

CENTERING VULNERABLE INTERESTS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S PROTECTION MODEL FROM FIELD LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

The position of women in Indonesian society is progressing. The progress trend is supported by several legal instruments and policies that guarantee women's rights. Although adequate legal instruments began, many implementations in the field are distorted. Implementation of the protection schemes for women does not address to the changing of the poor women's living condition, instead it remains vulnerable. This action research was addressed to analyze and discuss the practices of state social protection for the poor communities, as well as the testimony of beneficiaries. Based on the field learning from both parties, activists from universities and non-governmental organizations, attempt was made to knit some state schemes and policies into a model of protection; it also aimed to facilitate access and accelerate changes.

Key words: *social protection, pro poor policies, poor women.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses about "Vulnerable Centering Interests" and starts from a brief description of how Indonesian women are positioned within society. The idea of opening it actually follows the powerful data from the UNDP, which has been quoted by dozens of articles on the issue of poverty, which clearly illustrates the fact that poverty has a woman face (UNDP, 1995). The picture was reinforced by the data of MDG's (2010) reporting that a third of the world's population living below the poverty line, about 70% are women. World poverty data report is the same as the face of poverty in Indonesia. Pakkanna (2011) mentioned that the data of the National Bureau of Statistics, as of 2009, the number of poor 32.53 million (14.15% of Indonesia's population), 70% of whom are women¹.

Despite there has been an increased state's commitment as to serious efforts of reducing poverty, the number of poor people has not dropped significantly. During last 10 years since SBY² was in power, the budget allocation for poverty reduction was increased from 23 trillion rupiah in 2005 to 94 trillion rupiah in the year 2010. Nevertheless, the calculated percentage of poor people was 16 percent in year 2005, while in year 2010 as many as 13.3%. Pakkanna (2011) considered this phenomenon as disequilibrium between flushing the budget and poverty. So this overview would show about the recognition of the status of women as citizens, an access, and a matter of social protection.

As it is the case in many other parts of the third world, the poverty that afflicts Indonesian women likes a vicious circle. Women's poverty is intertwined with illiteracy, high drop-out rate of girls, nutritional status, maternal mortality rate³, hungry pregnant women who gave birth to malnourished babies, the low

¹ Gender Development Index in 2010 shows that Indonesia was at the 108 out of 166 countries.

² SBY is an abbreviation of the previous President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono

³ Maternal mortality rate in Indonesia in 2013 increased to 248 per 100.000

formal labor force participation⁴, exposed to HIV/AIDS, the marginalized informal sector to seek income in the vulnerable slum markets eviction, are prone to be the object of trafficking, and many more images of tragedy poverty of women, then reduction in the Human Development Index (HDI)⁵. In short, women's poverty is not mere coincidence, but rather systemic and structural phenomena.

It is a systemic, because the vulnerability was a result of the measures taken for the sake of power, the interests of the elite, and the military - which was owned by the dominant group. Women also endured adversity due to structural policies both at the local, national, and global. Policy generally underestimates the effect of the state policies on women. Policies were also much less considering the varying conditions of poor women in terms of economic, social-cultural, and political. Thus, institutional "state" violence either in local, national, and global level contributing to the sustainability on women poverty.

Many studies showed that women support the subsistence economy in lower-class families was significant. For example, study of Astiti (in Pakkanna, 2011) revealed that the survival of the social and economic migrant families in poor villages of East Bali dependent on the work carried out by the female member of the families, who are mostly migrant workers. Likewise, the research Susilowati, Zain, and Thoyib (also in Pakkanna, 2011), indicated that the empowerment of disadvantaged housewives in rural sub-district Kalipare, Malang regency, increases family income. So, in fact, the capacity building program for farmer' housewives in rural areas, proves to increase family income.

Objectives of the research were to see the substances of the state policies on social protection for vulnerable communities; to see the linkages between the state policy implementation and the CSOs activism on the fields; then, to design an alternative collaboration among those parties in order to accelerate poverty eradication efforts in village and district levels.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a participatory action research (PAR) as suggested by Kindon *et al.* (2007). The benefits of the action-oriented study are that both sides, researchers and participants of the study, are allowed to search, examine, and develop certain issues – then find new thoughts. Both sides are important, and there will not be a new perspective without their collaborations. It is also a strong role to empower “ordinary people” to improve and to make their own lives better. This kind of studies is important for people who seek justice and change the state policies. As Kindon *et al.* (2007) mentioned, PAR is cyclical, it starts with identification of the issue or situation to be changed, then follows up with altering capabilities and assets to precipitate relevant action.

The study team was composed of the University of Bengkulu researchers and activists of the Indonesian Women's Coalition, Bengkulu Chapter. Participants of this study were ordinary women who live in three districts, Central Bengkulu District, Rejang Lebong District, and Bengkulu City. Some other participants were villages heads, village officials, district officials, and some knowledgeable stakeholders in those three districts. Study process can be described in a simple sketch, in which the process is actually becoming one of the alternative cycle of data collection and monitoring on social protection programs (local-district/provincial-national). The steps can be seen in Figure 1. This study also collected secondary data from some official sources and websites.

Along the fieldwork in 2013-2014, the team conducted nine focus group discussions (FGD). There were three FGDs in every districts; so overall there were nine meetings. In every FGD, the study team invited between 12 to 17 participants. All subjects of the FGD were recorded by a team member assigned as rapporteur for the discussion. The field notes were subjected to analysis in conjunction with the secondary data to develop a model or framework of the program intervention in social protection; it is to insert women's human rights principles into the social protection policies. As well, it makes sure that most ordinary women gain more space to access social protections.

⁴ Labor Force Participation Rate of the males is much higher, namely 86.5% rather than women's 50.2%.

⁵ Human Development Index (HDI), Indonesia also fell from 108 in 2010, to the rank of 124 in 2011. Illustration that shows very clearly that the alleviation of women's poverty is far from serious (Institute of KAPAL Perempuan in Suara Merdeka, 2013).

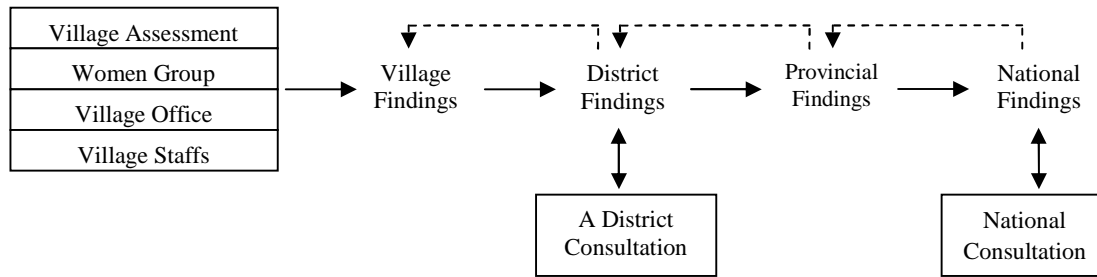


Figure 1: Study of Social Protection

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social protection policy to the poor

State policies for the poor are needed, including policies for the poor women; it is now called as a social protection. Vulnerability of poor women from various situations, such as social violation, cultural, economic, sexual, and political, is important to be the guidance system of protection and social security services. To run the intervention, a broad-mindedness is needed to examine carefully the limits of protection and social security. In many intervention programs, fine solutions in overcoming the problems of poverty were initiated from precise recognition of women's poverty, by which a comprehensive system of protection and social security can be developed (Rustanto, 2011).

Although the state is the institution most responsible for the poor recovery of various systemic effects of policies that do not benefit them, but monitoring and evaluation can be done by non-governmental organizations, or civil society organizations. Social protection is a response by the community of people / empowered groups to speed up recovery and keep the poor from the risk of infringement, avoid the various possibilities of life that is not feasible due to shocks or changes in social vulnerability. Social protection is also intended to develop a wide range of opportunities and improve the ability of citizens to overcome the problems when subjected to these risks.

Actually, there was a global commitment to eradicate poverty echoed, for example, the MDGs, and also published the efforts of the White House, even the WTO, World Bank, and the IMF (Cahyono, 2005); but not much change after such commitments were signed. If it can be seen the success of India and China in improving the lives of people. After a global agreement voiced, they progress in overcoming poverty was not dictated by the intervention of global institutions, rather the results of their own national efforts in earnest on healthcare, education, economic growth of the people / small businesses, and to decrease the corruption index.

Currently, a newly promising framework of SDGs is emerging, which underlines access to justice in making poverty eradication work. Most activists who worked for the poverty elimination believed that it was impossible to end poverty without putting justice in the center of approach. Without access to justice, the barriers to cope with poverty become all the more difficult to overcome (Open Society Foundation, 2015)⁶.

Social protection in the Indonesian context is to repair or restore people from shocks, to prevent with preparedness to reduce the risk, to promote opportunities, and to transform structural inequalities to vulnerable groups. These protections are also referred to as intervention organized under the authority of the government and private institutions, as well as invite the participation of civil society organizations.

⁶ See also J.A. Goldston (2015), Justice for Development: integrating justice and human rights into the Post-2015 Development framework, Remarks to the United Nation General Assembly, www.opensocietyfoundations.org.

⁷ Rustanto's data (2011) were collected from various sources show: violence victims in 2009 as many as 54,418 people, and most of the victims were women and children. There are increasing cases of women trafficking in Indonesia seriously, i.e from 320 cases in 2002 to 800 cases in 2003. Data from International Organization for Migration (IOM) Jakarta indicate that there are approximately 1,022 victims of human trafficking are handled between March 2005 and April 2006, 88, 6% of whom are women, including about 52% are exploited as domestic workers and 17.1 percent were forced into prostitution. Deputy Coordinating Minister for the Coordination of Women's Empowerment and Child Welfare reported during 2005 as many as 700 Indonesian girls used as prostitutes.

In the context of social protection, many women who live in vulnerability are the subject of protection and social security from the government or society. This was the consequence the bias in social structure that brought about women marginalization, full life risk position, less worthy living, inequality and injustice experienced in obtaining opportunity for employment, education, and political participation. Women were also vulnerable to violence and exploitation, including trafficking. In addition, there is a risk of reproduction, especially pregnant women and childbirth, which have an impact on child survival threat⁷.

Answering those circumstances, the Government of Indonesia has recently initiated various programs of social protection, especially for vulnerable groups integrated from poverty reduction programs based on social assistance, poverty reduction programs based on community development and poverty reduction programs based on empowerment of small businesses, which are run by various elements of both central and local governments.

Since early 2013, the government issued a social protection program for the poor, formal and informal workers, which was managed by the Social Security Agency (BPJS) to the field of health and labor protection program, used to be called Social Security. Today the program turned into BPJS for field labor. In addition, the Indonesian government has pursued policies for social protection systems, such as direct cash transfer program (BLT), Rice for the Poor (Raskin), Family Hope Program, Loans For People (KUR) etc.

Involvement of the CSOs in social protection

Policies on social protection were designed by Indonesian government at the national level and some other specific policies were also designed in local levels. The involvement of non-government community organizations were not prohibited. For these reasons, one of the largest women's mass organization in Indonesia, the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy, had started to intervene in social protection policies in 2012. The following findings were obtained from Indonesian Women's Coalition involvement on the issue, especially in the area of intervention models. The work had been in collaboration with Higher Education Institution (HEI).

a. Advocacy for social protection program

Initiation of Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI) is supported by the Australian Aids (AusAID) MAMPU program. Based on the initial assessment, it appears that social protection program implemented by the state is highly centralized. So the first step in advocacy was to create a map of the implementation of policies for poor people, how the village officials and the poor women responded to the protection program, how their views to facilitate the access mechanisms, as well as their participation in the implementation of social protection. Notes of fieldwork describes that:

"Women are the most disadvantaged in gaining access to various public services, including social protection services" said Dian Kartikasari as the General Secretary of Indonesian Women's Coalition, Salihara, Jakarta, Suara Pembaharuan, Thursday (03/07/2013).

KPI and HEI research results show that all social security programs were managed and launched by the Government. The study shows that women in most Indonesian areas only got approximately 10-20 percent of all programs. Consequently, there remained many poor women who had lost access to justice for education, health, politics, and so on. The study also tells that the root of the problem was in a fundamental concept of the position of women. In village level, a lot of officials put women as 'housewives', and they are recognized as independent citizens who have access on state services. This thought seems practically simple, but it is a problematic in substance, and this is a core barrier of access to justice for poor women in gaining an intervention.

Some interesting cases of poverty are found in rural areas, according to Dian Kartikasari, one of the most tragic factors is a child marriage. Child marriage seems to be one serious phenomenon that is able to explain about the roots of women's poverty. Many cases in some villages, the girls are forced to get married under the age of 15 years. As a consequence, they left education and lost the future. In many incidents, it also found that the young women have a relatively short period of marriage, many tragedies of divorces or de facto abandoned wives who have to support their small children. This cycle is known as the reproduction of female poverty.

From the description of the field, it is clear that the context of women's poverty is not only poor material. Women's poverty is not only the impact of structural policies through state regulations, but this is the poverty that occurs due to the cultural structure that puts women in unequal opportunities to men. This is an important finding of the study, that women's poverty is much more than just a political structural discourse.

b. Women's poverty in Bengkulu context

The collapse of Suharto New Order Era brought an open political context so called decentralization or autonomy. The reformation era began in early 2000s; it brought dramatically changed in policies, and an opportunity for change in the pattern of administration for managing public services to the lower levels as well. Bengkulu Chapter of Indonesian Women's Coalition saw the changing as a momentum to accelerate an empowerment for the poor women. By decentralization, local governments have had the space to improve the community welfare; and take a social protection program is an important step to empower the poor citizens. In addition, the program is also an opportunity to perform a responsible governance, either in the provincial or local levels.

Unfortunately, on the implementation at the village level, it was clearly having so much distortion, both structurally and culturally. Implementing the service is highly centralized; it means that it reverses to the spirit of decentralization. Data of the poor is managed by the National Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the village governments did not know anything about the data; they had lack of knowledge about data inaccuracy and some other things⁸.

The study noticed that there were some distortions of the social protection programs in the field. Some note details of the misconduct from the field were:

- 1) Coordination and communication between the competent parties were lacking, which more appear was execution command. Field officials often complained about their unfamiliarity in the basic concept of the social protection program. They also lacked in understanding the technical and operational guidelines to run the programs. Consequently, the protection programs was implemented as a routine run program, and not as the humanitarian rescue efforts.
- 2) Many poor women did not know clearly about the state run social protection program as an assistance to better off their lives. According to their experiences, poverty condition had never diminished even though there was a wide range of assistance.
- 3) The research informants were not familiar with the term social protection. They considered that social protection program was just alike to other programs to help the poor, such as the program for which the scholarship is given through educational institutions for poor students (BSM), cash transfer (BLSM), rice aid for the poor (Raskin), health card (BPJS) to go to the health center / hospital, as well as some programs in the form of co-operative venture capital assistance (Gapoktan or home renovation).

Thus it seems clear that access to information for the poor, especially women, are very little. Also, their position is merely as the object of the program, and is not the subject of the protection program itself.

Field notes below were testimonies of women about social protection:

IbuYulia (from Balai Perempuan Sungai Suci, Pasar Palik Village, District of Central Bengkulu):

"...On social protection was heard of, but do not know what and how it means, what it means, how it ?..."

She was confused when questioned about her understanding of the social protection programs provided by the government. When the question was changed to whether she ever gets BLSM, Raskin from the government?

⁸ Bengkulu Chapter of the Indonesian Women's Coalition and HEI (2013) was doing an action research on the issue of social protection; the study was in two districts, and FGDs (Focus Group Discussion) were conducted at 3 villages from each district. In addition there was a consultation meeting with stakeholders and community members in each district.

Centering vulnerable interests

Ibu Ketut Sinar (from Talang Benuang Village, District of Seluma)

“... I was actually less understanding about social protection programs, the government assistance that I get just Raskin. Because Raskin is evenly divided, all residents in the village got it, the both poor and have been able to. I do not know why I did not get any other government aids, whereas my conditions are poor. ...”

Beside a limited understanding of the informant to the concept of social protection programs, it is nearly all of informants do not know about social protection management, including how the aid is managed, and why they were selected to get the aids ? The answer is very diverse.

c. Questioning data collection.

Most of the informants said that the data collection was done by the government, it was uneven and tend to be picky, and sometimes just guess-what; the officers did not immediately meet the villagers. As a result, the data collected are not correspond with the conditions of the poor at almost all villages. Most are not recorded, as a result of government assistance down, they do not get, when they enter the category that needs the aid.

Here is the testimony of the Village Head of the Sumber Agung, District of Seluma, Ibu Sri Mulyani:

“... Every collection from the Central Bureau of Statistics and other government agencies, they do not coordinate directly with the village. Data enumerators act only guesswork, just to see the physical condition of the local community houses and almost all of the average hit.”

The above description shows that the village officials were never participated in the data collection process. While their position as the village chief needed to know and understand the conditions of community members, which are entitled to and in need of assistance and which are not. Poor data collection process also affects the fairness acceptance of social protection programs. As said DA member of the KPI BP Gunung Selan Village

“... Government assistance in the village of Gunung Selan is actually a lot, but I did not get a single one; I do not know how our village chief to collect data. I am a native of Gunung Selan, from the already poor little like this, but never received assistance from the government. Actually I do not ask for much, just be given the Raskin, because it's the most basic staples for us. If we had the rice just find a way to buy vegetables”

Instead of a citizen named AM admitted:

“... I got almost all government assistance programs, such as Raskin, BLSM, Jamkes. According to me, my family deserves to get help from the government, because my family is poor family, may I receive all kinds of aid because the government has the right assessment....”

d. Access to social protection programs

ranging from the procedure, who the program managers, almost completely unnoticed by the village authorities and beneficiaries. They only know that the program of the government. Ideally, social protection programs organized by the government to help the poor need to involve the poor. So that people's needs and affordability, and access can be designed according to the conditions of society are the recipients of social protection programs. So there is a sustainable system for providing protection to groups vulnerable people.

Designed models of study results

Solutions to eliminate poverty, according to a review of a group of women, were not just a matter of rights-based social protection programs. Given the widespread poverty was the problem throughout the region and was a multi-dimensional problem, the design of intervention was not merely a matter of economics or development skills of human resources. It is necessary to promote a consensus to all parties who involve in

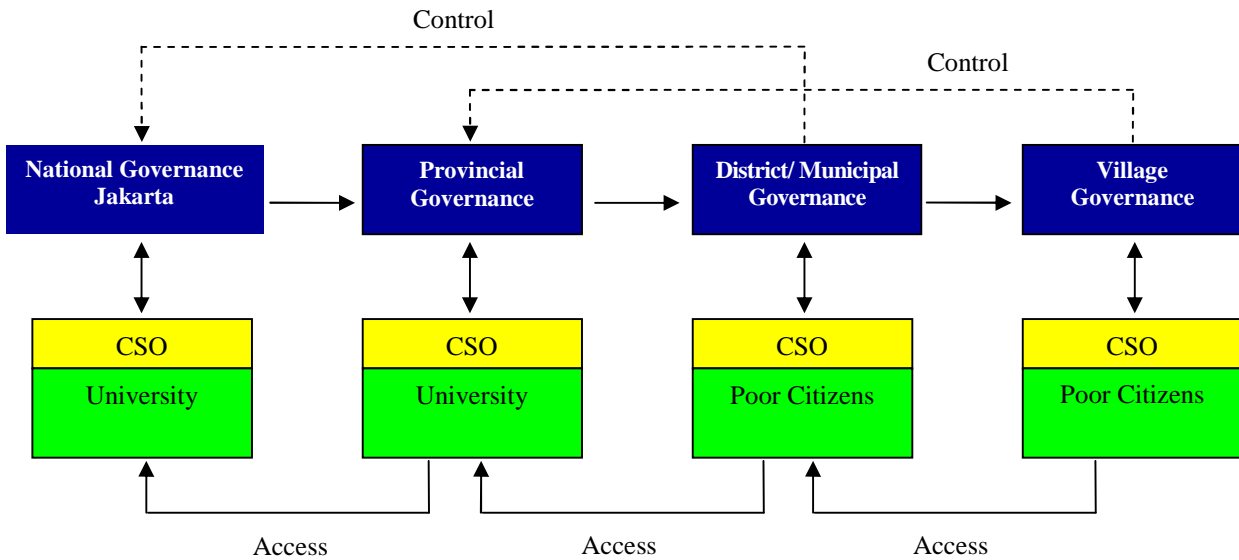


Figure 2. Access and control of social protection

poverty elimination – to put justice as a fundamental role. In particular, the access to justice of the poor women must be the core of the development framework. Because poverty is also related to the right to speak, the right to fight for their fate, then that is where the movement and the Indonesian Women's Coalition (KPI) to develop a draft with the HEI.

The findings of a study can be used to produce a series of model Access and Control of Social Protection. The model is simple and can be easily followed. In other words, to meet social protection, civil society organizations in Indonesia need to anticipate the state schemes through an advocacy initiative. The initiative was needed in order to encourage a model of protection for vulnerable women (Figure 2).

In the model it is clear that there is a need for people to be involved as one of the constituents. People, women, is an important element, because they will feel a part of their poverty alleviation efforts. HEI and CSOs need to think and advocate on this issue. Along with the administration, it will be a force triangle to encourage law enforcement of the social protection policies. Also, how the Laws reinforce in the field?, as well as how do social protection schemes need to involve civil society organizations, which are not part or extension of the state. Their function as a check and balance the power, and make people, especially women, as central to the implementation of social protection is a crucial role.

A scheme has to be friendly to women, because they used to have a limited space to access. Policy enforcement should be introduced, as part of a rights-based program; and everything really depends on political will. Because the current effects of regional autonomy nowadays are making the District Heads busy in maintaining their popularity; they often do not have time to work seriously implementing the vision and mission for social protection.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability of the social protection model depends on the commitment of the three parties. Instruments need to be there, and the arrangement reflects the principle of checks and balances. This model can also measure the degree of collusion, corruption, and nepotism. If only the government would come completely clean and put social protection as a priority agenda, then we may be optimistic.

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