



Synergy of Laz Harfa Institution with Village Government in Economic Empowerment of the Community of Bojongmanik Village, Sindangresmi District, Pandeglang Regency

Ombi Romli*

Emiliawati

Mathla'ul Anwar University Banten

Abstract

The synergy between the Harapan Dhuafa Amil Zakat Institution (LAZ Harfa) and the Bojongmanik Village Government represents a strategic collaboration in empowering rural community economies. This study aims to analyze the process and implementation of community empowerment programs conducted through mentoring, training, and local economic potential development. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method, employing observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The results indicate that the collaboration between LAZ Harfa and the village government has successfully strengthened community capacity in managing local resources, increased household income, and fostered economic independence among villagers. Moreover, this synergy plays a vital role in cultivating social awareness and collective responsibility toward sustainable rural development. This collaborative model is expected to serve as a best practice for other social institutions and village governments in achieving independent and prosperous communities.

Keywords: *Synergy, LAZ Harfa, Village Government, Economic Empowerment, Community Independence*

*Correspondence : Ombiromli.fisip@unmabanten.ac.id

I. Introduction

Community welfare is the main goal of every development effort carried out by both the government and social institutions. A safe, comfortable life, and the fulfillment of basic needs such as food, education, and health are important indicators of the level of community welfare. However, the achievement of welfare cannot take place automatically without continuous intervention and empowerment. Therefore, community empowerment is the main strategy in alleviating poverty and encouraging economic independence at the local level.

The concept of *empowerment* basically means providing power or strength to community groups that do not yet have the ability to live independently. In this context, society is not positioned as an object of development, but as a subject that has great potential to develop if given adequate access, guidance, and opportunities. Community empowerment is carried out through the process of awareness, capacity building, and utilization of the potential of existing local resources.

In Indonesia, community empowerment programs have been carried out by various parties, such as the government, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), community organizations, and private institutions. However, the effectiveness of empowerment is highly dependent on synergy between parties, especially between village governments as local authority holders and social institutions that have the expertise and resources to provide assistance. One form of synergy that is interesting to be studied is the cooperation between the Amil Zakat Harapan Dhuafa Institute (LAZ Harfa) and the Bojongmanik Village Government in Sindangresmi District, Pandeglang Regency.

LAZ Harfa is a social institution engaged in the empowerment of the poor in Banten Province. Through various programs such as economic training, strengthening micro businesses, and assisting community groups, LAZ Harfa seeks to help the community become more economically independent. Meanwhile, the Bojongmanik Village Government has a responsibility to improve the welfare of its citizens through policies and institutional support. The collaboration between the two reflects a form of synergy between non-governmental organizations and village governments that are oriented towards strengthening the community's economy.

The empowerment program in Bojongmanik Village is carried out by utilizing local potential, one of which is the processing of bananas as a leading commodity in the region. Through the assistance and training provided by LAZ Harfa, the community is guided to develop processed products, improve marketing capabilities, and obtain business capital. The program is not only oriented towards increasing family income, but also

encourages collective awareness of the importance of economic independence and active participation in village development.

However, the implementation of empowerment cannot be separated from various challenges. Low interest in some communities, limited knowledge, and lack of coordination between actors are often obstacles to achieving optimal results. Therefore, it is important to understand how the synergy between LAZ Harfa and the village government in overcoming these various obstacles, as well as how the role of this collaboration can strengthen the empowerment of the village community in a sustainable manner.

Based on this background, this research is focused on analyzing the synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government in community economic empowerment. This study is expected to provide an overview of effective cooperation patterns in improving the welfare of village communities and become an example of *best practice* for the implementation of empowerment programs in other regions.

Literature Review

The Concept of Synergy

Synergy comes from the word *synergy* which means cooperation between two or more parties to produce a greater output than the results achieved separately by each. In the context of government and community empowerment, synergy is defined as a form of coordination and collaboration between development actors — both government, non-governmental institutions, and the community — to achieve common goals effectively and efficiently.

According to Hampden-Turner (1990), synergy is the result of a dialogical relationship that combines various sources of knowledge to produce new value. Meanwhile, Silalahi (2013) emphasized that synergy requires coordination to align the activities of individuals and organizational units towards the same direction. In this study, synergy is understood as a joint effort between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government in realizing community economic empowerment through effective coordination and communication.

Najiyati and Rahmawati (2009) emphasized that the success of synergy can be measured from two main aspects, namely communication and coordination. Communication plays a role in building understanding and exchange of information between actors, while coordination ensures that the activities carried out are integrated and mutually supportive. These two aspects are important indicators to assess the success of collaboration between institutions.

Non-Government Organization (NGO)

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are non-profit organizations that play a role in social, humanitarian, and community empowerment. According to Komang (2008), NGOs exist as *agents of change* that seek to strengthen the community through advocacy, mentoring, and capacity building activities.

A distinctive feature of NGOs is their independence from formal political structures and their focus on social, economic, and environmental issues. NGOs are not oriented towards financial gain, but rather on achieving social goals. Sri Sapto (2009) explained that although NGOs are allowed to profit from their activities, the profits should not be distributed to members, but reused to support other social programs.

In the context of this research, LAZ Harapan Dhuafa (Laz Harfa) is one of the NGOs engaged in Islamic philanthropy and empowerment of the poor community. Established in 2004 in Banten, LAZ Harfa has developed various empowerment programs based on zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf (ZISWAF), including economic training programs, micro business development, and strengthening community groups. This institution positions itself as a strategic partner of the village government in implementing economic empowerment programs at the local level.

Village Government and Community Empowerment

According to Government Regulation Number 72 of 2005 concerning Village Government, the village government has the authority to regulate and manage the interests of the local community based on its own initiative, rights of origin, and customs that are recognized and respected in the national government system. In the context of rural development, village governments play an important role as facilitators, mediators, and implementers of policies related to community welfare.

Community empowerment is one of the main tasks of the village government. This process includes not only the building of individual capacity, but also the establishment of social and institutional structures that support community independence. Zubaedi (2013) called empowerment an effort to improve people's ability to make their own life choices, while Edi Suharto (2005) emphasized that empowerment aims to restore power to people who have lost access to productive resources.

In the context of this research, the Bojongmanik Village Government acts as the main liaison between the community and LAZ Harfa. The village government's support is realized through the provision of policies, local regulations, and administrative support for community groups participating in empowerment programs. This synergy allows for a more systematic, directed, and sustainable empowerment process.

Economic Empowerment Concept

Community economic empowerment is a process that aims to improve the ability of individuals and groups to access economic resources, manage local potential, and improve their standard of living. According to Jim Iff (in Suharto, 2005), empowerment is the process of increasing the power of weak people in order to participate in decision-making that affects their lives.

Economic empowerment is not only oriented towards increasing income, but also on strengthening social capacity, education, and collective awareness. Training programs, business assistance, and the formation of economic groups are the main means in this empowerment process. In this study, empowerment was carried out through mentoring activities for micro business groups based on local potential such as processing bananas and other derivative products.

The activity reflects the implementation of the principle of people-centered development, namely human-centered development. The process is *participatory*, *sustainable*, and strengthens community independence (*empowering*). Thus, economic empowerment is not only a technical activity, but also a social process that encourages the community to transform into the main actor of village development.

Research Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research focuses on the relationship between three main variables, namely institutional synergy (LAZ Harfa and Village Government), the economic empowerment process, and community independence. The synergy of the institution is realized through two indicators: communication and coordination. Economic empowerment includes training, mentoring, and the development of micro businesses based on local potential. Meanwhile, the expected result is an increase in the ability of the community to manage businesses independently and sustainably.

The synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government reflects a collaboration model between the social sector and the government that can strengthen the effectiveness of development programs at the grassroots level. This collaboration is expected to be an example of good practices in the implementation of community economic empowerment based on local potential in rural areas of Indonesia.

II. Research Methods

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the purpose of the research, which is to understand and describe in depth the form of synergy between the Amil Zakat Harapan Dhuafa Institution (LAZ Harfa) and the Bojongmanik Village Government in community economic empowerment. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of the parties involved in the empowerment program, rather than simply measuring the relationship of variables quantitatively.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research aims to explore social phenomena based on the views of the research subjects. The results are both narrative and interpretive. Thus, this study not only explains the facts on the ground, but also interprets the meaning behind the synergy process between the two institutions in the context of economic development of rural communities.

Qualitative descriptive research is also used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing social conditions in the community, so that the results of the research can provide a real picture of how the communication, coordination, and collaboration patterns are carried out by LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government.

Research Location and Time

The research was carried out in Bojongmanik Village, Sindangresmi District, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, as well as at the LAZ Harfa office as a partner of the empowerment program implementing institution. This location was chosen because it is one of the assisted areas of LAZ Harfa which runs a community economic empowerment program based on local potential.

The research activities lasted for six months, starting from February to August 2022, including the preparation stage, data collection, analysis, and report preparation. This period of time is considered adequate to conduct in-depth observations and interviews with all informants relevant to the research topic.

Data Sources and Types

The data in this study consists of two types, namely primary data and secondary data.

Primary data was obtained directly from the results of in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation of empowerment activities in Bojongmanik Village. This data includes the views, experiences, and perceptions of the parties involved, such as LAZ Harfa management, village officials, and beneficiary communities.

Secondary data were obtained through documentation studies, including activity reports, program archives, government regulations, and relevant literature on community empowerment, institutional synergy, and village development.

These two types of data are used in an integrated manner to strengthen the validity of the research results.

Informant Determination Techniques

The selection of informants is carried out by *purposive sampling technique*, which is to choose sources deliberately based on the consideration that they are considered to know and understand the problem being researched the most.

The main informants in this study include:

1. Head of Bojongmanik Village (Sukri S.Pd.I) – as the village government responsible for local development policies.
2. Secretary of Bojongmanik Village (M. Nikmat) – as the technical implementer of village activities and the administrative liaison of the program.
3. LAZ Harfa Field Coordinator (Isnén Jaya) – as the person in charge of economic empowerment activities.
4. LAZ Harfa Facilitator (Rusdianti) – as a companion to the community in the implementation of the program.
5. Chairman and member of the An-Nisa Berkah Mandiri Microfinance Group (Yaya, Nunung, Heni) – as a direct beneficiary of the economic empowerment program.

The selection of informants is carried out until the data obtained is considered saturated (data saturation), which is when the information obtained has been repeated and no new findings have emerged.

Data Collection Techniques

To obtain accurate and in-depth data, the following techniques are used:

- Observation: was carried out to directly observe the mentoring and training activities carried out by LAZ Harfa with the people of Bojongmanik Village. These observations help researchers understand the social dynamics and forms of community participation in the program.
- In-depth interviews: conducted face-to-face with informants using semi-structured interview guidelines. This technique allows researchers to explore the informant's views more freely while still focusing on the research theme.
- Documentation: in the form of collecting written data such as activity reports, photos, organizational archives, and administrative documents from LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government that are relevant to the empowerment program.

The combination of these three techniques aims to enrich the data and provide a comprehensive picture of the synergy process that occurs in the field.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out inductively by following the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn/verification.

Data reduction is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data from interviews and observations to suit the research objectives.

The presentation of data was carried out in the form of a narrative description that described the pattern of communication and coordination between LAZ Harfa and the Village Government.

Conclusions were drawn after all the data were analyzed to find the meaning and relationships between findings, and related them to the theory of synergy and community empowerment.

The analysis was carried out from the time the data collection process took place and continued until the final stage of the research, so that the researcher could adjust the focus based on the field findings.

Data Validity Test

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various informants, while method triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

In addition, *a member check is also carried out*, which is to confirm the results of provisional findings to informants to ensure the correctness of the data obtained. Thus, the results of the research can be scientifically accounted for and reflect objective conditions in the field.

Research Limitations

The researcher is aware of limitations, such as relatively short research time, limited number of informants, and dynamic social conditions in the field. However, maximum efforts have been made to keep the data obtained credible and relevant to the research objectives.

III. Results and Discussion

Overview of Research Locations

This research was conducted in Bojongmanik Village, Sindangresmi District, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province. This village has an area of about 2,500 hectares with a population of ±4,300 people. Most of the people make a living as farmers and small business actors based on local agriculture. One of the prominent natural potentials in this village is the production of bananas, which then became the basis for the development of community economic empowerment programs.

The LAZ Harapan Dhuafa Institute (LAZ Harfa) is the main partner of the Bojongmanik Village Government in this empowerment program. LAZ Harfa is an amil zakat institution that was established in 2004 and is engaged in the social, educational, health, and economic empowerment of the poor in Banten Province. This institution has long experience in community assistance and the management of social funds based on zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf. Through the Desa Harapan program, LAZ Harfa seeks to develop a sustainable model of village community empowerment.

A Form of Synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Village Government

The synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government is realized through two main indicators, namely coordination and communication. Both are key to the implementation of effective and sustainable economic empowerment programs.

a. Coordination

Coordination is carried out in various forms, including the preparation of activity schedules, the determination of target groups, and the division of roles of each institution. The Village Government plays a role in providing administrative support, activity permits, and coordinating community participation. Meanwhile, LAZ Harfa acts as a technical implementer who provides direct assistance, entrepreneurship training, and the distribution of business capital assistance.

Based on the results of the interview, the Head of Bojongmanik Village stated that coordination with LAZ Harfa was going well and was routinely carried out through meetings every six months. This meeting became a forum to evaluate the progress of the program and discuss follow-up strategies. Good coordination between the two institutions results in a mutual understanding in determining the direction of empowerment policies.

b. Communication

Communication between LAZ Harfa, the village government, and the community is carried out openly and participatoryly. LAZ Harfa routinely conducts field visits to monitor activities and dialogue with community groups. LAZ Harfa facilitators play an important role as a liaison between the community and institutions, as well as a companion who provides motivation and technical guidance.

However, the results of the study show that communication between the village government and community groups is still not optimal. Some members of the An-Nisa Berkah Mandiri economic group admitted that they

rarely interact directly with the village government. This condition shows the need to improve vertical communication so that the synergy built is more inclusive and participatory.

Implementation of Economic Empowerment Programs

The empowerment program carried out in Bojongmanik Village is focused on the formation of the An-Nisa Berkah Mandiri Microfinance Group (KKM). This group has been accompanied by LAZ Harfa since November 2021 and consists of 25 female members. The purpose of forming the group is to develop local economic potential and strengthen the role of women in the family economy.

The mentoring program includes several main activities, namely:

- Training in processing local products, such as processed banana and cassava innovations into products with high selling value.
- Business management training, including simple financial record-keeping and marketing strategies.
- Capital assistance, through a revolving fund grant from LAZ Harfa for the development of small businesses of group members.

The results of observations show that this training and mentoring activity is able to increase people's skills and confidence in managing micro businesses. Most of the group members began producing products that were sold in the village environment and local markets. In addition to providing economic benefits, this activity also strengthens social relations between members and fosters the spirit of mutual cooperation.

The Impact of Synergy on Community Independence

The synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government has a positive impact on increasing community capacity. Based on the results of interviews with the informants, some of the real changes that occurred include:

- Improvement of economic skills, especially in terms of production and marketing of local products.
- Strengthening the institutional capacity of community groups, which are able to manage revolving capital independently.
- Increasing social awareness and participation of the community, especially women, in productive economic activities.

The impact of this synergy can also be seen from the increase in household income of some group members. Although still on a small scale, these results show a positive direction towards the economic independence of the village community. Thus, collaboration between social institutions and village governments can become a model of sustainable community-based development.

Analysis of Barriers and Challenges

Although the synergy is going quite well, this study found several obstacles that need to be considered:

- Low participation of some people, mainly due to lack of understanding of the benefits of the program.
- The lack of direct communication between the village government and the community, which has the potential to cause an information gap.
- Limited resources and funds, both from the village and accompanying institutions, which limit the expansion of the program's scope.

Facing this challenge, it is necessary to improve the quality of coordination between actors and a more intensive communication strategy. The village government needs to strengthen the role of local facilitators so that empowerment activities are more integrated and sustainable.

Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with the synergy theory put forward by Najiyati and Rahmawati (2009), that the success of collaboration between institutions is determined by the effectiveness of communication and coordination. In this case, the synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government shows how cross-sector collaboration is able to create real social and economic change.

In addition, the results of this study support the concept of empowerment put forward by Edi Suharto (2005), that community empowerment is not only about improving the economy, but also increasing public awareness, confidence, and social capacity.

Thus, the synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government can be considered as an effective partnership model in the development of a community-based local economy. If managed consistently

and sustainably, this model has the potential to strengthen the independence of rural communities in various other regions.

IV. Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusion

This research illustrates that the synergy between the Amil Zakat Harapan Dhuafa Institution (LAZ Harfa) and the Bojongmanik Village Government in community economic empowerment is a form of strategic collaboration between social institutions and the local government to realize the independence of the village community. Through a good communication and coordination approach, both parties succeeded in creating an empowerment program that focuses on increasing the economic capacity of communities based on local potential.

The results of the study show that this synergy is manifested in various forms of activities, such as business skills training, assistance for economic groups, and the provision of revolving capital. This program encourages the community, especially women's groups, to be more active in productive economic activities. The An-Nisa Berkah Mandiri Microfinance Group is a real example of how community-based empowerment can increase skills, confidence, and social solidarity among citizens.

The impact resulting from this collaboration includes increasing family income, increasing people's skills in managing businesses, and growing awareness of the importance of economic independence. The synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Village Government also strengthens the role of the community as a subject of development, not just an object of assistance. Thus, this partnership can be categorized as a model of best practice for empowering village communities that is relevant to be applied in other regions.

However, there are still several obstacles that need to be considered, including low participation of some communities, limited resources, and lack of direct communication between the village government and the community. Therefore, the sustainability of the program is highly dependent on improved cross-stakeholder coordination and ongoing support from various stakeholders.

Suggestions

Based on the results of the research, some suggestions that can be submitted are as follows:

1. For the Village Government, it is necessary to increase the intensity of communication with the community so that the implementation of the program is more participatory. The village government can also integrate these empowerment activities into the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) so that the program has a clear legal and sustainability basis.
2. For LAZ Harfa, it is hoped to expand the scope of mentoring programs and strengthen entrepreneurship training based on local product innovation. The development of market networks is also important so that people's production has a higher selling value.
3. For the people of Bojongmanik Village, it is necessary to foster awareness and active participation in every empowerment activity. Economic independence can only be achieved if the community has commitment and responsibility in managing the programs that have been facilitated.

By strengthening collaboration between actors and maintaining program sustainability, the synergy between LAZ Harfa and the Bojongmanik Village Government is expected to become a model of participatory development oriented towards the independence and welfare of rural communities.

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