

GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN HEADED HOUSEHOLD PROGRAM (PEKKA) IN ASSISTING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: Permasalahan pembangunan yang berperspektif gender menjadi bahasan utama artikel ini. Diawali dengan definisi konsep gender dan pembangunan, bagaimana konsep gender dan pembangunan mempengaruhi proses pembangunan yang berkelanjutan, serta studi kasus Program Perempuan Sebagai Kepala Keluarga (PEKKA) yang merupakan salah satu program pemerintah yang menitikberatkan pada keluarga yang dikepalai oleh perempuan. **Keywords:** Gender and Development, Development, PEKKA

A. INTRODUCTION

Gender and Development (GAD) has become the policy of development worldwide since the late 1980s. In the first UN decade of Development during 1970-1980, the notion to include women's needs and interests in development was named Women in Development (WID). The debates on the term of WID or GAD in development theories and research have resulted in some policy changes regarding development projects, both at the national and international level. International agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), other funding agencies and international non governmental organizations (INGOs) that concern women and development issues are more or less involved in the debates of WID/GAD.

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In assessing gender and development, I will focus on how the terms gender and development are being defined in the literature. Since the late 1970s to 1980s the discussion on development and its impact on human beings in different regions of the world have been assessed. Researchers focus on assessing the impact of development, especially in poor countries, Developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin American regions have showed some unique characteristics on how development projects affect both their people and environment. This is an obvious statement on how different societies respond to international development projects being proposed by the World Bank, for example on the mechanization of farming technologies in some Asian and African countries. In relation to the relations between male and female population, study shows that both genders are affected differently by development programs¹ which, by and large, were formulated and implemented by the central hub of government decision makers and foreign development consultants. Goetz² emphasized that the discussion on women in development started to mature in the 1970s. There were two primary factors behind these changes: 'a new phase of the international women's movement and the aggravation of two major international problems, population and food, at that time'.³

Thus, gender has become a major focus in development discourse since that time onward.

This article will elaborate on the discussion of how the gender perspective in development arouse in first place, the recent development on gender, and a case study on how development is being assessed. The case study is on examining the notion of gender and development (GAD) program as being implemented in Indonesia. Indonesia is a developing country which actively seeks to improve its condition: economically, socially and politically, through various development projects. I will examine the case of the Indonesian development program that involves non governmental organizations named Women Headed Household Program (*Perempuan sebagai Kepala Keluarga* or PEKKA in its Indonesian acronym) and how it contributes to the betterment of women in Indonesia.

B. THE REVIEW OF GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Laslett and Brenner⁴ wrote in their article about the term gender and social reproduction to explain the tendency in a stereotypical division of labour. Gender refers to socially constructed and historically variable relationships, cultural meanings, and identities through which biological sex differences become socially significant. Gender has a direct correlation with the notion of social reproduction, since the latter was resulted from the former concept. Gender as a social construction is said to be preserved by society to maintain the continuity of social reproduction. Some scholars⁵ use the term social reproduction to refer to:

“The activities and attitudes, behaviours and emotions, responsibilities and relationships directly involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis, and inter-generationally”.

Other definitions of gender come from Rosina Wiltshire⁶ which states:

“The differential roles of men and women, their responsibilities, attitudes, perspectives, knowledge bases, and access to resources and decision making, as well as their differential needs and the implications of all of these”.

Wiltshire further argues that gender requires a holistic and comparative approach on women, and also men, and should not focus on the perspective of women or men alone in delivering a sustainable program. Development as an ongoing process is defined as ‘bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and to bestow benefits on all’.⁷ As for the term sustainable development, it is defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.⁸

Based on the definition on development and the achievement of sustainable development, I argue that the main goal of development is on the well being of each and every individual; therefore it is reasonable to count the views, needs and experiences of women, as well as men, in the development process. Gender perspectives thus need to be an ongoing process both in the substance and practices of development. Why are we looking at gender in the development process then? Is it so important to

acknowledge women's experience in development? I will give the arguments from the proponent of gender and development, by using three development approaches as proposed by Nussbaum.⁹ The first approach is the Capabilities approach¹⁰, Nussbaum argues that the Capabilities approach underpins the importance of human capacity which refers to the idea of 'what people are actually able to do and to be in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being'.

Nussbaum¹¹ argues that 'women have all too often been treated as the supporters of the ends of others-rather than as ends in their own right'. An end here meant as the full intellectual and physical potential of a human being, what he or she is capable of being. The second approach is the Need for Cross-Cultural Norms. Female scholars from non western countries that were actively involved in addressing the issue of inequality and violence toward women were often accused of being 'westernized' and ceased to acknowledge their own cultural values. Nussbaum thus asked on what ground do people assume some practices or values as being culturally bounded and other practices and values as belongs to foreign cultures.

Domestic violence, illiteracy and preferences to allocate family's resources in male education rather than female education in one family are all forms of injustices, which need to be addressed regardless of traditional norms inherent in those practices. Cultural values and practices are indeed a difficult area to discuss. Nevertheless, in the effort to formulate development programs that will benefit both male and female, some of the constraints embedded in traditional practices and values should be addressed and omitted. The third approach in gender and development discussion is what Nussbaum¹² called as 'the traditional economic approaches to development' which is the need for human norms approach.

The third approach is necessary if we want to implement cross cultural norms in the international development policy arena. Nussbaum noted that Gross National Product (GNP) level used to be the sole indicator to measure the progress of development projects in one country, despite it many flaws. This traditional economic approach of development has failed to recognize the problems of distribution and the

management of development resources in the realm of development activities. GNP as a development indicator is also able to place country with a high GNP level as the example of achievement among other development countries, even if there are many problems of inequality persists among its citizens. Tickner¹³ examines the inequality between the North and South countries power relations in development. Tickner¹⁴ argues that:

“Coming out of a Marxist perspective, dependency and world systems theories pointed to a structural relationship of inequality between North and South, whereby the South was locked into a historically dependent and peripheral relationship with the North through a hierarchical global capitalist economy”

Export based economy as being pursued by many developing countries has to be paid dearly by the most vulnerable groups in the society, usually poor women and men in rural and urban areas. One example is in Indonesia during the Green Revolution strategy implemented by the New Order era under Soeharto in the mid-1970s. The Green Revolution had priorities in the mechanization and usage of chemical fertilizer to increase the rice crops production. Rice is the staple food in most Asian countries and Indonesia was eager to become one of the rice exporters in the region. This new agricultural technology impacted mostly on female peasants, because they lose their specific roles in rice field works, as a paddy's cutter and planter, which now being taken over by sophisticated farm machines. Other example on how the development policies affect differently between male and female is the policy in accessing the micro credit from the government. Female peasants or female petty traders are required to show their patron's approval or guarantee in order to apply for a credit entitlement, by using their father or husband assets in the process.¹⁵

Credits thus becomes more difficult to access if those female peasants and petty traders failed to obtain their patron's approval or if they have no patron at all, as in the case of widows or unmarried females. Some NGOs that concern development issues have tried to help these poor women in rural and urban areas to gain microfinance credit, as in the case of The Program for Women Headed Households (PEKKA) in Indonesia, which specialized in assisting widows in rural areas to be more empowered and gain more contribution from development results.

C. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY OF PEKKA

The Program for Women Headed Households (PEKKA) in Indonesia was begun in 1999. PEKKA supports about six thousand five hundred poor widows in over three hundred villages, thirty eight sub districts or *kecamatan* and across eight provinces.¹⁶ PEKKA has focused on village level capacity building, microfinance activities, and social and economic empowerment. Village level capacity building meant that the program concern mostly on building the abilities of its clients (widows) to 'maintain a stable economic foundation that can provide them and their children with a reliable income'.¹⁷

A microfinance activity is similar to the model being popularized by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Rankin¹⁸ explains microfinance as 'models through which the poor receive credit on the basis of their membership in self-regulating solidarity groups'. As to pursue its social and economic empowerment goal, PEKKA design some of its programs as more patient than most development project-by personal approaches and regular small groups meeting to discuss their daily problems. The widows themselves should set the pace and not the pre-determined project plans. This design mainly seek to improve those widows self confidence and belief in their own capacity to improve their family's socio-economic condition.

After the tsunami disaster in 2004, PEKKA provides special programs for widows of the tsunami victims in Aceh. The project itself is to be conducted by NGOs, which had the experience and resources to work with widows, all of these NGOs were merge under the PEKKA project. A PEKKA project in each village will have one or two field project supervisor, who is responsible for recruiting, training and supervising the PEKKA member projects under PEKKA special fund.¹⁹ Widows have become the main target of this program simply because in the patriarchal society such as in Indonesia, being a widow with no fixed salary or no land to grow crops can degrade the family life into poverty. In many cases, widow mothers will asked their children to drop out from school and start to work to earn money for their family. Poverty can also affect the welfare of future generations, because their newborn

will have to endure lives in limited resources. Zulminarni stated that as the Indonesian law clearly states that a man is the only head of the household, which make things more complicated in matter of development assistance.

PEKKA receives its fund mainly from the World Bank, but in Aceh after tsunami, local NGOs work under PEKKA is funded by the Japan Social Development Fund and is implemented and linked to the World Bank's *Kecamatan* Community Development Program (KDP). This joint funding enables the program to gain more aid to be distributed to many villages in Aceh and helps more widows. Some empowerment programs being implemented throughout the program are photography training, cooking, and credit for small scale business. In 2004, the field development coordinator, Zulminarni,²⁰ had initiated to published the book that compiles the stories of the widows, their efforts and successes as being part of the program. This is a reminder that some of the programs delivered by these local development NGOs do make changes and improve the socio economic condition of the most vulnerable group in the society, namely women.

D. CLOSING

In this article, I have elaborated the assessment of gender and development. The debate on how to deliver development's projects and benefit equally to both male and female as the main target of development has been answered by the notion of GAD. Three approaches on how women perspectives were important to be noted in the development policies, especially to attain a humane and sustainable development programs. I have also elaborated the debates on the issue of women in development (WID) and the latter development of gender and development (GAD). A case study of the Program for Women Headed Households or PEKKA in Indonesia has shows how the marginalization on women works and roles in the society has contributed to their degraded quality of life, as in the case of widows in rural areas.

ENDNOTES

¹ Anne M. Goetz, *Getting Institutions Right for Women in Development* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997). H. Pietila & J. Vickers, *Making Women Matter: The Role of The United Nations* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1996). Shirin M. Rai, *Gender and the Political Economy of Development* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

² Anne M. Goetz, 1997.

³ Anne M. Goetz, 1997: 75.

⁴ B. Laslett & J. Brenner, "Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives". *Annu.Rev.Sociol.* 1998. 15: 381-404. Available at: www.annualreviews.org/aronline.

⁵ In Laslett & Brenner, 1989: 382-383.

⁶ In Steady & Toure, *Women and the United Nations* (Vermont: Schenkman Books Inc., 1995), p. 127.

⁷ M. Snyder & M. Tadesse, *African Women and Development: a History* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1995), p. 6.

⁸ Rai, 2002: 68.

⁹ In M. Molyneux & S. Razavi (eds). *Gender Justice, Development, and Rights* (Oxford: University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Molyneux, 2002: 49.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 55.

¹³ Ann. J. Tickner, *Gendering World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68.

¹⁵ Zulminarni, Nani. *Sebuah Dunia Tanpa Suami*. PEKKA National Secretariat (Jakarta: Citra Grafika, 2004).

¹⁶ Cited at <http://www.worldbank.org/pekka>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1.

¹⁸ Katherine N. Rankin, "Social Capital, Microfinance and the Politics of Development". *Feminist Economics*. Vol. 8, no.1 (2002:1-24).

¹⁹ Zulminarni, 2004.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

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