefit the middle and upper classes. This is indicated by the economic growth that exceeds the surrounding area and surpasses the provincial and national economic growth. However, it has not been complemented by the decrease rate of percentage in poverty.

Pertaining to the uneven distribution of sustainable economic development, the second indicator that needs to be considered is human development. The human development index based on statistical data is excellent, but in general, the respondents reported that they had not

benefited from the results of human development, scilicet increased income, health services, and even distribution of education.

The local governments still need to stand behind the marginalized communities by developing a community empowerment program from regional budget funding. Being dependent on the government's funding is unwise, given the long bureaucracy involves in the activities. The involvement of other non-government parties still needs to be improved, especially in terms of community empowerment, starting from its program planning and implementation of activities to supervision.

In accelerating the achievement of SDGs, the private sectors need to be involved through funding corporate social responsibility. Participation indicator presenting public participation, which includes the private sector, generally needs to be improved considering that local government original income is still at the lowest.

Updating the data needs to be done continuously by adjusting the dynamics of the community to get more accurate data of the poor community. This needs to be conducted every fiscal year to avoid community conflict and to accurately empower the poor community.

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