



**WOMEN'S SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AND EMPOWERMENT: THE CASE STUDY
FROM INDONESIAN FISHERWOMEN'S COLLECTIVE ACTION**

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from a study of artisanal fisherwomen in Indonesia, which investigated their innovative and collective action to run the Indonesian Sisterhood of Fisherwomen Organization (PPNI/*Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia*). The artisanal Fisherwomen has important role in the fisheries activities. However, they are facing multiple burden in the situation of marginalization, poverty, the worsening crisis in fisheries, and lacks of acknowledgment. This paper describes the survival strategies of artisanal fisherwomen on PPNI to avoid multiple burdens and the dynamic struggle of fisherwomen to amplifier their aspiration to the government. This qualitative case study examines the interplay of social capital, collective action, and women's empowerment. PPNI consists 16 local fisherwomen organizations in around Indonesia islands. The survival strategies such as knowledge exchange system among member to produce alternative livelihood by inventing a new product such as from fish or mangrove and share the market. It is also included the capacity building to access to government program. To embrace many fisherwomen, PPNI build a collaborative partnership with other civil society organization and local government. To conclude, artisanal fisherwomen through PPNI using all their capital in social, economic, and knowledge to provide situation that can help them face the multiple burden. In mostly case, when the women started the organization, their priority was income generation. However, the case of PPNI found that women also use PPNI as comfortable place to sharing the burden, opportunities to grow, and empower each other.

Keywords: *Fisherwomen, collective action, empowerment, PPNI*

INTRODUCTION

The fishery sector provides livelihood for 75 million people who depend on both in capture fisheries and aquaculture (FAO, 2016). However, climate change poses a major and growing threat to global food security and have negative impact on livelihood in fisheries sector in many regions. In many contexts, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men (UN Women Watch, 2009). They are more dependent for their livelihood and face social, economic and political barriers. Protection and repositioning fisherwomen are very important to support their



resilience. In Indonesia Fisherwomen have many important fishing activities in pre-production, production, and post-production. They also do sailing and catch the fish at the sea. Thus, they need equal protection like other fishers have. Allison (2006) mentioned that access to both assets and activities is enabled or hindered by policies, institutions and processes.

Indonesia established Law No. 7 year 2016 on Protection and Empowerment of Fisherfolks, Fish Farmers, and Salt Farmers which has mandate to give a protection to Indonesian fishers by providing a fisher insurance. However, none of fisherwomen have the insurance by far and very limited from them that have the fisherfolks registry. Facing multiple burden in the situation of marginalization, poverty, the worsening crisis in fisheries, and lacks of acknowledgment led the collective action among fisherwomen to have association to be stronger and strategic to survive. By using qualitative approach, this paper examines the interplay of social capital, collective action, and women's empowerment that has been running by the Indonesian Sisterhood of Fisherwomen Organization (PPNI/*Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia*).

STORY BEHIND THE COLLECTIVE ACTION OF FISHERWOMEN

Persaudaraan Perempuan Nelayan Indonesia (the Indonesian Sisterhood of Fisherwomen) or also known as PPNI is a place to strengthen fisherwomen movement at national level. Woman holds significant role in circle of production to fishery products consumption (www.mongabay.co.id). Strengthening fisherwoman on organizational aspect and capacity development in facing climate crisis brings fisherwomen to consistently be in the movement with PPNI. The need to be part of an organization is not only to collectively access a program in improving prosperity but also to give each other support to carry the double roles including to fight for woman rights. Historically, PPNI was initiated by fisher organization and organizations concerning on traditional fishers. In the beginning, PPNI was a place of capacity development for fisherwomen which was facilitated by civil society organization (<http://www.kiara.or.id>). Today, PPNI has grown into an independent fisherwomen organization with 16 members location in Indonesia, including Aceh, Langkat, Serdang Bedagai, Lampung, Indramayu, Demak, Jepara, Kendal, North Jakarta, Manado, Lombok, Sika, Bau-Bau, Gresik, and Batang.

INNOVATIVE STRATEGY OF FISHERWOMEN

The fisherwomen who are members of the PPNI face the same burden and problems as other fisheries actors. On the other hand, there is awareness to develop their capacity and find alternative to help their family. Some of them were also victims of violence from the harsh fishing neighborhoods. Under these conditions, there are innovative strategies and efforts to survive and growing with PPNI. The strategies are as follows:

Building collective action in organizations, there is awareness on the importance of organizing to voice women's aspirations regarding the needs of fisherwomen. Through organization fisherwomen



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can access information and fostering social relations that open access to economic resources and human capital. Dimensions of value, culture, and perception are built as the initial foundation to find shared interests within a community as an institution.

Social capital as a basis, social capital is a pillar that embodies the spirit of collectiveness to achieve shared goal (Dewi, 2010). Elements of social capital such as trust, cooperation, and solidarity play a major role in providing space to grow for each member in PPNI. The development of social capital within the group cannot be separated from the shared goals and hopes, thus encouraging the emergence of cooperation within the group. The element of trust is created through an intensive interaction in PPNI that is located in various regions in Indonesia to foster all of its members.

Organizational structure and coordination from the base to national level, PPNI builds the managerial structure from national to grassroots level to keep internalizing values and also embracing one another. The management of PPNI consists of national PPNI and regional PPNI. At the National PPNI there is a presidium board consisting of 3 people as organizational advisors and a secretary general who directly coordinates the head of the Regional PPNI.

Regional PPNI structure consists of Chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and several offices have area coordinators. Communication strategies are carried out both offline and online using various communication media channels. In carrying out its activities and movements PPNI collaborates with non-governmental organizations and individuals who care about fisherwomen issues. One of the most intense is with the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice. The element of trust is created through an intensive interaction, thus allows fellow members to understand each other's' characters. They believe that group members have a common goal and commitment to move forward and fight for the rights of fisherwomen. The rights in question is to get equal access to fishing cards and various programs to protect and improve the welfare of fishers.

Empowerment in various aspects, cooperation is not only created through hope, but also through trust. The element of trust is created through intensive interactions. Each member believes that women involved in PPNI are having the same goals and commitments to progress. The hopes and trusts that drives the creation of cooperation in PPNI. There are several reasons behind the involvement, and motivating women to unite. These fisherwomen are victims of injustice and violence, so they transform into a person who wants to defend other women. An example is PPNI Demak, where fisherwomen suffered violence experience due to the harsh environment of fishers. The shifting position of women victims of violence to critically see reality and eventually transform into an activist of PPNI.

Next is the urge to fight for the rights of fisherwoman. Not only through coordination of the PPNI structure but also efforts to empower women in PPNI by increasing awareness and developing the



potential that exists in each member to become an independent human being. Capacity building from economic development, family financial management to develop proposals to open partnerships with government or other NGOs. Besides education and training, PPNI members also encourage to participate in discussions, seminars, and activities on certain issues at the local, national and international levels. These activities foster the confidence of the fisherwomen to be able to express their aspirations and speak loudly to make changes. For example, PPNI members are well versed in advocating with the government when there are problems faced by fisherwomen. For Example, in conducting advocacy with the Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. Fisherwomen in PPNI are the vanguard to connect fisherwomen outside PPNI with related stakeholders.

Sharing knowledge between members, PPNI becomes a space of exchanging information and sharing experiences. An example of PPNI Lampung which consists of female shrimp farms, the abundant potential of shrimp in the region has not been accompanied by an increase in the diversification of shrimp products. Raw shrimps are usually sold directly to consumers. A comparative study was carried out between PPNI Lampung and PPNI Gresik which has the knowledge and skill in processing shrimp to make shrimp paste. Exchange of knowledge and inspiration is one of PPNI's strategies in facilitating the empowerment of its members. PPNI Langkat and Indramayu who have similar natural resource potential for mangroves can also exchange knowledge through PPNI. The results of the knowledge sharing inspire innovations in creating new products as alternatives to additional income, for example processing mangroves into chips, syrups, masks and *dodol* (sweet paste). In addition, PPNI members also exchanged information about programs related to maritime and fisheries policies, for example socialization of new laws and regulations concerning their livelihood.

VOICE AND RECOGNITION OF FISHERWOMEN

Indonesian fisherwomen have been dwelling with problems that have yet been resolved, namely regarding the recognition of their entities as 'fisherwomen' by the government. Although fisherwomen are involved in most activities and, in fact, some also go to sea, the government seems unwilling to acknowledge female fisher as "fisherwoman" and is only recognized as housewives to meet family's needs women in Indonesian coast have to take the role of fisherwomen. More than just go into the sea to fish, millions of women are also involved in almost all of the country's fishing chains (binadesa.org).. This definition of fishers does not apply to women who earn a living in the sea as is done by women in various tribes in the country. For example, in Demak, women who catch shellfish, crabs, and other fishery resources, their identity have yet recognized as fisherwomen. The government has provided fishers cards and fishers insurance as a condition to access various fishers' assistance and rights, but in practice the cards and insurance cannot be accessible to fisherwoman. This is what prompted PPNI to advocate the recognition of fisherwomen. PPNI is



advocating so that female fishers have professional identities as fisherwomen on their identity cards (Jurnal Perempuan, 2017). It will show the state's recognition of the existence of women at sea.

CONCLUSION

The Indonesian Sisterhood of Fisherwomen Organization is an example of a fisherwoman movement that is more than an organization fighting for the rights of fisherwomen but a place for member to grow and share. Amidst the double burden and economic limitations, they carry out a surviving strategy through several aspects such as building collective action through self-organizing, social capital as a basis, organizational structure and coordination from the base to national levels, empowerment in various aspects, and knowledge sharing among members. This paper shows the importance to broaden the definition of fishers to be able to portray the reality of fisherwomen. The PPNI movement is intended to carry out social and cultural transformation to provide a fairer life for all community members, including fisherwomen. More to it, is to open up space for fisherwomen to support and grow to always be strong and responsive to the dynamics of changing environmental, social, and political aspects.

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