

## THE ROLE OF OPINION LEADERS IN PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION OF FORMER MIGRANT WORKERS

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### ABSTRACT

Formers migrant workers have created social problem that stakeholders need to solve. The problem greatly impacts economy, family, law, and other aspects of community. This study seeks to reveal how participatory development communication is applied in the empowerment of Indonesian former migrant workers. This study employed qualitative method with case study approach with its aim was to generate holistic, systemic description and to reveal the meaning of empirical facts about participatory development communication in empowering the Indonesian former migrant workers (*Pekerja Migran Indonesia/PMI*). Data were collected through interviews with five key informants of community leaders and sources of relevant agencies as well as direct observations. The study found: (1) Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (*Forum Purna PMI*) seeks to empower the economy of former migrant workers in Desa Celak; (2) Community participation in Desa Celak, particularly among former migrant workers, is considered well-conducted; and (3) Local public figures as opinion leaders hold a significant role in encouraging the community in village development.

**Keywords:** *opinion leader, participatory development communication, migrant worker, indonesian former migrant workers, community empowerment.*

### ABSTRAK

Purna pekerja migran telah menciptakan masalah sosial yang perlu diselesaikan oleh para pemangku kepentingan. Masalah tersebut sangat berdampak pada sektor ekonomi, keluarga, hukum, dan aspek masyarakat lainnya. Penelitian ini berupaya mengungkap cara komunikasi pembangunan partisipatif diterapkan dalam pemberdayaan purna pekerja migran Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus yang bertujuan untuk menghasilkan gambaran yang holistic dan sistemik serta mampu mengungkap makna empiris mengenai komunikasi pembangunan partisipatif dalam pemberdayaan purna pekerja migran Indonesia (PMI). Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dengan lima informan yang berasal dari tokoh masyarakat dan instansi terkait serta observasi langsung. Hasil penelitian menemukan: (1) Forum Purna PMI melakukan pemberdayaan dalam sektor ekonomi pada purna pekerja migran di Desa Celak; (2) Partisipasi masyarakat di Desa Celak, khususnya di kalangan purna pekerja migran dinilai terlaksana dengan baik; dan (3) Tokoh masyarakat sebagai pemuka pendapat memiliki peran penting dalam mendorong masyarakat dalam pembangunan desa.

**Kata Kunci:** *pemuka pendapat, buruh migran, komunikasi pembangunan partisipatif, purna pekerja migran indonesia, pemberdayaan masyarakat.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Former migrant workers have created been a social problem due to the shift from the previous situation. Stakeholders need to address this problem since it greatly impacts economy, family, law, and other aspects of community. Statistics of Puslitfo BNP2TKI (2015) show that West Java is the province sending the most migrant workers, particularly to the Middle East and Far East. This is consistent with what was found in Desa Celak of Kecamatan Gununghalu of West Bandung Regency, a well-known sending area. Most of the villagers go abroad, particularly to Arab countries in the Middle East, to get a job as housemaids. The reason Celak villagers choose those countries is religious consideration. In their perception, the religion of the employers must be Islam; the same as theirs.

Most Celak villagers find a job as a housemaid or, the top one, a driver. This profession gives them opportunity to go abroad without adequate education and skills. This is consistent with Mulyana's (2015) study on migrant workers in Indramayu. He states that in general the workers go abroad because they are forced by economy crisis. Their inadequate education and skills make them hardly get a formal job in designated countries. The same situation happens to Celak villagers. They become a migrant worker because they think it is the best alternative to overcome their economy crisis.

People are highly motivated to be a successful migrant worker because it can generate a bigger income and saving than being a farmer, rancher, merchant, and laborer in their hometown. In addition to this personal motive, many villagers decide to be a migrant worker because of the strong persuasion from the agencies who directly come to the village and the support from the government. According to de Haan and Rogaly (2010), labor mobility is influenced by specific and complex changes in a region in order to meet the needs of capital and labor. So far, the interest for being a migrant worker is still high, and it has been a tradition being passed down since 1980's. The motivation usually comes from the successful

story of family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends who have been migrant workers.

Unfortunately being a non-skilled migrant worker is risky and problematic since the beginning of the process in the hometown. Therefore, various efforts are needed to reduce, or even prevent the sending of migrant workers. In Kecamatan Gununghalu there is Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Forum Purna PMI). The forum seeks to reduce the probability of former migrant workers of getting another job abroad. The forum carries out many activities in an effort to empower former migrant workers so that they can have their own business in their hometown and do not need to work abroad anymore.

Forum Purna PMI's effort is a support group for village development in Indonesia. In line with the spirit of reform and autonomy, the focus of development is no longer guided by top-down planning, but bottom-up planning. Community is no longer the object of development, but the subject of it. The same policy is applied by the forum in Desa Celak, where the people, who are the former migrant workers, become the subject of development.

To overcome the increasingly complex community development problems, an approach is needed to enable the community to acquire the skills to solve their own problems. Therefore, a form of communication is needed to make them free to talk, express and open themselves to each other (Sulistiyowati et. al., 2005). Mulyana (2007) asserts that development communication that must be built is the community-oriented or the humanistic one, which requires dialogue between those who hold ideas for development and the subject of development, i.e. the community and the government.

Based on the descriptions above, this study seeks to reveal how participatory development communication is applied in the empowerment of Indonesian former migrant workers (hereafter PMI), particularly the one by the Forum Purna PMI, in Desa Celak, Kecamatan Gununghalu. The forum's main activity is addressing problems faced by the migrant workers and the former ones, particularly by empowering their economy.

## Theoretical Framework

The role of development communication has been widely discussed by many experts. They generally agree that communication has an important role in development. Everett M. Rogers (1985) states that, in brief, development is a useful change for a nationally-desired socio-economic system. He also states that communication is the basis of social change of a nation. The desired change in development is certainly a better one. Therefore, the role of development communication must be linked to the direction of the change. It means that communication activities must be able to anticipate the pace of development.

Inayatullah (in Nasution, 2001: 28) states that development is a change for enabling the community to better realize the humanity values and to have a greater control over their environment and political goals as well as individuals. Whereas according to Riyadi (in Mardikanto, 2010: 3) development is an effort or a change for achieving the desired level of welfare and quality of life of a community (and its members) who are willing to carry out the development. Dissyanake (in Sumadi, 2007: 58) defines development as a process of social change that aims to improve the quality of life of all members (or the majority) of a community without damaging the natural and cultural environment in which they live in as well as seek to involve as many community members as possible and make them the determinants of their own goals. On the other hand, Katz (in Huraerah, 2008: 12) defines development as a huge process of a community from a less-valuable life to a better one. Based on the aforementioned definitions, it can be concluded that development is a process of changing life values through a planned and sustainable process by the government and the community by wisely utilizing resources for the welfare of the people.

Development, according to Rogers (1985), is a widely-participated social change for improving social and material welfare (including justice, freedom, and quality life) through a greater control over environment. At this level, Rogers has provided a new approach to development by including wide participation. This implies that the involved members of community do not only enjoy the

results of development, but also actively participate in its processes.

The success of development depends not only on the availability of material infrastructure, but of the non-material one, i.e. rules, positive mental attitude and favorable customs in the form of views that can be aligned to promote the success of development. Therefore, it needs efforts to change the community's mental attitude, from the less-supportive one to the more-supportive one, in accepting the conceptions of dynamic, advanced views. The involvement of many parties, both humans as the driving force and facilities and infrastructure like natural potentials, cultural values and the will of development of the community. The ability to influence and drive the available potentials will encourage public awareness of being more active in development activities.

In this perspective, community development is a bottom-up idea which values knowledge, skills, culture, resources, and local processes as important things. Bottom-up approach and participation are the fundamental principles of community development. The formulation of both principles makes communication be in the central position for driving the processes. Diaz Brodinave notes that in this approach, participation is often expected directly by the sources and agents of change. In this approach, people are persuaded to take part in independent activities, but the settlement of local fundamental problems is chosen by the agents of external development. Even though people's participation is directed, the target of participation is not pragmatic, but more about the independence of the community (Melkote and Steeves, 2006).

Participatory Development Communication is a systematic design and use of participatory activities, communication approach, method and media to share information and knowledge among the stakeholders of development to ensure mutual understanding and consensus leading to actions (Anyaeibunam, et al., 2004). It aims to facilitate community participation at all levels of development as well as to help identify and implement policies (Anyaeibunam, 2004: 10). The roles of communication and participation in development, among others, are (a)

empowering community, (b) building mutual understanding and action consensus, (c) training interest groups of the community, and (d) creating policies benefiting the community.

Participation is a person's mental, ideational, emotional involvement that encourages him/her to take part in achieving the goals and to be responsible for activities in it (Adams, 1995). Furthermore, Melkote and Steeves (2006) state that community participation means facilitating the active involvement of different community groups, together with other stakeholders, and the many development and research agents working with the community and decision makers. Thus, the participation is not only intended for individuals, but also communities and the groups within.

In line with Melkote and Steeves, Ndraha (1981: 108) argues that participation is carried out either in processional or partial pattern. Processional participation is carried out throughout the development, from responding information, planning development, implementing development to accepting the results of development and evaluating the development. On the other hand, in partial participation, community participation only takes place in one or several phases. Community participation in managing village development supports an input that grows and develops in community life because there are social interactions in it. Furthermore, Houlst (1974: 14-15) argues that participation is social relations, i.e. a state of sociology in which a person feels togetherness as a result of social interaction. People's awareness will arise if it's motivated by the need to be in a group on the basis of pleasure, something useful, friendship, mutual love or mutual sympathy...in that group he/she will find his/her personal identity because being with other people can make him/her able to sense the needs of the group and its members on the basis of shared communication and activities.

Community participation is an activity of two-parties: the awakened party (the community) and the awakening party (the government). Hence, it is not one-sided. In regard to village development, the awakening party is the village government. In an effort to promote community participation, communication has an important role in

maintaining a reciprocal relationship: on the one hand, the government makes policies for the community, while on the other hand the community conveys their ideas, desires and needs to the government.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed qualitative method with case study approach because its aim was to generate holistic, systemic description and reveal the meaning of empirical facts about participatory development communication in empowering the Indonesian former migrant workers (PMI).

Case study was employed due to its relevance in examining as much data as possible about the subject under study. In this approach, a researcher studies as much data as possible about an individual, group or event and he/she aims to provide a comprehensive view of the subject under study (Mulyana, 2001: 201). This is also an intensive study about a member of the target group of the subject under study.

This study was conducted from July to November 2019 in Desa Celak, Kecamatan Gununghalu, Kabupaten Bandung Barat. This village was purposively selected as a case area. The data were collected through depth interviews with five key informants of community leaders and sources of relevant agencies as well as direct observations. The purposively-selected key informants of this study were those who were competent about the focus of this study. In addition, a review and documentation were carried out by relying on the aforementioned theoretical concepts.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Productive Migrant Village Program as the Seed of Forum Purna PMI**

Productive Migrant Village (Desmigratif) is a flagship program of the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (Kemnakertrans) in collaboration with relevant government institutions. Desmigratif aims to prevent the sending of illegal migrant workers and to empower rural communities in the pockets of poverty, which are the sending

areas of migrant workers. This is a breakthrough program to empower, to better protect and serve home coming migrant workers and their families, particularly in their hometown.

Desa Celak of Kecamatan Gununghalu of West Bandung Regency is an implementation area of Desmigratif program of Kemnakertrans. Under the scheme, the village hires two mentors for guiding and monitoring about 60 former PMIs with their respective businesses. To implement the program, Kemnakertrans works with seven ministries: Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises, Ministry of Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Communication and Information, and Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. These ministries are involved in the program in order to realize an effective and efficient cooperation based on the principle of mutual assistance and support for its implementation. The scope of this cooperation includes the exchange of data and information, the construction of migration service centers, the development of productive rural businesses and productive migrant villages based on natural resources and appropriate technology.

PMI protection must be carried out from the beginning to the end, where they finally return to their hometown. Migrant workers must receive a safe, fast, easy, cheap service. Desmigratif is a care from the government and relevant stakeholders for improving and protecting people's life before and after being a PMI.

There are four main contents of Desmigratif program. The four support each other so that it can benefit the community and run continuously. The four are as follows: (1) establishing migration service center to accommodate villagers who want to work abroad. They will be served by the government in the village hall. They will get sufficient information, including international labor market, work guidance, and document preparation. (2) Establishing productive businesses. This activity is meant to help PMI couples to build their skills and willingness to establish productive businesses. This includes training, mentoring, assistance and marketing. (3) Community parenting for PMI children.

Here the children are jointly cared by the community in a learning center. In this context, parents and couples living in the hometown are trained on how to raise and care for their children so that they can go to school to develop their creativity according to the stages of development. (4) Strengthening productive business for a long term by establishing business cooperative. This can be a shared initiative of community that will be supported by the government.

Productive Migrant Villages (Desmigratif) is the initiative of the Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Purna PMI), chaired by Hj. Noneng Syamsiah, in Desa Celak. The forum accommodates any productive activity for former migrant workers so that they have no desire to work abroad again. The participation of former PMI under the forum makes Desa Celak develop. In village development, community participation is a condition of a successful village development, as stated by Ndraha (1981: 17) that "village development is a development in which the village community is expected to actively participate in and the village government manages it." The statement is in line with the nature of village autonomy as stated in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, specifically article 1 paragraph (8) which states that village development is an effort to improve the quality of life for the greatest welfare of the village community. Furthermore article 78 paragraph (1) states that village development aims to improve the welfare of rural communities and the quality of human life and to reduce poverty by meeting basic needs, developing village facilities and infrastructure, developing local economic potential, and sustainable use of natural and environmental resources. Finally, in paragraph (3) village development promotes togetherness, kinship, and mutual cooperation to realize the mainstreaming of peace and social justice.

The Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Forum Purna PMI) in Celak Village can make the former migrant workers independent, in the sense that they can create individual or group businesses, and thus they can be productive without having to go abroad anymore. Mr. Dede of the West Bandung Regency Manpower Office also stated that the existence of the Forum Purna

PMI was indeed true. This program is a post-placement program where the target of this program is the former migrant workers who have just returned from abroad. They are then trained on entrepreneurship so that they will not have to return to work abroad.

*“Regarding post-placement, we have an NGO called the Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Forum Purna TKI) with about 2500 members. It is chaired by Mrs. Hajj Noneng Syamsiah of Mount Halu. So, in essence, the aim of this forum is to train the returnees of former Indonesian migrant workers to become entrepreneurs so that they don't have to go abroad anymore.”* (Dede, 2019).

### **The Participation of Former Migrant Workers in the Development of Desa Celak**

The focus of this study is participatory development communication in the empowerment of Indonesian former migrant workers in Desa Celak, Kecamatan Gununghalu, West Bandung Regency. It is known as a sending area of migrant workers. As stated in the introduction, every year many people in this sub-district, particularly from Desa Celak, go to the Middle East (Arab countries) to work.

Desa Celak covers 9.14 km<sup>2</sup> area. Based on 2017 monograph data, there are 2,294 householders in the village. The population is 9,158, comprising 4,860 men and 4,298 women, and is grouped into 19 neighborhood associations (RW) and 55 neighborhood units (RT). In general, community participation in Desa Celak in village development is better than in other villages in Gununghalu. The data also shows that there are 95 cadres of PKK (Family Welfare Program), 60 cadres of Posyandu (Mother and Infant Center), 60 officials of Karang Taruna (village youth groups) They are involved in various community empowerment activities according to their respective main tasks and functions in community programs or in their organizations.

In Kecamatan Gununghalu, there is a Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Forum Purna PMI). The forum's main activity is addressing problems faced by the candidate and former migrant workers ,

particularly by empowering their economy. According to Hj. Noneng Syamsiah—the chairwoman of Forum PMI, the forum has about 4,000 members, with 1,500 active members. The forum has been established here since 2012 and keeps growing. The forum consists of several groups, and even some of them are individuals, and each of them has several business units of processed food like cassava chips, banana chips, and wajit, a sweet traditional Sundanese food. In addition, there are other businesses like farming, trading, beauty salon, catering and many more. In 2013 and 2015, the forum received appreciation and recognition from the Governor of West Java for their achievements.

The role of community, particularly former PMIs, in village development is distinguished by genders. Men and women are involved in different activities. Men are often involved in activities which require human power like farming, plantation and trading, whereas women in home business like producing processed food, salon, and catering. This is in line with Dhak (2014) stating that gender equality and women empowerment are the most important factors to achieve goals and to realize policies, particularly in regard to village development.

Celak people's economic activities are still in the forms of individual business and small groups, not a business community that brings all groups together to support and strengthen each other. They initiate these even though the local government has not created a community economic empowerment program yet. Some of former PMIs actually have ever been successful for about two to five years. They can save money and return to the hometown to buy land and houses, paddy and crop fields or to run a business such as opening a grocery store or growing and selling livestock such as chickens, goats and cows. Even so, there are former PMIs who are being consumptive in spending their savings by buying land, houses, vehicles and wasteful things, and they do not do any productive economic activity. Another highlight of this study is that most of former PMIs rarely invest their money for higher education for their children and family members in order to change their orientation in getting a job. This is in line with the general condition of Celak people. They acquire low education and lack

of sustainable-programmed economic empowerment.

As a result, most people do not have the opportunity, ability and courage to express their opinions, to propose their ideas about village development and empowerment program. According to Subianto (2006), remittance spending is even greater outside the hometown of migrant workers. Hence, government intervention is needed, especially in growing entrepreneurship, to make use of it for productive activities and investments, not merely consumptions. The government should pay attention to the village's potentials, including natural resources, human resources, and man-made resources, to create a strategy for productive spending of remittance so that it will encourage long-term and sustainable local economic growth.

### **The Importance of Opinion Leader in the Empowerment of Former Migrant Workers in Desa Celak**

Participatory development communication, according to Bessette, is a planned activity, where it is based on participatory processes as well as the use of communication media and face-to-face communication, which aims to facilitate dialogue among different stakeholders, from the formulation of a common development problem or goal to develop and implement or describe a set of activities that contribute to finding a win-win solution (Bessette 2012).

Here the participatory processes in question are community participation, namely the participation of all members of the Forum Purna PMI who are actively involved in compiling, designing, and deciding on ways and efforts to improve the economy of these former migrant workers so they do not have to go abroad to be a migrant worker anymore. One of the research informants, a former migrant worker who worked in the Middle East for 6 years, stated that she felt grateful as being greatly assisted by this forum. She got a lot of knowledge from the various activities they held. Not only getting knowledge, but she was also facilitated to start a snack business, namely making chips from cassavas grown from her own garden.

“Alhamdulillah ibu mah, semenjak aya Forum, ibu tiasa muka usaha. Biasana mah sampeu téh ngan digoréng keur emameun di bumi. Ayeuna mah ibu téh tos

tiasa ngolah sampeu jadi kiripik berbagai rasa. Teras ibu bisa ngajualna.”(Thank God, thanks to this Forum, I can run a business. Usually, the cassavas are only fried for food at home. Now I can process them into chips with various flavors and I can sell it as well.)

Various trainings, facilitated by the Forum Purna PMI in collaboration with relevant parties, such as government agencies and universities, have become social capital for the former migrant workers to empower themselves and to raise the potential of the region where they live in. The research shows that one of the factors that contributes and accelerates participatory development communication is the presence of community leaders as opinion leaders. They are villagers, former PMIs with creativity, innovation and concern for solving local problems. They then coordinated other former PMIs to carry out more useful activities for the sake of their welfare.

In line with the first objective, the establishment of Forum Purna PMI also aims to develop independent entrepreneurial form to promote regional featured products based in the potentials of their respective regions. To optimize the result, a mentoring program is applied by Center for Service, Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BP3PMI). However, this program faces two problems: program continuity and product marketing. This is due to distance and market distribution.

In her capacity as the Chairwoman of Forum Purna PMI and its success so far, Hj. Noneng is often asked to be a speaker in many trainings and coaching for entrepreneurial pilot projects of Department of Manpower and Transmigration, both at municipality and provincial levels.

What was share by Hj. Noneng on various occasions actually was about various experiences in fostering public awareness to actively participate in the development of his village. Hj. Noneng in many occasions shares her experience of growing people's awareness to actively participate in village development.

In participatory development communication, opinion leader is an element that greatly influences the flow of communication. Various changes and advancements due to village development are highly determined by the community's ability

to anticipate and adapt to many things, including opinion leaders. For example, an opinion leader can motivate people to actively participate in a development. Therefore, the government should pay a special attention to him/her, not take him/her out. To gain community's trust in a development program, the government should activate the role of opinion leader as a central figure in village development.

Van de Ban's (1963) study (in Roger, 1985) in the Netherlands discovers the fact that whatever an opinion leader does, the community will do it as well. Opinion leader has a better homophile gradation than others. Homophile means a level where individuals equally interact each other on certain things, such as beliefs, values, education and social status. Heterophile, on the other hand, is an interaction in communication with no basis of trust. In a social system in which the homophile is high, communication will be very easy to do.

## CONCLUSION

Forum of Indonesian Former Migrant Workers (Forum Purna PMI), which was built as an implementation of Productive Migrant Village (Desmigratif) Program of the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, is a forum that seeks to empower the economy of former migrant workers in Desa Celak, Kecamatan Gunungjalu, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia. Community participation in Desa Celak, particularly among former migrant workers, is considered well-conducted. It can be seen from the establishment of Forum Purna PMI that seeks empower the economy of the community and to promote regional featured potentials. Local public figures as opinion leaders hold a significant role in encouraging the community to have a good awareness so that they can anticipate and adapt to any dynamic and change resulting from village development. This study has several limitations. Firstly, it is limited to only one geographic area, and thus similar research can be carried out in other areas or within a larger area coverage. Secondly, it also found that opinion leaders have a significant role in participatory development communication (PDC) by former migrant workers. Thus, the

influence of opinion leaders on the active participation of former migrant workers is still an important study in developing the concept of PDC.

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