

# Community Empowerment Through the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmer Group in Gajahrejo Village, Gedangan District, Malang Regency

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## Abstract

Educational platforms and human resource development are the sole goals of forest farmer group organizations. However, based on field observations, the enormous potential of non-timber forest products is still less accessible to forest farmer groups. Forest farmers must be empowered to become independent group business managers, as evidenced by low production and minimal human resources. The first objective of this research is to explain the empowerment program offered at KTH Bangkit Sejahtera. The second objective is to describe the empowerment methods applied there. (3) Mention the challenges faced by Bangkit Sejahtera forest farmers in their efforts to gain greater authority. By using case study methodology, this research uses a qualitative research strategy. At the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmers Group Institute located on Jl. The Southern Cross of Gajahrejo in Gedangan District, Malang Regency, research has been carried out. Interviews and observations were used as data collection methods. The stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions are used to test the data obtained. Source and time triangulation was used to verify the accuracy of the data. The research results show that by carrying out various empowerment activities and successfully completing them, the Bangkit Sejahtera Farmers Group has been able to carry out its role as a forum for learning and community development. Communities gain information, skills and improved economic conditions as a result of these empowerment initiatives. The KTH Rising Sejahtera empowerment process follows the current stages, which include planning, implementation and assessment. However, there are many obstacles faced by institutions in implementing it.

**Keywords:** Forest Farmers Group; Empowerment

## 1. Introduction

Forest-related resources are abundant in Indonesia. The country's environmental and economic sustainability is greatly helped by its forests. Climate change, unsustainable deforestation and deforestation are some of the problems often faced in forest management. Forest farmers can be involved in sustainable forest management as a way to overcome these obstacles. Therefore, it is important for the government and the business world to work together to fully utilize the potential that exists in the agricultural and forestry industries to empower these sectors. The aim is that the growth of the forestry and agricultural industry can become a catalyst for the progress of other scientific disciplines, such as development and economics. In this way, people's income, especially forest communities/farmers, can increase in the agricultural sector. In this situation, reforms must be carried out in every area of the agricultural sector to equip the industry to face modern challenges and changes. The poor quality of life is thought to be caused by farmers' limitations as agricultural human resources. The agricultural community is also faced with a number of problems related to the increase in living standards caused by technical progress (Nippi & M, 2019).

The biological and economic role that forests play in ensuring human survival is extremely important. Decree of the Minister of Forestry Number 70 of 2001 states that a forest is an ecosystem consisting of land that has important biological natural resources in the form of interconnected trees. The sustainability of natural resources, especially forests, is threatened by rapid population growth. Conflict in forest management is just one of the many causes of decreasing forest numbers. As a supplier of natural resources, both wood and non-timber, forests have a role in the economy. Wealthy communities, especially those living near forests, can benefit from good forest management. To realize effective forest management, community involvement is very important. Through the social forestry initiative which began in 1995 with a strategy known as Community Forestry (HKm), many communities were involved in forest management efforts. Previously, the state guarded Indonesia's forests, but since then, the community has become involved in the process. After the issuance of Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number P.83 of 2016 which regulates forest utilization by involving the community in the form of social forestry, social forestry in Indonesia has experienced a number of policy developments. HKm, Village Forests, Community Plantation Forests, Private Forests, Customary Forests and Partnership Forests are just a small part of the forest types included in this social forestry system.

Developed by local communities or communities governed by customary law, social forestry is a forest management method that aims to protect the environment, improve socio-cultural dynamics and improve the welfare of its members. Based on the Indicative Map of Social Forestry Areas (PIAPS), this regulation provides village forest management permits (HPHD), community forest utilization business permits (IUPHKm), and business permits for the utilization of community plantation forest wood products (IUPHHK HTR). ). Involving provincial, district/city governments, and related parties, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, non-governmental organizations, and other sources to provide findings on the harmonization process for determining PIAPS maps. 12.7 million hectares of forest land is intended for community-based legal management through social forestry initiatives. Apart from helping the economy, this program also provides official access to the use of forest resources. The state, through Perum Perhutani, the State-Owned Enterprise which oversees most of the forests on Java Island, and other forest management institutions, uses the Social Forestry Forest Utilization Permit Decree (IPHPS) in managing forest areas.

Perum Perhutani is tasked with overseeing productive forests and protected forests in an area of approximately 2,547,382,610 hectares in East Java. After the enactment of Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number P.39 of 2017, there were changes in the way forests were managed in the Perum Perhutani area. This gives the community independence because Perum Perhutani used to manage the forests of Java Island as a whole. opportunities to build legitimacy of forest management. One of the areas affected by this strategy is Malang Regency. One of the forest farmer groups in Gajahrejo village, Gedangan District is the Bangkit Sejahtera Farmer Group which has a Decree number SK.945/MENLHK-PSKL /PKPS/PSL.O/3/2018 which was signed by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. Director General of Forestry on March 5 2018. Based on this decision letter, the Bangkit Sejahtera Farmers Group can now legally manage forests in the Sengguruh BKPH Sumbermanjing Wetan KPH RPH Malang area which covers an area of 3,102 hectares and is located in Gajahrejo Village, Gedangan District, Malang Regency.

With this decision, this group of farmers will be able to make the best use of forest resources and avoid negative publicity related to illegal operations that harm society as a whole. Now that they have obtained their legal rights, communities can continue their activities and be involved in the forest. However, so that social forestry programs can run in accordance with the guidelines set out in Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number P.39 of 2017 and provide the greatest social impact, it is important to review the forest management system, especially those related to forest management. to the planning and implementation of management carried out by the Bangkit Sejahtera Farmers Group. The success of social forestry initiatives is measured by community forest management (Rais, 2020).

The aim of forest farmer group organizations is only as a forum for education and human resource development. This is consistent with the function of after-school education in encouraging social development and empowering individuals by meeting needs and solving social problems. Regarding politics, health, education and other fields. By providing the community with the ability to change or improve their knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, abilities, awareness and use of resources in relation to the urgent problems and needs of individuals, groups and society as a whole, empowerment is an effort to advance society. independence and welfare of the community through various activities.

Empowerment programs are linked to out-of-school education because this initiative goes beyond providing infrastructure, knowledge and skills. More than that, empowerment programs need to have a foundation that can be achieved by the target group, which includes increasing awareness and bringing about changes in attitudes and thinking patterns. In terms of concept and methodology, this is certainly nothing new in the study of out-of-school education. Apart from that, when realizing community empowerment initiatives. The actions taken are not much different from studies of out-of-school education; they start with data collection and proceed through problem identification, preparation of goal-oriented programs, mobilization, and creating a climate in target communities—the field of out-of-school education is the main foundation in the development of empowered communities, of course (Asmoro et al., 2021).

However, field studies show that forest farmer organizations do not have the authority to fully exploit the enormous potential of non-timber forest products. This situation can be seen from the low productivity and level of human resources, which shows the need to empower forest farmers to be independent in the form of strong competitiveness, filtering power, and the ability to manage group companies.

The contribution of the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmers Group to empowering forest farmers will be the main topic of study in this regard. As previously mentioned, the Forest Farmers Group (KTH) functions as a forum for increasing the knowledge, abilities and access to markets and natural resources of forest farmers. The aim of this research is to determine the methods used by KTH Bangkit Sejahtera in Gajahrejo Village, Gedangan District, Malang Regency to support farmers and encourage forest empowerment.

## **2. Method**

The research methodology used in this research is qualitative. Examining the influence of the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmer Group on sustainable forest management and the extent to which forest farmers are empowered is the main objective of this research. The research methodology used in this research is qualitative. Examining the influence of the Bangkit

Sejahtera Forest Farmers Group on sustainable forest management and the extent to which forest farmers are empowered is the main objective of this research. Using Gajahrejo Village, Gedangan District, Malang Regency as a case study, this research examines the operations of the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmers Group and provides a detailed analysis of empowerment of forest farmers that they do. When collecting information, researchers use interview and observation techniques to obtain information.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Result and Discussion**

##### **1. Forest Farmer Group in Empowering Forest Farmers**

As a forum for community development and education, forest farmer groups act as an institution. An important aspect in human resource management is development (Cahya et al., 2021). To fulfill this task, empowerment activities must be carried out in forest farmer group institutions. Improving a person's condition is the ultimate goal of empowerment (Laksono & Rohmah, 2019). The improvement referred to here is in the form of increasing managerial competence in the field of institutional administration and plantation forest land management. According to Andayani et al. (2017), there are various ways to empower communities, including through training and outreach. As a forum for learning and community development, the KTH Bangkit Sejahtera institution has carried out its duties, according to research results. As evidenced by the sources' accounts, the KTH Bangkit Sejahtera organization carries out a number of empowerment programs. According to IH, AR, and EL who are part of the informants, KTH Risen Sejahtera empowers its members through training, environmental services, forest products, cooperatives, and others. This empowerment is possible thanks to the help of other interested parties. build community capacity.

Activities that seek to improve a person's knowledge and skills are collectively known as training (Richter et al., n.d.). Shen and Darby found that training significantly influences the productivity of group members in an organization (Training et al., 2010). Based on research findings, there are many training programs available at KTH Rise Sejahtera. The following is an overview of some of the training that has been carried out:

- a. Pesang Gentarung Nusropa Islamic Boarding School led by Yahya Ciro Muhammad Sukoso acted as facilitator for the training. Goat farming is the focus of this special instruction. So that goats can reach their maximum potential, this provides enlightenment to the public about the best way to care for them
- b. KPR Kebun Bupit Rakyat Bupit Das Bantas also played a role in boosting KTH's success. Training in this case focuses on sengon wood breeding; Apart from that, the community also received guidance on all aspects of sengon management, from seeding to planting, so that they could better understand the process and apply what they learned.
- c. Socialization or training is assisted by interns from the State University of Malang's Out-of-School Education program. The aim of this activity is to help KTH Bangkit Sejahtera administrators carry out their duties well by educating them about the basic responsibilities of management.

d. CDK Malang provides direction or guidance at each meeting which is routinely held once a month.

Utilizing environmental services is another way to empower yourself, apart from the KTH Bangkit Towards Prosperity course. One way to utilize natural forest resources without destroying the ecosystem is by utilizing environmental services (Arafat et al., 2015). The environmental service in question is the possibility of tourism along the forest coast, based on research findings obtained from interviews with related informants. Utilizing environmental services for tourism provides benefits to communities because it allows them to start their own businesses, thereby improving the economy and making them more independent. (Rohmah et al., 2022) supports the idea that environmental services are very important for the survival of society.

Apart from its environmental services, KTH Rise Sejahtera also empowers the forest product utilization sector. Utilizing and cultivating forest products in a way that does not harm the current ecology is the aim of discussing the use of forest products. That way, the forest can remain green. According to this source, KTH Rise Sejahtera utilizes various kinds of wood and non-timber forest products. Sengon wood and other wood products are examples of wood forest products; Seasonal forest products such as corn, cassava, rice, and so on are examples of non-timber forest products. Apart from that, you can also find fruit plants such as bananas, soursop, etc. in the forest.

The findings also show that cooperative activities are a source of empowerment at KTH Bangkit Sejahtera. Cooperatives are a constitutional requirement as well as society's best hope for economic development in Indonesia because of their vital role in the country's economy (Rohmat, 2016). Community welfare and economic progress are assisted by cooperatives (Alderson, J. Charles & Wall, 1992). According to AR, who is an informant at KTH Bangkit Sejahtera, cooperatives are a forum for managing economic results as well as managing various economic activities at KTH Bangkit Sejahtera, including taxes and other fees charged by the community. trees cut down.

Based on the information provided, it is clear that the Rise Sejahtera Farmers Group has fulfilled its role as a forum for sharing knowledge and community development through implementing various empowerment initiatives. The success of this effort, however, depends on the support of many people and organizations, both inside and outside the community, who are committed to making it happen. Aprianto et al. (2019) found that when people participate in empowerment activities, this helps them become more independent. However, they also find that receiving encouragement from others gives them the confidence to reach their maximum potential.

Community support and participation is very important for the success of any empowerment project. When people in a community participate, whether financially, emotionally, or otherwise, this shows that they care about the goals that have been achieved (Rubiantoro & Haryanto, 2013). According to informants IH and AR, community involvement at KTH Rise Sejahtera is very active, but we need confidence in the results of these efforts in order to make them happen. People will lose confidence in the process and its results, so they will reduce participation if the results are not satisfactory. In conclusion, community involvement is quite active and supports all KTH Rise to Prosperity events, but the community also wants to see real results from the event.

There is always a guarantee that empowerment actions will produce positive results. The following are some of the benefits of the KTH Bangkit Sejahtera empowerment program for the local community:

- a. The previously strict rules governing licensing of non-timber plantations have been slightly relaxed. In the past, all forests had to be planted with wood. Currently, that percentage has fallen to 50%. The other 20% can be filled with fruit plants such as bananas, soursops, etc., and 30% can be used for annual crops such as sugar cane, rice, corn, etc.
- b. The community can make maximum use of the forest thanks to empowerment initiatives based on the fact that Gajahrejo Village is a forest area. They undergo various trainings that teach them how to manage forests properly.
- c. Environmental services improve local economies in more than one way. Not only does the entrance fee help, but many locals also run businesses in this sector, including food stalls, toilet rentals and homestays.

Considering these and other benefits, it is clear that empowerment initiatives are very beneficial in increasing economic growth, educating and empowering local communities, and increasing community capacity.

## 2. Processes carried out in empowerment activities

Being empowered is not a one-time deal; rather, it is a journey. Empowerment activities, like any process, have several steps that, if followed sequentially, will produce the best results. Research shows that there are several steps in the empowerment process, and according to (Suswanto et al., 2019) the steps are as follows: planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating empowerment and community assistance programs.

### a. Planning stage

Finding out what the community needs or what problems need to be fixed are two of the many tasks that must be completed at the planning stage. The purpose of needs identification is to collect data to determine the most urgent community needs. As an added bonus, this will make it easier for us to no longer guess what type of empowerment is being implemented, thereby increasing the likelihood that the empowerment will be effective in solving people's problems and improving their quality of life (Suswanto et al., 2019). Based on the results of interviews delivered by AR and DS, there is a planning stage in empowerment efforts. This stage involves coordinating with agencies and partners to prioritize community needs and ensure that programs are tailored to meet those needs.

### b. Level of implementation

There is an implementation stage that follows the planning stage. At this stage, the planning results are followed up to ensure program implementation meets expectations (Pranoto & Yusuf, 2016). From research and interviews with AR and DS informants, it is known that this activity was carried out with the presence and support of the target community who had received an invitation from the institution. However, there were several obstacles, not all invitees attended or received the event well. We must be sure that the implementation of this

program will provide real results. Regardless, things are moving forward and going according to plan.

c. Evaluation stage

There are evaluation activities after the activity is completed. All program participants are actively involved in evaluation throughout the duration of the program (Dian & Ma'ruf, 2019). This is consistent with what we learned from our interviews with DS informants, namely that the purpose of evaluation is to identify program weaknesses so that we can see whether the program is successful in achieving its initial goals and incorporate that information into our future initiative.

The description above makes us confident that the KTH Rise Sejahtera empowerment process follows the steps that have been determined, namely starting from planning and ending with evaluation. By following these methods correctly, we can raise the standard of existence of a community, with the ultimate goal of making them a stronger and more advanced civilization.

3. Obstacles Faced in the Process of Implementing Forest Farmer Empowerment.

There are a number of challenges faced by KTH Bangkit Sejahtera in carrying out community empowerment initiatives. This is done in the same way as the old adage goes: no path is perfectly straight. This challenge can be seen from the attitude of the community which is starting to reduce their involvement. The success of future empowerment efforts will be influenced by this. Based on the findings and explanations of informants IH and AR, the following are the challenges faced when implementing the empowerment program at KTH Rise Sejahtera:

a. Even though it is still a decision, internal parties, especially LMDH, are less enthusiastic. Of course this has an impact on empowerment procedures. There is an agreement between the Gajahrejo Village Head and the KTH Bangkit Sejahtera community to work together on a program, including boundary marking. At that time, it was agreed that the cost would be 350,000 for the border marking process. However, a conflict arose because LMDH Ngul Wulung believed that KTH Bangkit Sejahtera would take over social forestry, and the application process could not be carried out by just one party, so it became problematic. LMDH Ngul Wulung has no intention of proposing boundary marking, thereby adding to the obstacles. Because of this misunderstanding, boundary marking has not been carried out.

b. Government policies and regulations are not aligned, and we cannot solve the problem at this time. Because this concerns land that is considered to belong to the state, forest farmer associations have very strict restrictions, but this actually confuses the public even more. I don't mean financially, but in terms of the magnitude, it's a huge undertaking. Unfortunately, the government does not provide a solution to the community in this predicament. However, the public has high hopes for steps that comply with government standards. The lack of clarity in regulations has a major impact on optimizing the use of forest functions.

c. The village did not agree with this. In this case, it was because the village head did not understand the principles of social forestry. Forests are excluded from the regional budget according to regulations. With the help of this village grant, KTH Bangkit Sejahtera can improve

the environmental services sector—especially by promoting beaches as tourist attractions—thus improving the local community's economy. To what extent can KTH Bangkit Sejahtera market itself to visitors in order to revive the sluggish economy of Gajahrejo Village This opportunity should not be left to investors. The rights and responsibilities regarding the assessment of all village government administration in monetary form, including all village assets, are regulated in Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 37 of 2007 (Hanifah & Praptoyo, 2015). In this case, beaches represent the environmental services sector; Therefore, villages have a responsibility to help beaches reach their maximum potential so that they can restore and even increase village income.

d. Encouraging people to trust each other and take part in empowerment programs is not easy. Regaining people's trust will be a challenge if the results are not relevant. even though there will be no productive interaction between management and members without trust. The reason is that as self-confidence develops, an accommodating structure can be built, thereby increasing the likelihood that the actions taken will be deeply accepted by the parties involved (Sujatmiko et al., 2023).

e. Lack of human resources; The majority of members of the Bangkit Sejahtera Forest Farmers Group are still in their old age, so the management team is administratively and physically inadequate. Khairul Amri and Adia Ferizko in their article emphasize that the availability of human resources has a significant impact on the success of an empowerment program, making it possible to carry out appropriate operational planning (Amri & Ferizko, 2020).

f. The government is not ready to establish better cooperation, so farmers are not ready to be guided by it. Collaboration in this situation does not require initiative. Administrative barriers and lack of management knowledge require a different form of collaboration—one that involves management in the management and governance of the organization. From a managerial perspective, it is clear that KTH Bangkit Sejahtera has started to take action. As far as I know, this has been implemented well by institutions that prioritize boundary marking, work contributions, RKPS, or organizational labeling. However, a number of challenges arise throughout the implementation of the technology. To avoid unnecessary delays in the administrative process, it is necessary to confirm with several parties such as CDK, BPSKL and KLHK in an administrative context. This applies to provincial and district governments.

g. Bureaucratic bottlenecks caused by third parties who should provide services quickly. This means that people have to wait longer to receive services in response to complaints submitted to the government. Inequality should not occur, despite the fact that sustainable forests and community welfare are known to be the main goals of social forestry.

Based on the information provided, it is clear that there are several challenges that need to be overcome in order to carry out empowerment operations. These challenges may come from external sources or internal conflicts between management and members.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As a center for education and community development, KTH Bangkit Sejahtera has become an asset. In this case, the many empowerment initiatives carried out by the KTH Bangkit Sejahtera institution were clearly illustrated in the speakers' remarks. However, empowerment efforts will not be successful without the support of various groups and wider

community participation. Although community involvement is very important and supports all KTH events, the community also wants to see real results from these efforts.

The empowerment activities carried out by KTH Bangkit Sejahtera are very beneficial for the community because they have multiple benefits. Knowledge, skills and economic growth are some of the many benefits that society obtains. The empowerment process carried out by KTH Rise Sejahtera follows predetermined steps, namely starting from planning and continuing through implementation and evaluation. Through these appropriate procedures, it is believed that the results of empowerment initiatives can improve the community's ability to sustain life, ultimately leading to their transformation into a new and thriving society. Efforts are needed to overcome various challenges faced by management and members, as well as challenges originating from outside, in the empowerment initiatives currently underway

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