



Tackling Community Challenges in the IMT-GT Region: A Multidisciplinary Strategy for Empowering Local Voices Songkhla, Thailand

Fathiah¹, Eliana², Ferdi³, Suhela⁴, Mursyidin⁵

^{1,5}Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

^{2,3}Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Sabang, Indonesia

⁴Institut Agama Islam Negeri Langsa, Indonesia

Email Korespondensi: fathiah@ar-raniry.ac.id

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Abstract

Empowering communities is key to strengthening local participation and voice, especially in areas facing socio-economic challenges. The purpose of this community dedication activity is to explore a multidisciplinary strategy in empowering communities in Songkhla, Thailand, which is part of the IMT-GT region. Through a qualitative approach, the study analyzes the challenges faced by communities at Songkhlas and identifies various effective empowerment strategies. The results show that its main challenges include the lack of natural resource protection, limited community capacity, and weak coordination among stakeholders. The recommended empowerment strategies include strengthening community capacities through training and support, enhanced partnership and coordination between stakeholder, and the protection of natural resources through environmentally-conscious policies. The findings in this activity highlight the importance of a multidimensional approach in empowering communities in border regions, by involving various stakeholders to inclusive and equitable development

Keywords: *community, strategy, challenge, inclusive*

Pemberdayaan komunitas merupakan kunci untuk memperkuat partisipasi dan suara lokal, terutama di daerah-daerah yang menghadapi tantangan sosial ekonomi. Tujuan kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat (PKM) ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi strategi multidisiplin dalam memberdayakan komunitas di Songkhla, Thailand, yang merupakan bagian dari daerah IMT-GT. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis tantangan yang dihadapi oleh komunitas di Songkhla dan mengidentifikasi berbagai strategi pemberdayaan yang efektif. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utamanya meliputi kurangnya perlindungan sumber daya alam, kapasitas masyarakat yang terbatas, dan koordinasi yang lemah antara pemangku kepentingan. Strategi pemberdayaan yang direkomendasikan mencakup penguatan kapasitas masyarakat melalui pelatihan dan pendampingan, peningkatan kemitraan dan koordinasi antar pemangku kepentingan, serta perlindungan sumber daya alam melalui kebijakan yang berwawasan lingkungan. Temuan dalam kegiatan ini menyoroti pentingnya pendekatan multidimensi dalam memberdayakan komunitas di wilayah perbatasan, dengan melibatkan berbagai pemangku kepentingan untuk mencapai pembangunan yang inklusif dan berkeadilan.

Kata Kunci : Komunitas, Strategi, Tantangan, Inklusif

A. Preliminary

The IMT-GT area is a regional economic cooperation initiative that covers southern Thailand, northern Malaysia Peninsula, and southwestern Indonesia. The area has great potential for economic development and improving the well-being of local communities, but also faces complex challenges. The communities in the Indonesian-Malaysia-Thailand growth region face unique challenges in sustainable development. The region has diverse cultural diversity, natural resources, and levels of development, which require a specific approach to empowering local voices and creating a positive impact. Songkhla, Thailand, is one of the areas in the IMT-GT that has great potential but also significant challenges in community engagement. One of the main challenges is empowering the voice and participation of local communities, especially in remote areas like Songkhla, Thailand.

Public participation is an important component of sustainable development. (Novian & Machdum, 2021). The main challenge in the involvement of local communities in the IMT-GT area is the lack of capacity, coordination, and partnership (Rusiani, 2018). To address this, a multidisciplinary strategy is needed that combines capacity-building, the protection of natural resources, and enhanced stakeholder partnership (Rusiani, 2018). In addition, technological innovation is also key in improving the capacity of local communities, especially farmers in backward areas. (Swastika & Indraningsih, 2020).

Researchers jointly with the KABA Academic Society Foundation collaborated with several universities to dedicate themselves to the international community to develop multidisciplinary strategies to empower local communities in Songkhla, Thailand in the context of IMT-GT cooperation. Through this initiative, academics can leverage their combined expertise to make impactful contributions to both their institutions and the community as a whole, especially in the region of the IMT.

Based on a literature review, it can be concluded that to empower local voices in Songkhla, Thailand, a comprehensive strategy is needed, it includes enhancing the capacity of communities, protecting natural resources, partnerships with local interests, and technological innovation tailored to local contexts.

B. Methode

The method used in this activity is a qualitative approach to the case study method. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in Songkhla, Thailand, such as local governments, civil society organizations, and local community leaders, namely the Al-Hidayah Waqaf Foundation for Educational and Social Development. Secondary data is collected from various sources such as reports, scientific articles, and related policy documents. Data analysis is performed in a descriptive-interpretative manner by identifying the main themes that emerge from the data and associating them with the conceptual framework built on the basis of a literary review.

C. Results and Discourse

This commitment to the community identifies three key strategies for empowering the local voice of the Songkhla community in the context of IMT-GT cooperation: enhancing the capacity of the community through training and support programmes, protecting natural resources and strengthening the law for ecosystem development, and enhancing multi-party partnership in the planning and implementation of development programmes. It includes entrepreneurship training, business management, and local excellence product development. In addition, intensive support from governments and civil society organizations is also needed to ensure the sustainability of the empowerment programme.

Conservation of natural resources and enforcement of law are also key strategies for empowering the local Songkhla community. This can be done through the endorsement of ecological management umbrella laws, the enforcement of visitor quotas, and zoning that protects sensitive areas. This will ensure that ecosystem development does not damage the environment and remains beneficial to local communities.

The third strategy is to enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships between government, private, and civil society organizations. These partnerships are essential for coordinating development programmes, providing the necessary resources, and ensuring the sustainability of community empowerment initiatives. Through close collaboration, various

stakeholders can more effectively adapt the program to the local context and the needs of the Songkhla community.

D. Conclusion

Empowering the local voice of the Songkhla community, Thailand, in the context of IMT-GT cooperation requires a comprehensive multidisciplinary strategy. The main strategies include enhancing community capacity, protecting natural resources, and enhancing multilateral partnerships. This approach is expected to increase the active participation of local communities, create a sustainable development impact, and empower Songkhlas to take advantage of opportunities in the IMt-GT area. To implement this strategy effectively, it requires strong commitment and coordination from various stakeholders, including central and regional governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations.

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