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Coastal Community Empowerment Through Sustainable Marine Resource Management to Improve Fishermen's Welfare in Bokori Village, Soropia District, Konawe Regency

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A B S T R A K

This community service activity aims to empower coastal communities through sustainable management of marine resources to improve the welfare of fishermen in Bokori Village, Sooria District, Konawe Regency. The people of Bokori Village have a high dependence on marine resources as the main source of livelihood. However, the utilization of marine resources still faces various challenges, including limited knowledge about sustainable resource management, the use of simple fishing technology, fluctuations in catches, and limited ability to develop the added value of fishery products. The activity is carried out through a participatory approach by involving fisher groups and coastal communities as the subject of activities. The methods used include socialization, counseling, discussion, training, environmentally friendly marine resource management practices, and assistance in processing fishery products. The activity is directed to improve the knowledge, skills, environmental awareness, and economic ability of the community in utilizing the potential of marine resources. The results of the activity show an increase in public understanding of the importance of maintaining the sustainability of marine ecosystems, the wise use of resources, and the development of processed seafood products that have economic value. Empowerment based on local potential is expected to strengthen the economic independence of fishermen while maintaining the sustainability of marine resources for future generations.

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INTRODUCTION

Situation Analysis

Bokori Village in Soropia District, Konawe Regency, is a coastal area with abundant marine resource potential. The majority of the local community relies on the capture fisheries sector and other coastal activities such as transportation, tourism, floating net cage operations, and aquaculture for their livelihoods. However, this potential has not yet been managed in a fully optimal and sustainable manner, and consequently, it has not significantly improved the welfare of the fishermen.

The primary challenge facing coastal communities in this region is a lack of knowledge and skills regarding the sustainable management of marine resources. Traditional and environmentally unfriendly fishing practices such as the use of trawl nets, fishing with poisons, and the capture of protected species, threaten to damage marine ecosystems and reduce catch productivity in the medium to long term. This situation poses a serious challenge to the sustainability of the communities' livelihoods (Khairul Amri et al., 2023).

Furthermore, limited access to modern fishing technology poses a challenge to increasing catch yields. Some fishermen in Bokori Village still rely on simple, inefficient fishing gear such as plastic bottle traps, basic gillnets, bamboo fish traps, and spears. A lack of access to information and technological innovations makes it difficult for them to compete and adapt to the increasingly dynamic developments within the fisheries sector.

Community-level institutional aspects also remain weak. Existing fisherfolk groups lack optimal organization, limiting their effectiveness as a platform for advocating shared interests such as access to capital, training, and the marketing of their catch (Nasution, 2011). This results in a weak bargaining position for these fisherfolk within the fishery product distribution chain, often leaving them at a disadvantage compared to modern fishers from Kendari City.

Another issue is limited access to broader markets. Fishermen’s catches are often sold to middlemen at relatively low prices due to the *ijon* system, which compels traditional fishermen to borrow funds to cover production costs. This dependency leaves fishermen with no control over selling prices, resulting in income that tends to be unstable and less profitable (Lubis & Pane, 2012).

From an environmental perspective, pressure on coastal ecosystems is also mounting. Uncontrolled fishing activities, marine pollution resulting from mining exploration, and climate change are contributing to the deterioration of the marine environment (Ahmad, 2013). If left unaddressed, this situation could threaten the sustainability of the marine resources that serve as the primary source of livelihood for the community in Bokori Village.

Community partnership programs serve as a strategic approach to addressing these various issues. These programs foster community empowerment by engaging diverse stakeholders including academics, government bodies, village facilitators, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local residents. A participatory approach is crucial to ensuring that the programs align with the specific needs and circumstances of the local community.

In practice, these programs can focus on enhancing the capacity of fishers through training and mentoring. The curriculum covers topics such as eco-friendly fishing techniques, catch management, and marine resource-based business diversification. Consequently, fishers are not solely dependent on their catch but can also maximize the potential of other marine resources to diversify their livelihoods.

Institutional strengthening is also a crucial aspect of this program. The formation and strengthening of fisherfolk groups specifically through KUBE (Joint Business Groups) that are expected to foster social solidarity, facilitate access to assistance, and enhance bargaining power when marketing fishery products. Such cohesive groups also serve as a platform for members to share knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, expanding market access requires primary attention. Through partnerships with various stakeholders such as business entities and marketing platforms, fisherfolk can gain broader market reach and secure more competitive selling prices. Additionally, the processing of fishery products can be developed to enhance product value-added (Primasari, 2024).



Figure 1. Capture fishery potential in Bokori Village.

Overall, empowering the coastal community in Bokori Village through sustainable marine resource management represents a crucial step toward improving fishermen's welfare. By adopting an integrated approach that encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions, this program is expected to generate positive long-term impacts for the coastal community while ensuring the preservation of marine resources.

Given the situational analysis and the complexities of the issues outlined above, the initiative "Empowering Coastal Communities through Sustainable Marine Resource Management to Improve Fishermen's Welfare in Bokori Village" serves as a viable alternative for fostering self-reliance among coastal residents who remain trapped below the poverty line.

Partner's Challenges

Understanding the issues faced by coastal communities regarding sustainable marine resource management is a crucial step in ensuring the success of any empowerment program. Without a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, and environmental conditions confronting fishers,

interventions risk being misdirected or ineffective. Each coastal region possesses distinct characteristics and challenges such as the level of reliance on marine resources, fishing patterns, and the community's knowledge of sustainable practices (Poerwanto, 2025). Therefore, an in-depth identification of these issues serves as the foundation for designing strategies that align with the community's actual needs, ensuring that programs deliver long-term impact rather than merely temporary results.

Furthermore, a solid understanding of the issues is crucial for fostering a shift in community behavior toward more environmentally friendly practices. Problems ranging from the use of destructive fishing gear and low conservation awareness to limited economic access cannot be resolved through technical approaches alone; they require a participatory social approach. By grasping the root causes, programs can be designed to build the capacity of fishers, strengthen local institutions, and open up access to technology and markets. Ultimately, this will support sustainable marine resource management while simultaneously improving the overall well-being of coastal communities.

Based on the narrative above, and supported by field data and facts, there are nine indicators of the challenges faced by the coastal community in Bokori Village regarding marine resource management. These include: 1. Some fishermen still employ environmentally unfriendly fishing methods such as the use of explosives, poisons, or destructive gear due to a lack of knowledge and awareness-raising; 2. Fishermen rely on rudimentary equipment, resulting in suboptimal catches that are highly dependent on seasonal conditions; 3. Overexploitation without proper management has led to declining fish stocks, making fishermen's incomes increasingly unstable; 4. Fishermen do not yet utilize technologies such as GPS, fish finders, or weather forecasting, rendering their fishing activities less effective and high-risk; 5. There is low value-added for fishery products, as catches are typically sold raw without processing, leading to low selling prices and limited income; 6. Market access is restricted because fishermen rely on middlemen, resulting in weak bargaining power and unprofitable selling prices; 7. Fishermen's organizations are not functioning optimally, making it difficult to engage in collaborative management or secure program assistance; 8. Coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds are degrading due to human activity, which negatively impacts fish resources; and 9. Limited access to financial institutions hinders fishermen from expanding their businesses or transitioning to more environmentally friendly practices.

In light of these issues, all stakeholders bear a significant responsibility to address them. This includes the government through relevant agencies such as the Marine and Fisheries Office as well as the coastal community (as direct users of marine resources), non-governmental organizations, fishery companies, seafood processing industries, academics, and others.

Proposed Solution

The solution proposed in the initiative "Empowering Coastal Communities through Sustainable Marine Resource Management to Improve Fishermen's Welfare in Bokori Village, Soropia District" involves an educational,

participatory, and practical approach designed to foster understanding and cultivate new habits regarding marine resource management. The program employs an integrated strategy comprising training on the use of more efficient, eco-friendly fishing gear; guidance on value-added catch management (such as processing and marketing fishery products); and the institutional strengthening of fishermen's groups to support sustainable fishing practices. It also encompasses marine conservation education focusing on the preservation of coral reef and mangrove ecosystems, and the implementation of fishing zoning to ensure resource sustainability. Through collaboration among the community, village government, and academics, the program aims to enable fishermen to boost productivity, maintain environmental sustainability, and secure a more stable and sustainable income.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The approach adopted to address the partners' challenges involves training designed to enhance the capacity and self-reliance of coastal communities in managing marine resources sustainably and for high economic value. The program aims to equip participants with practical knowledge and skills regarding eco-friendly fishing techniques, seafood processing, business management, and product marketing, thereby boosting productivity and income. Furthermore, the training seeks to foster awareness of the importance of marine ecosystem conservation, strengthen local institutions, and encourage innovations based on regional potential to achieve sustainable well-being for coastal communities.

Several approaches or methods offered within the Independent Community Partnership Program include: 1. Conducting surveys and disseminating information about the activities to partner stakeholders (the Village Head and administrative staff, fisherfolk groups, fishery business operators, business entity administrators, "Merah Putih" Cooperative officials, and community self-help groups); 2. An interactive approach that actively involves participants in the training process through group discussions, case studies, and role-playing exercises; 3. Training that combines theoretical explanations with practical exercises to provide participants with a comprehensive understanding and hands-on experience; 4. Training that fosters collaboration among participants, encouraging them to share experiences, knowledge, and ideas regarding marine resource management facilitated through group discussions, team projects, or knowledge exchange via online platforms; and 5. Holding regular Q&A sessions to give participants the opportunity to ask questions and clarify concepts or topics that are difficult to grasp.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Program Kerja PKM Mandiri Independent PKM Work Program

The Independent Internal Community Partnership Program in Bokori Village, Soropia District themed "Empowering Coastal Communities through Marine Resource Management to Improve Fishermen's Welfare", focuses on three program agendas:

1. A program focused on training to strengthen community ecological awareness through the following agendas: a. Strengthening fishermen's capacity based on sustainable fisheries management; b. Developing value-added marine product processing businesses; c. Strengthening fishermen's economic institutions; d. Community-based marine resource conservation; and e. Developing community-based marine ecotourism.
2. Work programs and activities in the form of group discussions, focusing on: a. Exploring community understanding, perceptions, and experiences regarding marine resource management to leverage them for increasing fishermen's income and welfare; b. Identifying issues and potential in marine resource management; and c. Formulating solutions and follow-up plans for community-based empowerment.
3. Work programs involving problem-solving strategies across three activity agendas: a. A program to enhance fishermen's capacity in sustainable marine resource management; b. A program for product diversification and marine-based business development; and c. A program for institutional strengthening and digital marketing of fishery products, alongside a "waste-to-blessing" initiative through training on utilizing waste for productive purposes.

Based on the program agenda outlined above, the Independent Community Partnership Program focuses on four key themes: a. Sustainable marine resource management based on coastal ecosystems; b. Training on diversification and the processing of value-added marine products; c. Training on business management and digital marketing for fishery products; and d. Training on strengthening fisherfolk group institutions and developing business partnerships.

These themes are addressed through sessions led by competent and qualified experts, aiming for the following empowerment outcomes: increased fisherfolk income through more effective and sustainable marine resource management; enhanced community participation in collaborative resource management; and a better understanding within the community of the importance of preserving coastal ecosystems.

Implementation of the Independent Community Partnership Program

a. **Program Dissemination**

Outreach activities targeting program partners and the intended beneficiary group were conducted following prior coordination with the Head of Bokori Village on June 4, 2026. In addition to discussing the program's objectives which serve to realize the *Tri Dharma* (Three Pillars) of Higher Education, the community service team gained insights into the characteristics and economic potential of local marine resources, covering capture fisheries, aquaculture, and other opportunities. Subsequently, the team finalized the technical plan for the training, which was agreed upon on June 17, 2026. This coordination process established the list of invitees, the venue, the activity content, the necessary supporting facilities, and the data required by the team to execute the independent partnership program.

b. Provision of Program Facilities and Infrastructure

To support the activities and the Independent Community Partnership Program, the community service team has prepared proactive, constructive, and innovative measures to ensure the initiative proceeds smoothly and successfully. Preparations made prior to the training sessions included the development of materials, modules, illustrations, and visual aids. Other logistical arrangements involved setting up projectors and screens, sound systems, and photocopying materials, as well as organizing refreshments, activity documentation, and other necessities.

To optimize the training process, the Independent Partnership Program team also requested that participants including capture fishermen, aquaculture farmers, village enterprise administrators, cooperative managers, community and youth leaders, and village government officials to prepare data and information regarding the dynamics of marine resource management in Bokori Village.

c. Program Implementation

The implementation of the Independent Community Partnership Program began with the distribution of invitations to participants, comprising the Village Head and village officials, community and youth leaders, managers of village-owned enterprises, administrators of fishermen's cooperatives, capture and aquaculture fishermen, and seafood traders. The main event took place on June 17, 2026, at the Bokori Village Office in Soropia District, Konawe Regency.

The independent partnership program activity, themed "Empowering Coastal Communities through Marine Resource Management to Improve Fishermen's Welfare in Bokori Village," was attended by 25 participants.

The training session took place on Wednesday, June 17, 2026, at 13:30 WITA and was officially opened by the Head of Bokori Village (Herdin, S.Si). Dr. Sulsalman Moita, S.Sos, M.Si, served as a presenter, covering topics such as ecosystem-based sustainable marine resource management, diversification and value-added processing of marine products, business management and digital marketing for fishery products, as well as the institutional strengthening of fishermen's groups and the development of business partnerships.



Figure 2. PKM Team and Training Participants

The training, which lasted approximately three hours, was well-received by the participants, who responded positively. This was evident from the numerous arguments and questions raised, particularly regarding the challenges and obstacles faced in managing marine resources such as a lack of fishing equipment (e.g., motorized boats) and facilities, limited business capital, unfavorable environmental and weather conditions for fishing activities, and a scarcity of training opportunities (especially in aquaculture), among others. Some of the questions posed by the participants included:

- Response from "Rahman" (Head of the Village Representative Body), who asked: "How can marine resources be managed to ensure sustainability while still increasing fishermen's catches?"

In response to that statement, the resource person recommended that sustainable marine resource management be achieved by applying responsible fishing principles such as using eco-friendly gear, adhering to size limits, avoiding fishing during spawning seasons, and preserving coastal ecosystems like mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs. These efforts are crucial because healthy ecosystems serve as breeding and feeding grounds for various fish species, thereby ensuring that fish populations are maintained and utilized sustainably.

- A question from "Hamidah" (a housewife): "What processed products made from fishermen's catches offer good market opportunities for housewives?"

In response to the question, the resource person noted that processed fishery products offering good market potential for housewives include fish floss, fish balls, fish nuggets, fish crackers, smoked fish, high-quality salted fish, fish-based chili sauce, and various ready-to-cook frozen seafood products. These products offer higher added value compared to selling fresh fish, possess a longer shelf life, and enjoy relatively stable market demand. To remain competitive, housewives need to focus on raw material quality, hygienic production processes, and attractive packaging, while also leveraging social media and online marketplaces to expand market reach and increase family income.

Next, a statement was made by "Mahmud" (an administrator of the Merah Putih Cooperative), who inquired about the possibility of the team initiating and facilitating through the relevant agencies of the Konawe Regency Government regular training sessions on topics such as aquatic product cultivation, an activity that has not previously been conducted in their area. He noted that while the region possesses significant marine resource potential, a lack of community knowledge hinders the effective utilization of these resources.

In response, the resource team expressed their willingness to provide facilitation through relevant activities such as coordination, outreach, research, and community service programs (KKN). The team also advised the Village Government and residents to take a proactive approach in leveraging available potential, opportunities, and external networks, ensuring that mentoring, empowerment, and training initiatives are implemented effectively and yield tangible benefits for the community.



Figure 3. Training Implementation Session

In addition to the challenges and obstacles, positive appreciation from the participants was also evident in several arguments and recommendations made during the group discussion forums, such as:

- Empowerment of Coastal Communities through Marine Resource Management to Improve the Welfare of Fishermen in Bokori Village, becoming a vehicle for exchanging information and experiences for fishing fishermen. The results of the discussion can at least identify the obstacles, challenges and obstacles faced by fishermen so that in the future they can increase the quantity of results which can increase family income and welfare.
- The majority of participants were of the opinion that management of marine resources must involve support from the Regional Government, fisheries investors, and credit institutions, especially in relation to assistance in providing fishing facilities, business capital, aquaculture training, catch processing training, and increasing the entrepreneurial spirit for fishing households.
- Group discussion forum participants emphasized the importance of strengthening village institutions in supporting a transparent, accountable and participatory fishing economy. Without a solid institutional structure, such as: contributions from the Village Government, village business entities, fishermen cooperatives, fisheries investors, youth organizations, puggawa and mustard greens relations, and so on; So it will be difficult to obtain results from marine product management that can provide economic benefits for residents

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Based on the results of the Independent Community Partnership Program, the following conclusions are drawn: 1. The Independent Community Partnership Program activities have enhanced the knowledge and understanding of the coastal community, specifically fishermen and housewives in Bokori Village regarding the importance of sustainable marine resource management. Participants gained an understanding that marine resources must be utilized wisely through the use of eco-friendly fishing gear, the preservation of coastal ecosystems, and the adoption of responsible fishing practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of these

resources; 2. The activities also fostered economic capacity building within the community by leveraging marine products to create added value. Participants gained insights into opportunities for processing their catch into various products with higher economic value, as well as marketing strategies to expand market access. Consequently, the community now has alternatives for increasing family income beyond a sole reliance on selling fresh fish; 3. Overall, the implementation of the partnership program in Bokori Village demonstrates that community empowerment that achieved through education, mentoring, and capacity building, is an effective approach to supporting the well-being of fishermen. Program sustainability is expected to be realized through collaboration among the community, village government, higher education institutions, and various stakeholders, ensuring that sustainable marine resource management continues to support the improved welfare of the coastal community.

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