

IMPROVING MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE OF PEAT ARBORETUM MANAGERS POST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BENGKALIS DISTRICT

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Abstract

The existence of the Peat Arboretum is very important for environmental preservation, especially in areas that have extensive peatlands. It's just that its existence is less of a concern to the parties concerned. The manager has experienced a lack of income due to the absence of adequate management activities. The purpose of this community service activity is to improve the managerial competency of managing the Post-Covid 19 Pandemic Peat Arboretum in Bengkalis Regency. The implementation method used is a participatory approach and counseling and active assistance aimed at the management of the Peat Arboretum in Bukit Batu District, Bengkalis Regency. The results of the dedication show that the management of the Peat Arboretum as eco-tourism requires support from various parties. It is not enough just to rely on corporate CSR or government projects. Especially since the Covid 19 pandemic practically the activity of visiting tourists to locations has been greatly reduced. Managerial competence is felt to be important to the attention of all stakeholders in the management of the Peat Arboretum, because all team members can experience an increase in their leadership competence. Managerial competence makes coordination and communication easier, members are more open, and members feel valued and there is member attachment to the team.

Keywords: *Peat Arboretum, Managerial competence, Community welfare*

1. INTRODUCTION

Management of peatlands often fails, whether it is carried out by the government, the private sector or the community (Zulkarnaini, et al., 2020; Noer, 2016). One of the causes for this to happen is because the programs carried out only focus on restoring the ecological functions of peatlands and ignore community empowerment (Zulkarnaini & Lubis, 2018). In fact, by involving the community, the needs of the community in the area will be known. Realizing the importance of community-based peatland management, PT. Pertamina UR II Sungai Pakning, Bengkalis Regency, created the Bestari Peat Village Program.

The Kampung Gambut Bestari program is basically Pertamina's CSR program to integrate environmental restoration and community empowerment (Zulkarnaini, 2021). The form is in the form of environmental improvements, more empowered communities, and more advanced economies. This program has become an example and inspiration for further development elsewhere because it can inspire

existing stakeholders. In carrying out this program, the community is fully involved in the management of peatlands, starting from the addition of extinguishing equipment, the establishment of the Fire Concerned Community Communication Forum (Forkompa) to fire suppression training (Zulkarnaini & As'ari, 2019).

In addition, this program utilizes burnt peatlands through pineapple cultivation farming and supervised processing of pineapple products such as chips, dodol, sweets and jam. The company even fostered nine elementary schools by instilling the values of Kampung Peat Berdikari from an early age. The implementation is that the school has an environment-based curriculum that raises issues of preventing land and forest fires and exploiting the potential of peat areas. By involving the community in restoration and restoration programs, and peatland conservation, such as in Kampung Gambut Berdikari, community awareness will emerge. From here the community will participate in the preservation and maintenance of peat, along with increasing their welfare (Prakitri, et.al., 2016).

Among the environmental conservation programs in the Berdikari Gambut Village Program that has become the center of attention for environmentalists is the development of peat forests into a Peat Arboretum. This program is the first in Sumatra and makes it a community-managed eco-tourism facility. The Peat Arboretum is intended as an educational and tourism facility, especially for the younger generation to introduce the function of peatlands as the main support for ecosystems in Riau Province in general. The point is that this program is expected to trigger and encourage other regions to develop the same program, namely by involving the community's participation in the conservation of peatlands (Nizam & Yasir, 2022).

This Peat Arboretum is located on original land that was saved from fire with a land area of 1.1 Ha. Apart from having a restoration function, the Peat Arboretum also has an educational function by becoming a learning facility for school students and researchers from universities around the Pakning River area as a field learning laboratory (Nizam & Yasir, 2022). Economically, the Peat Arboretum also provides separate income for the management group from ticket sales, food, and cultivated plants that visitors can take home.

Management of the Peat Arboretum as eco-tourism requires support from various parties. It is not enough just to rely on corporate CSR or government projects. Especially since the Covid 19 pandemic practically the activity of visiting tourists to locations has been greatly reduced. The manager has experienced a lack of income due to the absence of adequate management activities. This condition must immediately find a way out so that Peat Arboretum management activities can return to normal. The current endemic period should be taken advantage of by the management to be able to restore conditions to the way they were before.

Managerial competence is very important to the attention of all stakeholders in the management of this Peat Arboretum. Why is it important, because all team members can feel an increase in their leadership competence, coordination and communication are easier, members are more open, members feel valued and members are attached to the team (Valentiana, et.al., 2022). The main aspects that are considered in increasing this competency include knowledge, skills, and attitudes/behaviors that can be observed, measured, developed to lead and/or manage organizational units (Darlita, 2019). This is important because competencies can affect performance; with abilities that If the ability of

the members is low, then the performance will not be achieved.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This community service activity will be carried out using the multihelix method because it is considered relevant in the effort to realize sustainable development (SDGs) in accordance with the goals set by the Government of Indonesia, namely to accommodate the local wisdom of productive communities and institutions in order to survive and also develop. In accordance with the goals of the SDGs, the locus of community service is carried out at the Marsawa Peat Arboretum, Bukit Batu District, Bengkalis Regency, whose status has reached a productive stage that has survived, but needs refreshment in developing. So that in the future it remains adaptive and diffuses well in any era of development so that development still involves future generations (Mayarni, et al, 2021).

The steps for community service activities to be carried out are: 1) Equal Perception of the Purpose of Community Service Activities. This stage was carried out as an initial form of agreement to carry out community service partners between Riau University and partners, namely PT. Pertamina RU II Pakning River and Peat Arboretum Manager. The perception equalization activity is carried out by producing a partnership certificate output and agreeing to always collaborate during community service activities. 2) Debriefing the Community Service Team with the Integration Kukerta Group. The community service activities carried out will involve 10 students from various different faculties in order to enrich the community service activities. Students as a supporting system who are in the field for 40 days (adjusting to the maximum rules for implementing Kukerta). 3) Community Service Activities Pattern of Institutional Partnerships. Service activities by gathering all partners and the community through FGDs with the aim of collecting and identifying problems and potential that can be developed by the community. Then collecting the cumulative results of secondary activities that have been carried out by students, coordinating with partners, the primary service activities are carried out slowly. Community service activities carried out with a pattern of forming related development, social capital that has been formed. 4) Monitoring, Evaluation and Recommendation of the Multi Helix Institutional Partnership Pattern. This stage is the basic stage for implementing community service in the second year, after carrying out community service activities, the community service team will develop a model of an appropriate institutional

partnership pattern in accordance with the stages of community service that have been carried out.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bukit Batu District has the potential of natural resources on land and in the ocean that can be utilized for community development with the concept of community empowerment. These existing natural resources are in the form of mangrove ecosystems and peat ecosystems which must be maintained and preserved with the concept of sustainable development (Yasir, et.al, 2020). However, during the last few decades many peatland areas have been cleared for various purposes. The problem is that many of these opening activities are motivated by short-term economic interests overriding long-term considerations of environmental aspects (Agus, et.al, 2014). What was then produced was a number of failures and losses experienced by the community, especially in the fields of ecology, economy and health (Masganti, et. Al., 2014). The haze that often appears during the dry season is one of the impacts that can be avoided due to unwise management of peatlands (Darmawan, 2015).

The establishment of the Marsawa Peat Arboretum in Bukit Batu District was the first in Sumatra and made it a community-managed educational tourism facility. The peat arboretum is intended for education and tourism facilities, especially for the younger generation to introduce the function of peatlands as the main support for ecosystems in Riau Province in general. The bottom line is that this program is expected to trigger and encourage other regions to develop the same program, namely by involving the community's participation in peatland conservation.

To find solutions for community development (empowerment), the first step is for the service team assisted by Kukerta Integrasi students to hold a Focus Group Discussion/FGD or focus group discussion in the Discussion Room/Marsawa Peat Arboretum Hall by inviting relevant stakeholders and inviting partners from the business world, namely PT. Pertamina International RU II Sungai Pakning Refinery. This method relies on obtaining data or information from an interaction of informants or respondents based on the results of discussions in a group that focuses on conducting discussions in solving certain problems. Data or information obtained through this technique, apart from being group information, is also an opinion and decision of the group.



Figure 1. FGD implementation with partner groups

The characteristics of the implementation of FGD activities are carried out objectively and externally. FGDs require trained and reliable facilitators/moderators to facilitate discussions so that the interactions that occur between participants are focused on solving problems. The main strength of the FGD method is the ability to use interactions between participants to obtain a more dense depth and richness of data that is not obtained from in-depth interviews.

The FGD method, based on practicality and cost, is a cost-effective/inexpensive data collection method, flexible, practical, elaborative and can collect more data from respondents in a short time. In addition, the FGD method facilitates the freedom of opinion of the individuals involved. Synergy activities with village officials and local community groups are very important. The Kukerta service team and students and their partners, namely PT. The Pertamina Internasional RU II Sungai Pakning refinery in this activity tried to build communication by means of group discussions (FGD) as



an initial stage before touching the wider community. The aim is to convey the intent and purpose of carrying out this service activity.

Through this FGD it was agreed that the utilization of burnt peatlands could be managed through pineapple cultivation and servicing the processing of pineapple products such as chips, dodol, sweets and jam. The peat soils in Bukit Batu District have existed for a long time Figure 2. Craft businesses that need to be developed

used for pineapple cultivation with a total production of 3 tonnes/ha (2021). Considering that the potential for horticulture development, especially pineapples, is still wide open, opportunities for pineapple farmers are still wide open to make pineapple a mainstay commodity. However, this could not be realized because high production in the form of fresh pineapples was not matched by demand. Demand spikes only at certain times, namely when welcoming religious celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Christmas and Chinese New Year, because consumers use pineapples as raw material in making holiday cakes.

This program is expected to trigger and encourage other regions to develop the same program, namely by involving the community's participation in the conservation of peatlands. However, the existence of this peat arboretum is still managed in a traditional way and seems to be what it is. Its existence is not widely known to the public. It seems that the management does not yet have a plan for the development of this object in the short, medium and long term. Technological elements have not touched on development efforts which actually have the potential to become alternative livelihoods for their daily life needs. Its main potential is to become a place for edutourism, which combines education and tourism.



Figure 3. Open training related to management managerial competencies

The Peat Arboretum also succeeded in identifying peat-specific plants that were saved from land and forest fires, and attempted to cultivate peat-specific plants so

they were not threatened with extinction. Some of the rare plants that are being conserved in this activity include *Nepenthes spectabilis*, Meranti (*Shorea Pinanga*), Jelutung (*Dyera Castula Hook*), Red Palm (*Cryptoctachys Lakka*). These plants are included in the endemic category which can only grow well on peatlands.

4. KESIMPULAN

Communities living in the peatlands of Bukit Batu District in general and the managers of the Peat Arboretum in particular have a limited standard of understanding of program development. In such conditions, they need additional knowledge and skills through training and providing understanding on an ongoing basis, so that they don't have wrong goals in utilizing peatlands and managing peat arboretum. Basically managing peatlands in the form of establishing a Peat Arboretum requires support and commitment from all parties. This is because the participation of stakeholders or stakeholders is closely related to the competence of stakeholders as one of the capital in its management. Through good managerial competence, knowledge, skills, and attitudes/behavior that can be observed, measured, developed to lead and/or manage the organization can be increased..

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