

## THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN EMPOWERMENT TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY WELFARE IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRAK

Community empowerment is one of the main foundations in sustainable social development. In this regard, various stakeholders, such as the government, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play a very important role. In Indonesia, NGOs have long been recognized as active agents of social change, particularly in efforts to improve community welfare. This research aims to conduct a literature review related to the role of NGOs in empowerment to improve welfare in Indonesia. The research method chosen in this study is the SLR (Systematic Literature Review) method. Data collection is done by documenting and reviewing all articles that have similar research. In this study, 7 Sinta indexed articles were used, which were obtained from Google Scholar with the help of the Publish or Perish application. Based on the literature review conducted, the role of NGOs in community empowerment in Indonesia has a significant impact in improving social and economic welfare. Through various programs, such as mentoring, awareness, advocacy, and training and education.

**Keywords:** *Non Governmental Organization, empowerment.*)

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this literature review is to find out the various roles of Non Governmental Organizations in community empowerment in Indonesia. Community empowerment is one of the main pillars in sustainable social development. In general, community empowerment includes various efforts to increase the capacity of individuals and communities so that they are able to control and direct their own lives. In this context, various parties play an important role, including the government, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In Indonesia, NGOs have long been recognized as active agents of social change, especially in efforts to improve community welfare. Based on data submitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri), as of June 2022 the number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Indonesia reached 512,997 and is expected to continue to increase every year. Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or what in Indonesian is called Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is an organization of individuals or community groups also known as community organizations (Ormas) or Non-Governmental Organizations (LSM) which are formed with certain objectives and are not directly related to the government.

The existence of NGOs in Indonesia is increasingly significant given the complexity of social problems faced, ranging from poverty, social inequality, to education and health problems. Education in this case can help the community develop themselves through a different learning process from formal education which is often more competitive and standardized (Rosmilawati, 2017). This form of non-formal education can be initiated and facilitated by NGOs as part of community empowerment efforts. In this process, NGOs often function as facilitators, mediators and motivators who bridge communities with the resources, knowledge and policies needed to achieve self-reliance and prosperity. The role of NGOs is not only limited to the provision of direct assistance, but also includes policy advocacy and local capacity building.

Community empowerment by NGOs covers a wide range of sectors, from the economy, education, health, to the environment. Each sector has its own characteristics and challenges, thus

requiring a specific and integrated approach. For example, in the economic sector, NGOs are often involved in skill building and entrepreneurship programs, while in the health sector, they focus on counseling and basic health services. These interventions are expected to improve the quality of life and long-term well-being of the community.

This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to identify and analyze the role of NGOs in various community empowerment initiatives in Indonesia. By utilizing the SLR method, this study collects and evaluates various findings from previous studies, so as to provide a comprehensive picture of the contribution of NGOs in improving community welfare. This approach also allows for the identification of knowledge gaps that still need further research.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The SLR method is carried out by identifying, reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting all available research. With this approach, researchers systematically review and identify journal articles in each process following predetermined steps (Triandini, et al. 2019).

The stages of this research are determining the formulation of problems in the form of 1) How is the role of Non Governmental Organizations in empowerment in Indonesia; and 2) How are the obstacles and challenges it faces. Next is to determine the keywords, the search process, the criteria for the selected articles, and the analysis of the selected articles. The following is the determination of the criteria for the literature to be reviewed, which includes: 1) Literature articles published in research journals; 2) Articles published in the last 10 years (2014-2024); 3) Contains Non Governmental Organization elements; and 4) Reviews NGOs in general.

Based on the previously mentioned stages, to complete the study results, researchers collected journal articles that used the keywords role, Non Governmental Organization (NGO), empowerment, or a similar combination of the three. Data collection was done by documenting all articles obtained in this literature review. This study used 7 Sinta-indexed national articles related to the keywords used and obtained from Google Scholar with the help of the Publish or Perish application. The article data is presented in 2 tables. Table 1 includes the year of journal publication, journal name, number of articles, and type of publication. While Table 2 includes authors, research methods, and research results. The articles selected are articles that have similar research. The articles were then analyzed and summarized. The results of this research are then organized into a complete discussion in this article.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The results of the research are presented in two tables containing journal articles that were reviewed. Table 1 presents the research results which include the year of publication of the article, journal name, and type of publication. From the findings obtained, Non-Governmental Organization is a topic that is still hot to study. This is evidenced by the writings contained in journals that have been indexed by Sinta in the last 10 years. Based on 7 journals that contain articles about NGOs, it was found that 1 article was published in a Sinta 3 indexed journal, 3 articles were published in a Sinta 4 indexed journal, and 3 articles were published in a Sinta 6 indexed journal.

Table 1. Indexed Journal Publications

Year	Journal Name	Number of Article	Publication Type
2023	Journal Publichuo	1	Sinta 4
2022	JISIP: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan	2	Sinta 6
2020	Societas: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi & Sosial	1	Sinta 4
2019	Jurnal Penelitian Kesejahteraan Sosial	1	Sinta 3
2017	JUAN: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Negara	1	Sinta 6
2015	Jurnal Pelangi	1	Sinta 4

After the presentation of Table 1 which explains the year of publication of the journal, Table 2 describes the title of the article, the name of the author, the research method, and the findings related to NGOs. From Table 2, it is known that all authors come from Indonesia. This indicates that Indonesian writers have high enthusiasm in researching NGOs. The results of the research data included in this literature review are an analysis and summary of documented articles related to the role of Non Governmental Organizations in empowerment, which are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Authors, Research Methods, and Findings

No.	Author	Research Method	Findings
1.	Daini, N.K.P., & Arif, L.	Qualitatif	The Omah Dhuafa community has carried out its role well, although there are some obstacles in empowering street children, such as limitations in collaborating with the government and limitations in providing training to street children.
2.	Nursansiwati, D.A., & Hidayat, R.	Qualitative – Case Study	Social activism carried out by LAKPESDAM PCNU Bima District through the "Peduli" program for two years (2014-2016) in Oi Bura Village had a significant impact and contributed to increasing social awareness and community empowerment. The organization successfully transferred knowledge about social inclusion, improved basic service delivery, and expanded access to community interaction with the Village Government.
3.	Sauki, M., & Hidayat, R.	Qualitative - Descriptive	Although this program was only fully funded by the International Funding Agency, LAKPESDAM PCNU of Bima District successfully pioneered the application of the concept of active citizenship as a demand. They encouraged certain elements of civil society to have the courage to voice demands to village power holders through alternative channels when facing limited access to participation in regular mechanisms.
4.	Auliya, A.N., Choirunnisa, E., & Arif, L.	Qualitative – Descriptive	NGO SPeKTRA carries out its role with a focus on community welfare, service provision, education development, participation and empowerment, and network building. The partnership is based on a mutualism partnership pattern.
5.	Ngalu, R., Jamun, Y.M., & Wejang, H.E.A.	Qualitative – Case Study	NGOs working in Kabupaten Manggarai have played a role in community empowerment in the socioeconomic field. The strategies developed by NGOs include (1) a group-based approach, (2) changing mindsets, (3) participation and capacity building, and (4) institutional strengthening to achieve long-term independence. Challenges faced by NGOs in carrying out their role include: (1) limited personal capacity of NGOs, (2) limitations of NGOs in determining target villages, (3) inappropriate community mindset, and (4) overly bureaucratic partnerships with the government.
6.	Safitri, D. P., Kurnianingsih, F., & Edison, E.	Qualitative – Descriptive	The government has not yet realized the presence of international actors as a potential to participate in human development in the Riau Islands, especially Bintan. In other words, a positive partnership between the local/village government

		and the NGO The Island Foundation (TIF) has not been established in a balanced manner.
7.	Fitlayeni, R.	Qualitative
		The presence of the NGO Perkumpulan untuk Kajian dan Pengembangan Ekonomi Kerakyatan (PKPEK) has provided a significant increase in community income, especially for dent makers. PKPEK's presence is marked by a change in outlook, which can be seen in the changes in business entities that provide the infrastructure needed by the community, such as assets, labor, and motivation.

## Discussion

### The Role of Non Governmental Organizations in Empowerment in Indonesia

Facts show that currently, the position of civil society institutions such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is considered increasingly strong. NGOs are able to demonstrate their ability as an important part of the institutional structure that continues to try to address various issues such as poverty, rural development, gender equality, environmental conservation, disaster management, human rights, and other social issues. Various activities have been successfully implemented by NGOs-from training and empowering communities, to disseminating research and organizing community groups-with the aim of raising public awareness and encouraging them to take a stand on global issues, including the challenges and difficulties that come with them.

Based on the results of research conducted by Nursansiwi and Hidayat (2022) on the NGO Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (LAKPESDAM) PCNU Kabupaten Bima, it shows that the important role of NGOs in strengthening the community empowerment movement can be through various activities such as assistance (providing space for communication, consolidation, and various experiences), awareness (encouraging critical understanding, active participation, inclusion awareness, and technical understanding), and advocacy (building dynamic interactions between various parties). Within the framework of social empowerment, NGOs can initiate various activities to empower communities or support the development of the independence of certain community groups, namely 1) Identifying the needs of local groups and strategies to address them, 2) Mobilize and agitate to actively pursue the identified needs, 3) Formulate long-term activities to achieve more general development goals, 4) Generate and mobilize local resources for rural development activities, and 5) Manage the planning and implementation of the series of activities.

Another study by Sauki and Hidayat (2022), the role of NGOs in empowerment refers to the characteristics of active citizenship, namely the NGO program seeks to develop the ability of a group of individuals to negotiate and influence public decisions. In a broader scope, citizens participate in the political system to build an effective state in managing public affairs because every individual has the right to create a democratic government. Empowerment with the theme of active citizenship is always looking for strategic ways for citizens, especially the poor and marginalized groups, to be involved in the implementation of development and monitoring the performance of state actors. Sauki and Hidayat's (2022) research on the NGO LAKPESDAM PCNU Bima District program shows that empowerment encourages vulnerable groups (women) to participate more actively to advocate for their priority needs, either directly or through intermediary groups, to the Village Government through regular civic forums in the form of Musdes (Village Deliberation) or Musrenbangdes (Village Development Planning Deliberation).

Specifically for empowerment in the field of environment and development in the community, NGOs have 7 roles that can be used as a reference focus, namely 1) Community welfare and service provision, 2) Emergency relief, 3) Education development, 4) Participation and Empowerment, 5) Self-sufficiency, 6) Advocacy, and 7) Networking. Based on the results of research by Auliya, et al. (2020), the role of NGO SPeKTRA in empowerment through the waste bank program has been running well. SPeKTRA focuses on the environment and community development through the waste bank program in Sidoarjo Regency with several steps. First, for community welfare and service provision, they established a waste bank program. Second, education is developed through socialization to village officials, PKK groups, and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs). Third, participation and empowerment

are carried out with waste recycling training, improving the quality of waste bank cadres, and organizing competition events. Fourth, networking is developed through making partnership proposals, stakeholder mapping for marketing waste management products, and digitalization to introduce waste banks on social media. In running this partnership, NGO SPeKTRA uses a mutualism partnership pattern, which provides benefits for all parties (government, civil society, and private) involved in the waste bank program in Sidoarjo Regency.

The role of NGOs in community empowerment, as reflected in PKPEK (Perkumpulan untuk Kajian dan Pengembangan Ekonomi Masyarakat) (Fitlayeni, 2015), focuses on participatory development. The NGO not only acts as a facilitator, but also as the main driver in improving the economic and social independence of the community, especially after the earthquake in Yogyakarta around 2007. They started by building trust through friendship and regular meetings at the hamlet hall, which became a platform to discuss peyek crafters' problems and marketing strategies. By prioritizing knowledge and capital, PKPEK not only increased the community's understanding of the economic potential of peyek, but also promoted the idea widely, changing the outlook of the local economy and encouraging more individuals to start their own peyek businesses. PKPEK also provides artisans with advice and infrastructure, such as business capital (assets), labor, as well as business motivation to get back on their feet and expand their businesses to create an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth.

The important role of NGOs in improving community welfare in Indonesia has proven vital in various aspects of social and economic development (Fitlayeni, 2015). With a focus on empowerment, NGOs such as Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (LAKPESDAM) and SPeKTRA have successfully implemented various programs that include training, awareness, and advocacy to encourage active community participation in local resource management and environmental protection. Through initiatives such as waste banks and support to post-disaster local economies, NGOs not only support economic self-reliance but also promote awareness of global issues, inspiring positive social change at various levels of the community.

### **Obstacles in Empowerment**

The obstacles identified from literature studies on existing empowerment efforts include limitations in establishing cooperation with government entities, as experienced by the NGO Omah Dhuafa (Daini & Arif, 2023). Although Omah Dhuafa has performed well in aspects of Facilitative Roles and Educational Roles, it still faces challenges in its Representative Roles. This role, which involves social workers or volunteers interacting with external parties for the benefit of the community, has not been fully optimized. This is due to the NGO's limited collaboration with a few government entities and the underperformance of some roles necessary for effective empowerment implementation.

A similar situation is observed with the NGO The Island Foundation (TIF). The government's lack of recognition of TIF's potential as an international actor participating in human development in the Riau Archipelago, particularly Bintan, poses a significant barrier. The government's resource limitations as the sole development agent should encourage it to utilize all potential support resources outside the government itself, including those from private sectors, the community, and international/global actors (Safitri, D. P., & Edison, E., 2017). However, this type of partnership is not yet understood by the local government, both at the Kabupaten Bintan level and at the Desa Berakit government level. In other words, a balanced positive partnership between the local government and TIF has not yet been established.

Other obstacles faced by NGOs in carrying out their roles include: (1) limited personnel capacity, (2) insufficient capacity in targeting, (3) misconceptions among the community, and (4) overly bureaucratic partnerships with the government.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The role of NGOs in community empowerment in Indonesia is highly significant in enhancing social and economic well-being. Through various programs such as mentoring, awareness-raising, advocacy, as well as training and education, NGOs like LAKPESDAM, SPeKTRA, and PKPEK have successfully initiated various activities that empower local communities. They focus on increasing community participation, managing local resources, and developing economic self-sufficiency. These

programs include skills training, environmental education through waste banks, human rights advocacy, and strengthening vulnerable groups such as women. This success is reflected in the increased active participation of the community in civic forums, improved understanding of social and environmental issues, and the development of sustainable local enterprises.

To optimize the role of NGOs in community empowerment, it is recommended to enhance cooperation between NGOs and the government, especially in terms of representation and advocacy. The government needs to be more aware of and leverage the potential support from NGOs as strategic partners in development. Additionally, increasing the capacity of NGO personnel in targeting and implementing empowerment programs is necessary. Education and changing the mindset of the community regarding the importance of active participation in development must be continuously pursued to create an environment that supports sustainable economic and social growth. Emphasis on mutualistic partnerships, where all parties (government, civil society, and the private sector) benefit, should also be strengthened to ensure the continuity and success of empowerment programs.

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