

# **ANOTHER SIDE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT: AN IMPORTANT LESSON FROM BANYUMAS INDONESIA**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to analyse some important indicators in rural development that focuses on nonpartisan communities in community empowerment. That phenomenon is very interesting to study because of the importance of involving the people in community empowerment, including those who are not participating. This study is a case study in the District of Banyumas, Indonesia, with purposive sampling as an informant choosing technique. In-depth interviews and documentation are chosen for collecting the data. The research results show there are several reasons for the villagers not to participate in rural development. Those factors are age, busyness, and lack of information, among others. The suitability between hopes and needs with the program cannot be a supporting indicator of participation. However, nonpartisan villagers are not subject to sanctions or different actions and reactions for their reluctance to participate. They only receive satire from their neighbours. The openness to and the suitability of the program that will be done makes it possible for the villagers to be able to take part in future programs.

*Keywords: participation, nonpartisan, community empowerment, rural development*

## **Introduction**

It cannot be denied that community participation is one of the most important and interesting studies in rural development studies (Leeuwis 2000). Many studies of participation have been conducted by researchers from all over the world, giving rise to various definitions of participation. Jacobson and Store (2004) stated that participation sometimes occurs as involvement in execution, designing programs, or both. Jacobson and Store added that in many references the participation tends to be more focused on the process at the village level.

Rural development cannot be run well without involvement from all the

community elements. Many strategies have been employed to encourage all the stakeholders, including the villagers, to take a part in the rural development process through community empowerment (Antun 2011). The community empowerment model, with a bottom up approach, placed the villagers in a better position and became an alternative to give a greater chance for the villagers to take a more active part ( Rukminto 2007; Suci 2006; Dedy & Riyadi 2005). However, there is no guarantee for this community empowerment model to ensure all the villagers participate. These nonpartisan groups, which are sometimes ignored, can be a crucial element in community empowerment.

Based on that phenomenon, the authors are interested in further studying the influential factors for the villagers who choose not to participate in the community empowerment done in their area. The factors can be very interesting and important to study because the nonpartisan communities also become an important part in the development. Ignoring their existence will create a big problem and make them feel far away from the program.

This research aims to study several aspects regarding why these villagers do not participate, including 1) the reason, 2) the suitability between the program and the villagers' needs and hopes, 3) the impact/consequences, and 4) the possibility of participating in the future. Using those indicators, the authors hoped to find some new information.

## **Literature Review**

Community empowerment begins with a process of listening between citizens, participation, identifying the community's characteristics, and creating new strategies for change. Through dialogue, perspective can be studied and used to find a way to solve the problems faced (Wallerstein and Bernstein 1994). In parallel to some previous opinions, Richards and Dalbey (2006) add community members' need for information on a range of possible alternatives before addressing the options. In most participatory processes, only a small number of community members are involved in the decision-making process caused by socio-economic factors, language, or educational constraints. Laverack and Labonte (2000) illustrate a framework aimed at assisting planners, implementers, and evaluators to consider the goal of community empowerment. A highlight of the need is necessary for expert knowledge and formal institutions to recognise the role of all stakeholders and integrate public knowledge with the institutions involved in the process of participation in development (Eversole 2010).

In the process of community empowerment, there are also the dominant voices of certain people, who often make the unheard members of a party become reluctant to participate, and not become part of the community empowerment program being implemented. However, the process can determine how the strategies and actions of individuals and organisations involved contribute to community-development

efforts. White (1996) also considers participation a political process, because there is always tension over issues, such as who is involved, how, and at what level. Goodman et al. (1998) saw a linkage between participation and leadership, ability, resources, social networks and inter-organisation, community, understanding of community history, community power, and values.

Non-participation means the individual does not contribute in overcoming the problems that occur around him. Related to that condition, Ohmer (2007) sees the participation of the community as being actively involved in changing the problematic conditions present in society. Involvement in the problematic changes that exist in this society will correlate with policies and programmes that spur the quality of life. Ohmer also states that participation can also be used as a 'vehicle' that can be interconnected within the community to improve the ability of society, both individually and collectively. In addition to contributing to the enhancement of community capacity, participation is also allegedly correlated with the intensity of the relationship with neighbours. Increasing needs, the intensity of relationships with neighbours, and contributions to environmental controls make the community have more of a 'sense of belonging' to the surrounding environment. In addition, the potential sense of belonging can be understood as part of an assessment of capacity and quality of trust (Lachapelle 2008).

The nonpartisan view of the villagers in development programmes, including community empowerment results, adds to the 'loss' of opportunities provided to communities to contribute to their environment, and contributes to the process of eroding solidarity among citizens (Bhattacharyya 2004), reducing the intensity of relationships with neighbours and the sense of belonging to the surrounding environment. This non-participation can be caused by assorted reasons, including busyness, old age, programme mismatch, lack of/no information, and so on. Perkins et al. (2007) reveal the obstacles facing young people's participation varies between gender and ethnicity, and in regards to personal decisions, peer group influences, parents' restrictions, the level of local knowledge, the security of land rent, and community cohesion (Walters et al. 1999). In addition to these factors, the adequacy of information was also a very important indicator. By this information, the community members can be connected to each other.

## **Material and Methods**

This research is a qualitative approach with a case study model. It includes some in-depth interviews with the 46 (forty-six) non-partisan community members from 17 (seventeen) villages in the District of Banyumas. To obtain a more complete picture of the context studied, the informants were selected through purposive sampling.

Secondary data was obtained through various literature and documents relevant to the research topic. All the data found in the field were recorded using a tape recorder, then categorised and analysed with various related literatures to fit the

theme of research and to produce the new findings.

## Field View from Banyumas Indonesia

### Characteristics of informants?

*Gender:* The composition between male and female of the informants is almost balanced, where 24 of the informants are female (52%) and 22 are male (48%).

*Age:* On average, the informants' ages ranged between 24 and 32 years (44%), 50 and 59 years (60%), and 20-29 years (8.69%).

*Formal Education:* There is a variety of education levels, ranging from unfinished elementary school to graduate studies. Most (36.9%) finished their studies through elementary school.

*Occupation:* The informants work in different jobs, both in formal, such as a government employee and bank officer, and informal, such as farmer, labour, house keeper, and others sectors. Some of them are housewives.

*Income:* The income of the informants ranges from 500 thousand rupiahs to 6 (six) million rupiahs. Half (50%) of the informants receive an uncertain income. That uncertain income comes from informal sectors.



Figure 1: The Province of Middle Java, Indonesia

### Not to Participate in Rural Development: A Portrait?

The reason. Community empowerment will not be able to achieve maximum results without the participation of all stakeholders who are expected to contribute to the smoothness of the programme, including the villagers. The villagers do not just participate for the success of community empowerment programme in their area, but also become the main actor of that programme. However, the facts found that not

all the community members have spare time to take part and participate.

Table 1 illustrates the reasons why people do not want to be involved in community empowerment activities in their villages. Most of the causes are due to no time or busyness. Communities also consider these activities to be carried out in a timely manner. More detailed reasons for non-participation in community empowerment programmes can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1: The Reason not to Participate**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Busy	21	45,6
Not interested 1	2,20	
Lack of information	5	10,9
Age	4	8,70
Others	15	32,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

Suitability. Community empowerment makes the community member the main stakeholder, so the programmes implemented should come from the analysis of the needs of the communities that they themselves do. The suitability between needs and expectations with the implemented programme becomes a very important point that can be correlated with the success of the programme. The research found that many informants (78%) considered that the community empowerment programmes have been suitable to their needs and expectations. That finding becomes very interesting for further analysis. In contrast, that fact could not be a powerful motivating factor for the community to participate due to assorted reasons as discussed in the previous points.

**Table 2: The Suitability Between the Programme with the Community's Hopes and Needs**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Suitable	36	78.3
Not suitable	10	21.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

Another finding of this research is that community empowerment programmes implemented in the District of Banyumas not only make the community more knowledgeable, but also positively affect the social, economic, and environmental aspects of increasing income, improving environmental health, and so on.

One 'weirdness' happens again. Although most informants said that community empowerment programmes implemented in their villages had a positive impact, it still did not make positive impacts as a strong motivating factor for them to participate. They remain reluctant to participate in community empowerment programmes in

their village.

Impacts/consequences. Participation in community empowerment programmes is expected to improve the living standard of the community, as discussed in the second indicator. The problem is the consequences of non-partisan of the villagers in the community empowerment program. Based on the results of the study, more than half of the informants (54.3%) saw the effect that they received from their non-partisan neighbours, although this effect was only at the level of being neighbours, not excommunication or otherwise.

**Table 3: Impacts/Consequences**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Receive impact	25	54.3
No impact	21	45.7
Total	46	100

Although there is no difference in the treatment of people who do not participate in the same village, inequality occurs among the villagers from one village to another due to differences in the rules. The community members in certain villages get paid when they are willing to participate in community empowerment programmes, while others do not. This condition creates a situation that is less conducive to participation and has the potential to hinder the success of the community empowerment programme.

The possibility to participate in the future. Despite the on-going community empowerment programme, the informants did not participate, but when they are asked about the possibility to participate in the future, not all informants refused. A small number of the informants (8.7%) chose not to participate because of their age, busyness, and other reasons, while most them (71.8%) would like to participate in the future.

**Table 4: The Possibility to Participate in the Future**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Staying not no participate	4	8.7
Not clear	2	7
Would like to participate with notes	33	4.3
Agree to participate	15.2	71.8
Total	46	100

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Participation is an important variable in rural development study including community empowerment. Based on the results of the research in the District of Banyumas, the authors found that 46 (forty-six) community members did not participate. The non-participation of the community members in community empowerment programmes did not make them feel isolated or treated differently, although theoretically these conditions have the potential to 'separate' them from other participating community members. In relation to the condition, Shortall (2008) states that social processes and participation in rural development programmes are often misinterpreted. This misinterpretation increases the labelling of socially excluded groups. Labelling is counterproductive with the spirit of community empowerment itself because it is more of 'alienating' of groups that do not participate. These groups should 'not be shunned', but should be given more attention. In this regard, Cornwall (2008), in relation to this issue, expressed the importance of further attention to 3 (three) issues: who participates, in what way they participate, and what benefits they gain.

In addition to these three issues, the involvement of the government is also one of the points that can contribute positively to the smoothness of community empowerment programmes, if the government acts as a facilitator and not as the main actor in the programme. However, development can be done well through community empowerment when there is cooperation between government and society (Totok 2010). Abbott (1995) argues that community development is a specific form of community participation. The success of the process is determined by 2 (two) key factors, namely the role of the state and the complexity of decision-making that acts as a key element of community empowerment.

The people's participation in the community empowerment programme will create better conditions both for individuals and the community. The suitability among the community empowerment programme and the people's hopes and needs ideally became supporting factors which contribute to influencing the villagers' decisions to participate. Unfortunately, that condition did not happen with the 46 villagers in the research area.

The influencing factors for the villagers choosing not to participate in community empowerment are laziness, busy, age, lack of information, and others. The lack of involvement of the community in the community empowerment program did not provide a 'different effect' for the villagers because there was no sanction, no difference in treatment compared to the participating citizens. The community members who do not participate only receive satire from the participating neighbours. Non-sanctioned factors causes some citizens of society to remain reluctant to participate in the future, even though most of the community members will change their opinion to be willing to participate when there is a match between the programme with what they need.

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