

DOMINASI EXPERT AGENT DALAM PROGRAM-PROGRAM PEMBANGUNAN PEDESAAN

Domination of Expert Agent in The Rural Development Programs

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine the implementation of rural development programs. The study also shows an alternative model in how these programs could be conducted effectively. A case study approach were implemented to unveil the distribution of development programs organized by groups of farmers (Poktan) and the union of them (Gapoktan) in Sidoasri village, Sumbermanjing Wetan, Malang. The result of the study reveals that Gapoktan Committee as the expert agent dominated the mechanism and distribution of programs. In contrast, Gapoktan members only received passively the development programs and were not able to participate and initiate a change on these mechanism. In order to distribute the programs effectively, a participative model is highly required. There should be an ongoing assistance so the farmers could participate in decision making processes continually, from identifying problems, finding the solution to the problems, and monitoring as well as evaluating these programs. This model would be effective to achieve empowerment objective of the rural development programs

Keywords: Gapoktan, Participation, Rural Development Programs, farmers and Poktan

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengelolaan bantuan Kementrian Pertanian yang diberikan kepada petani. Kajian tersebut dilakukan sebagai upaya untuk menggagas model pendampingan yang efektif dalam mengelola bantuan pertanian. Metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus diimplementasikan untuk menelaah pengelolaan bantuan pertanian yang diorganisir kelompok tani (Poktan) dan gabungan kelompok tani (Gapoktan) di Desa Sidoasri Kecamatan Sumbermanjing Wetan Kabupaten Malang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengelolaan bantuan pertanian petani di Desa Sidoasri didominasi pengurus Gapoktan sebagai *expert agent*. Anggota Gapoktan hanya berperan sebagai pihak penerima bantuan saja dan tidak memiliki kemampuan atau kesempatan untuk menciptakan inisiatif untuk melakukan perubahan terhadap kebijakan pengelolaan bantuan yang diterapkan para pengurus. Kondisi ini menjadikan pengelolaan bantuan terpusat dan tidak tepat sasaran. Agar bantuan pertanian ini berjalan lebih efektif, maka model pengelolaan bantuan yang bersifat partisipatif menjadi penting dilakukan. Partisipasi anggota Gapoktan dalam model tersebut perlu ditopang pendampingan yang berkelanjutan supaya keterlibatan petani bersifat holistik dan konsisten. Pendampingan berkelanjutan diproyeksi mendorong anggota Gapoktan terlibat sejak tahap mengidentifikasi masalah, memunculkan alternatif pemecahan masalah, memutuskan solusi untuk mengatasi problematika hingga mengevaluasi solusi yang diimplementasikan. Pendampingan dengan model ini berpotensi meningkatkan partisipasi petani dalam penentuan kebijakan pengelolaan bantuan pertanian. Partisipasi inilah yang ditawarkan sebagai jalan keluar bagi perbaikan pengelolaan bantuan pertanian.

Kata kunci: Gapoktan, partisipasi, pendampingan berkelanjutan, petani, dan Poktan

INTRODUCTION

Most of people in Indonesia make their living from agriculture. Almost 38 million people has been employed in this sector (Mohamad, 2014). In fact, the agriculture sector has contributed to the highest number of poverty compare to other sectors, for instance mining industries and plantation (Pranadji & Hastuti, 2004; Mohamad, 2014). Most of those people lived at subsistence level. At this level, the farmers expend most of their harvest for consuming rather than selling it for commercial reasons. As a consequence, they always live in poverty. It can be seen from the increasing number of poor people in village from 17.37 million in September 2014 to 17.94 million in March 2015 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2016). Government has attempted to identify the problems hindering the development of the agricultural sector as well as to set several development programs to deal with the problems. Including in these

programs are *Program Pengembangan Kecamatan* (PPK - The District Development Program) conducted by the Department of Domestic Affairs, *Program Penanggulangan Kemiskinan di Perkotaan* (P2KP – The Poverty Alleviation Program in Urban Areas) by the Department of Public Works, *Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Mandiri* (PNPM - The Community Empowerment National Program) and others. The main objective of these programs is to increase the community's welfare and mitigate the poverty issues. Nevertheless, referring to the fact that the number of poverty keeps getting worse, those community development programs have been considerably ineffective.

There have been scholar's assumptions which explain the ineffectiveness of those community development programs including: (1) 'target' and 'top-down' approaches; (2) ignorance of local wisdom and 'outsiders' bias; (3) lack of

participation; (4) less holistic approach; and (5) investment illusion (Pranadji & Hastuti, 2004; Hadi, 2010). Hadi continues to explain that these factors contribute to the failure of poverty alleviation programs in some areas around Asia and Africa.

Some prior research studies concerning on the poverty alleviation programs in rural areas have been conducted to evaluate the ineffectiveness of these programs (Akhmadi, Siregar, & Hutagaol, 2016; Ariyati, 2011; Suryana, 2015). However, these studies have not been able to explain the limitation of those programs comprehensively. Some of those studies argue that the failure of the community development programs to address poverty issues has risen due to the structural factors (macro perspective) including government interest bias and top-down strategy in the implementation of these programs (Desiree & Rizal, 1993; Welker, 2012; Yuwono & Prasadjo, 2013). This has given rise to several consequences. First, the government more concerns on the way in which its development programs could be conducted successfully than establishes the programs which are appropriate to the local community needs (Pranadji & Hastuti, 2004). Second, the top-down planning approach has required the farmers to always depend on the support of government, for instance in conducting the agriculture programs (Pujiharto, *Kajian Pengembangan Gabungan Kelompok Tani*, 2010). On the other hand, other studies believed that the effectiveness of the agriculture programs is highly affected by the capacity of individual or agent, for instance the ability of group of farmers to access and undertake these programs (micro perspective) (Hafinuddin, M., Mulyaningsih, A., & Salamessy, 2013; Lastinawati, 2011; Syahyuti, 2007).

The target of this study is to examine several issues which hamper the implementation of the agriculture programs more comprehensively, both at micro (agents or individuals) and macro (structure) level. Structuration theory of Anthony Giddens will be employed to capture the duality relations between structure and agent. This study also exhibits an alternative model of which the participation of the farmers could be encouraged in this program. The research study will be located in Desa Sidoasri, Kec. Sumbermanjing Wetan, Kab. Malang.

METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was employed to capture the complexity problems and issues in the implementation of the rural development programs. Data was collected by utilizing semi-structured interview; Focus Group Discussion (FGD); observation; and documentation. All supporting data from Central Bureau of Statistics, Gapoktan, and the monograph of Desa Sidoasri were examined. Based on purposive technique, this study selected fifteen (15) informants based several criterias including their involvement and responsibility in the implementation of the rural development programs. Included in these informants are Department of Agriculture and Plantation of Malang Regency, the head of committee of Gapoktan of Sidoasri village, farmer members of Gapoktan, as well the field assistance officer in relation to the government's empowerment programs.

Community Development Programs for Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas

Community development programs have been assumed could address the poverty issues in rural areas in Indonesia (Pranadji, 2004; Rosyadi & Rusli, 2014; Firstiana, 2012). Kenny (2006) explains that community development refers to processes, tasks, practices and visions for empowering communities to take collective responsibility for their own development to achieve a better life. This means that community empowerment becomes the key principle as well as main objective of community development. To achieve this objective, community development practitioners must adopt self-help principles which need community to participate in conducting the development programs. The participation process would be able to increase capability of individual or community so they can take responsibility for their own programs (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006).

In regard to agricultural programs, these programs should be conducted to achieve empowerment of people in rural areas and sustainability of the programs (Pranadji, 2004). Therefore, the community members in rural areas should become subject rather than object by participating in the development processes, from the planning of the programs, identifying problems and finding the solutions to these problems (Utami, 2013; Santoso & Erniasih, 2016). Taylor and McKenzie (1992) and Adisasmita (2006) argue that the development of rural areas will require the local community's.

There are two approaches or models by which the community development programs could be conducted which are top-down and bottom-up models (Larrison, 2002). Each of these models has different methodologies for conducting development programs. The top-down model will require assistance of outsiders, for instance external professionals, governments, NGOs, which plant, implement and evaluate these programs (Macdonald, 1995). In contrast, the bottom-up model gives an opportunity for people within communities to participate in designing their own development process (Larrison, 2002). Turner (2007) and Larrison (2002) indicate that the bottom-up is the better method or model to listen and respond to the community needs in order to accomplish community empowerment objective.

The Organization of Farmers as an Access to Agricultural Programs

The farmers in Sidoasri Desa are structurally classified into two groups of Poktan Sidomakmur I and Sidomakmur II. Both of Poktan form a wider group entitled Gabungan Kelompok Tani (Gapoktan – the union of Poktan) Sidomakmur. The establishment of the union was supported by the program of farmers' empowerment provided by the government of Malang Regency. The empowerment represented into the delivery of the assistance from Department of Fisheries and Marine, Department of Irrigation, and Department of Agriculture and Plantation indicated the existence of farming organization as the responsible party of the assistance. The forming of the

union was considered effective for the empowerment program by government (Syahyuti, 2007; Pujiharto, 2010; Mutmainah & Sumardjo, 2014). The union became an open door for the assisting programs from the government to the farmers.

Most empowerment programs for the farmers' union of Desa Sidoasri were in the form of physical and infrastructure assistance and farming aids. First, infrastructure assistance programs such as water pump, grant for restoring the irrigation infrastructure, grant for building dams and embankments in watershed areas. The second one are farming aids such as tractor, diesel engine, copper engine, paddy seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides ahead of the growing seasons. Gapoktan managed all of those programs for farmer's needs in Sidoasri.

Table 1. Empowerment Programs in Sidoasri

Institution	Development Programs
Dinas Pengairan	water pump grant for restoring the irrigation infrastructure
Dinas Perkebunan dan Pertanian	diesel engine copper engine paddy, durian, and rambutan seeds fertilizers pesticides tractor
Dinas Perikanan dan Kelautan	grant for building dams embankments in watershed areas mangrove grant for building bridges sea level gauges

Source: based on interview conducted with Gapoktan on September 2th 2014

Domination of Gapoktan Managers in Distribution and Utilization of Agricultural Development Program

In addition to the domination of agricultural programs, particularly physical and infrastructure programs, the study also reveals the dominance of Gapoktan managers in the utilization and distribution of agricultural programs. The condition is apparent from the relation established between Gapoktan managers and its members which can be analyzed by using Giddens' structuration theory.

The notion of structuration refers to 'the way in which the social structure is produced, reproduced, and transformed into and through repetitive and patterned social practices across space and time' (Giddens, 2010). In essence, structuration explaining how humans interact in society by its motivations and external forces (MacKay & Tambeau, 2013; Lamsal, 2012). In accordance with this definition, the structuration in this study can be seen through the existing practices and can be carried out in the application of agricultural assistance programs. To explain the theory of structuration, Giddens (2010) lays out three main concepts of structure, system and

duality of structure, more particularly in its connection among the agents (actors) and structures. In the view of Giddens (2010), structures are defined as 'rules and resources', that are orders and resources (structural things), which are always produced and reproduced, and have duality relations with the agency, and produced various social practices and actions. The structure is the medium as well as the result of the structurally repeated actions. The definition of agency or actor, according to Giddens (2010), is concrete people in a continuous flow between actions and events. Agency refers to people's capacity to define their own decisions and to override the agency of others (Kabeer, 1999). Meanwhile, the concept of a structure is described as relationships reproduced among actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices. Structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures (Sewell, 1992).

The present study defines structures as the assistance programs by the government. As a form of structure, the agricultural assistance programs are a means as well a result of social practice in the mode of program implementation. As explained previously, the development programs were conducted by distributing these programs to the farmers. Related to this distribution mechanism, Gapoktan manager have established three policies. **First**, in terms of rice seeds distribution, the members of Gapoktan who purchase 10 kg of rice seeds have to exchange the seeds with 10 kg of dry rice seeds of their crop. **Second**, the Gapoktan managers have conducted rental system by which the farmer members are allowed to use the water pump and tractor engine. However, the farmers should pay amount of money per hour in using it. **Third** the Gapoktan managers also employ a package system which is every purchase of rice seeds from Gapoktan should include the purchase of fertilizers and pesticides.

The other social practice in relation to the distribution process of aids by Gapoktan managers was a mechanism that allowed them to decide and control the distribution of agricultural programs to Gapoktan members. Additionally, these manager also select the farmer members who would receive these programs. The social practices performed by Gapoktan managers have resulted into the existing rules and resources represented into distribution system policies and the government's aid resources. The policies have set a pattern or rule for distributing the farming aids or in other words, they let the managers to use these programs only for their own interests. This has become a mechanism by which the managers and farmer members of Gapoktan to perform social practices.

The concept of agent and actor according to the theory of structuration by Giddens in this study refers to the farmer members of Gapoktan. Based on the data collection, Gapoktan managers was responsible to be an agent and be able to perform agency. The agency aspect is closely attached to the managers since they were able to interfere with and reproduce the structure. Gapoktan managers set the distribution system of the farming aids. On the other side, the farmer member of Gapoktan played a role as a passive actor receiving the aids and did not hold any ability to interfere with the policies

agreed by the managers.

Besides explaining the concept of structure and agent, the utilization of farming aid programs also implies other concepts of Giddens' theory of structuration, that are structure system and duality, with more specific concern on the relation between agent (doer, actor) and structure. In accordance with the structure concept, Giddens define it explicitly as follows (Giddens, 1993, p. 18):

'Social system are made up of human actions and relationships: what gives these their patterning is their repetition across periods of time and distances of space'

The social system mentioned by Giddens in the present study was observed in the relation between Gapoktan managers and the farmer members in Sidoasri in exploiting the aid programs in organized manner as a continuous or regular social practice. Also, the social practices in managing the farming aids can also be used to explain the duality between the actor and the structure.

Giddens consistently recognized structure in society as something inseparable from the humans' actions living in it (Nashir, 2012). To add, Giddens (1993, p. 18) stated an idea of duality relation between structure and actions as follows:

There are underlying regularities in how people behave and in the relationships in which they stand with one another. To some degree it is helpful to picture the structural characteristic of societies as resembling the structure of a building.

Giddens' statement above illustrates that a society is like a building, established from various types of structure. According to Giddens, structure is then developed and at the same time considered as a means for the existing social practices or actions performed by agents. Structure, in relation to this present study, is the government's agricultural programs. The structure encompasses social practices performed by Gapoktan managers through a number of policies about the techniques of utilizing the aids. Agent, that is Gapoktan managers, carried out a social practice that set a structure, and oppositely the set structure has become a medium for the ongoing of social practices. In those patterned and repeated social practices, the duality between actor and structure takes place (Nashir, 2012). The duality of the relation lies on the fact that the structure is similar to guidance that turns into the ongoing social practices (Priyono, 2003). Rules so created through routine practice can help in the negotiation of disputes over movement, access and rights in the community (Zvelebil, 2005).

In order to point out the establishment of a structure, Giddens describes three groups of structure (Nashir, 2012), namely signification that covers symbolic scheme, meaning, naming, and discourse, domination encompassing empowering scheme over people (politics) and over goods/things (economy), and legitimation which includes normative values represented into law rules. The three clusters are related to each other.

The present study indicates the signification scheme was apparent in the role of Gapoktan agent in making use of the programs of farming aids by the government. The signification affected the authority or domination of the managers of Gapoktan. The authority can be clearly observed through the managers' capacity in dominating the aids and the farmer members of Gapoktan. The authority also marks the structure domination in the delivery of farming aids to the society. Furthermore, it allows legitimation of Gapoktan managers to determine the farmer members that suit for the aids.

Based on the above arguments, the highlight of Giddens' theory of structuration is the relation between agency and structure that explain the duality and dialectic relation between agency and structure (Nashir, 2012). Meanwhile, the duality relation is defined as a mutual relation as between the two sides of a coin in which all social actions involve the structure, and all structures involve the social actions (Nashir, 2012).

There is an essential concept of the relation between agency and structure in the theory of structuration by Giddens that is the distinction of social practice agents through two constructs, namely agent and actor. Agent is an actor, while agency for Giddens consists of events in which individuals are responsible for the events, and the events will not take place if the individuals do not perform intervention (Nashir, 2012). Agent is able to create social distinction in social world. Also, agent is not likely to exist without any power; so, actor will not be an agent any longer when he/she loses the ability to make distinction. Giddens (in Nashir, 2012, p. 7) describes the relation between agent and power as follows:

'...even though the discussion on the issue is a lot complicated, the basic relation can be easily illustrated. Being able to 'act differently' is defined as intervening the world, or protecting from any intervention, with an impact to interfere with a special process or condition of businesses. The relation assumes that an agent has to be able to use (continuously in daily basis) a set of causal power, including to interfere with the power performed by other people. The actions rely on the individuals' ability to 'influence' the condition of a matter or a set of events that took place in the past. An agent is no longer responsible for the role when he/she loses the power to 'influence', which is a type of power' (dalam Nashir, 2012, hal. 7).

The previous discussion states clearly that role of actors and agents are different in a dialectic relation between structure and agent. An actor will be an agent if he/she has the ability or power in performing social practices repetitively and at the end will form a structure. In this process, an actor is running his/her agency function. On the other side, an actor that is incapable of performing his/her agency function will stay as an actor, not an agent.

The present study clearly illustrates that the agent that took advantage in delivering the governments' aid was the managers

of Gapoktan. The managers were able to carry out their action of agency by deciding some policies on the farming aid programs. Through the policies, the management of Gapoktan held a power to control the other farmer members of Gapoktan in order to take benefits from the programs. Meanwhile on the other side, the farmer members of Gapoktan performed a passive role and did not hold agency function on the issue of taking advantage of the farming aids. It is most likely that some farmer members suffered from dissatisfaction and wondered if the policies by Gapoktan managers were reliable. However, the dissatisfaction had never been so far explicitly expressed in the meeting of Gapoktan and only ended up with the occurrence of social practices in the form of protest against Gapoktan managers.

The structuration theory by Giddens is a little different from the perspective of structural functional theory in a way it views the concept of power. Power is not seen as a resource or achievement according to some particular interests. Giddens (Nashir, 2012, p. 8), explains power as follows:

'Resources (centered through signification and legitimation) are the structured tools of social systems that are produced and reproduced by the smart agent throughout the interaction. Power does not relate intrinsically to the accomplishment of certain interests. In this concept, the use of power does not resemble behaviors, but the whole actions and the power itself are not a part of the resources. The resources are a medium of using the power as a regular element of institutionalization of behaviors in social reproduction. We cannot see domination structures attached to social institutions as we perceive how our body reacts to something mechanically as suggested by the science of social objectivity'

It can be concluded from the above discussion that the power owned by the agents is not assumed as a resource but as a medium to perform social reproduction. The power of agents is not derived from the motivation to achieve a certain power or from the position offered in particular institutions. Thus, the power of agent is understood as a transformative ability that precedes subjectivity or the formation of introspection and awareness (Nashir, 2012). Additionally, Giddens define power into two terms, namely as an ability of the actors to carry out the most popular decisions and as a bias mobilization attached to the institutions.

In accordance with the practice of taking advantage over the farming aids from the government, Giddens mentions two dimensions of Gapoktan managers in Sidoasri village. One dimension suggests that the managers of Gapoktan owned a power or signification scheme since it is attached to their function as the managers. While on the other dimension, the power of Gapoktan managers is attached to them due to their transformative function. The following few excerpts of interview reveal a data that the ability or capacity of Gapoktan managers really affect the activities of farmer groups on the

issue of farming aids provided by the government:

At that time, there was a slight vacuum in farmer group 2, the former administration was unclear. It was coincidence that I was close to the managers, so I was invited to join them. Now it is difficult to collect farmers for the organization election. (David, Poktan Administrator, interview, 2 September 2014)

I don't know for sure who appointed me as a part of the managers. It was not easy to find people for the organization, the problem of incentives was also unclear. We get the payment if there are some projects, if there aren't any, we get nothing. Things like this are seen as commercial by some friends. They don't want to join if there aren't any projects. (David, Poktan Administrator, interview, 2 September 2014)

*The program was actually good, but there was a problem of enthusiasm. Sometimes we got a good quality of seeds from the Department of Agriculture, but when it came to Gapoktan, there would be difference. For example we got the aids in the form of **sengon** (a type of tree) for one meter high, but then in the real condition, the height of the tree reduced into only 30 cm. That applied the same to rice seeds. Once I expressed a protest towards the department, although basically the seeds were just given by the government, but when we were too critical we might end up getting nothing at all. It's all about a game. When there was actually 50 million amount of money provided by the government, the department would only allow 30 million to be distributed. We just accepted it, it has been a habit. All was just a gift anyway. (David, Poktan Administrator, interview, 2 September 2014)*

The three excerpts are the result of an interview with the chief of Gapoktan administration in Sidoasri village. The informant, during the interview, revealed that under the old management of Gapoktan, the farming activities in Sidoasri village were put into hiatus for some time. The condition finally insisted the farmer groups in the village to hold an election for the structural positions. The process proves that the ability of agents in performing transformation or acting differently affects the occurrence of social practices quite much. After appointing the new chief of the union along with the whole managers, Gapoktan Sidoasri has actively participated in the programs of agricultural assistance by the government.

The transformative ability of the chief of Gapoktan Sidoasri can be perceived through some aspects. **First**, before appointed as the new chief of the union, the informant had been able to create a relation with the former managers. **Second**, the informant was able to perform as an innovator that created differences, for instance through the management of Gapoktan's cash for the purpose of the union's administration

or activities. **Third**, the informant had a strong leadership. One evidence was when he expressed a protest against the Department of Agriculture because the aids promised were not suitable with what the farmers received in fact. Thus, the ability of an agent to perform the agency role in producing and reproducing the structure is very prominent with regards to the social practices that have become the basic foundation of Giddens' structuration theory.

Suggested Models of Empowering Gapoktan

Based on the result of the study, it can be inferred that the empowerment programs provided by the government in agriculture sector have not been able to empower the farmer members of Gapoktan. The empowerment programs distribution of farming aids in fact has been enjoyed by the expert agents having a competence to manage the assistance program (social practice). In the other side, the farmers being lack of managerial competence will only perform a passive role by waiting for the types and numbers or amount of government's assistance they will receive. Thus, not every single farmer member of Gapoktan is able to take part in the empowerment program suggested by the government. Meanwhile, the aspect of participation is the major means of actualizing the empowered or independent community that is the main purpose of the empowerment programs for the society (Arnstein, 1969; Bhattacharyya, 2004; Kenny, 2006). According to Arnstein, the highest participation level will be accomplished if in the empowerment process the community is involved in making decisions. In this case, the making of decisions includes the types and numbers or amount of the farming aids, program implementation, and finding the solution of the farmers' problems towards the assistance programs.

The government's department utilizes the *bottom-up* mechanisms to open a chance for Gapoktan to determine the types of agricultural assistance. The mechanism will guarantee the participation of the farmer members of Gapoktan to decide the programs. However, the mechanism is undergoing a problem on the issue of the low capacity of the farmer members of Gapoktan in managing the programs. The government's department, moreover, does not support any assistance process to improve the farmers' knowledge to decide on the program management.

The participation process of the farmer members of Gapoktan has just finished up to the process of determining the types of assistance. The next stage is, the farmer members of Gapoktan can only rely on the dominant role of Gapoktan managers in making decisions on the implementation or management of the assistance programs. In addition, the managers will also be responsible to come up with solutions for the potential problems of the assistance programs. This type of participation, according to Arnstein (1969), is at the level of *tokenism*. This level of participation enables the community to express their ideas towards the process of community empowerment. However, the community cannot ensure if their aspiration will be noticed and they only need to rely on the power holder. In this case, the power holder is Gapoktan managers that fully dominate the implementation and management of the farming

aids by the government.

In order to deal with the problem of the power gap between the managers and the farmer members, the government's department responsible for distributing the farming aid programs should apply an ongoing engagement in relation to the process of empowering the farmers through the implementation of distributing the farming aids. The ongoing engagement is conducted before and at the moment of the programs until one day the farmers will be able to independently manage the assistance programs. Therefore, besides providing the physical assistance, the government's department should also offer non-physical assistance in the form of improving the farmers' competence in implementing the assistance programs. More comprehensively, the assisting model should be carried out is illustrated by the following scheme:

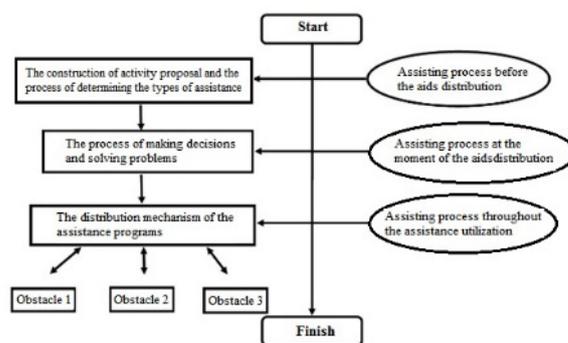


Figure 5.4 Suggested Model of Assisting Farmers in Agricultural Assistance Programs

The figure illustrates the alternative model of assistance that can be applied in the empowerment process through the distribution program of farming aids, for example in the empowerment programs requiring activity's proposal submission (bottom-up). This type of assistance has never been accessed by the farmers in Sidoasri village due to their limited competence. The assisting process consists of three stages and will take place continuously. **First**, the assisting process will take place before the farmers receive the aids distribution. The assistance will also help farmers to recognize their needs and to determine the types of assistance programs that suit their own needs. **Second**, the assistance is performed at the moment the aids are distributed. The assistance can be done by improving the managerial and organizational competences of farmers, especially the managers of Gapoktan, to determine the distribution mechanism and communication pattern useful for the increasing participation of the farmer members. **Third**, the assistance process has to continuously be performed in the implementation of assistance programs. Farmers will surely cope with a set of obstacles on the empowerment programs. The obstacles might be out the farmers' reach or capacity so the assistance of the outsiders will be needed to help the farmers find the solutions.

The assisting process taking place completely and continuously will gradually increase the farmers' knowledge and competence in utilizing the agricultural assistance from the government. The improving farmers' competence will optimize their

participation in managing the empowerment programs to realize the farmers' independence and empowerment that has become the main purpose of society empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The act of taking advantage over the agricultural assistance by Gapoktan Sidomakmur of Siodasri village was controlled by the managers of the union that at the same time performed a role as the expert agents. The Gapoktan managers managed the government's aid distribution through a mechanism they had set themselves. The distribution mechanism was done by establishing a standard of accessing the aids. The distribution was delivered by deciding the amount of assistance and selecting the farmer members of Gapoktan to accept the aids.

The two models of making use of the assistance are seen as a social practice that is affected by agents and structures. Agents in this context represent into the managers of Gapoktan. The managers had a competence to interfere with the aids delivery provided by the government. They used the competence to manage the farming aids effectively and efficiently. The effectiveness of the aids is in relation with deciding policies of aids mechanism and distribution. The managers are allowed to determine the models of the aids as well the farmer members to receive the aids. The structure supporting the social practice of the assistance is the assistance programs from government institutions. The structure that turns into assistance programs has been a framework in performing social practices by the agents. The types of assistance will determine the social practices of Gapoktan managers. The aids of farming instruments and equipment has encouraged the managers to use the aids for the farming purposes. Meanwhile, the assistance programs offering opportunities for the managers to claim the infrastructure restoration will be used by them to develop physical establishment.

The effective assisting model to improve farmers' participation in the implementation of assistance programs by the government is the continuous assistance. The continuous assistance is seen as a prominent component to increase the farming aids effectiveness. The continuous assisting process opens a chance to encourage the farmers' participation in many activities, such as in determining the types of agricultural assistance and the aids management, identifying the potential problems in the management as well proposing some alternatives to solve the problems, and finally deciding the right solutions for the problems. With this type of assistance, the farmer members of Gapoktan is not expected to be a passive actor to receive the empowerment program, but they are able to be independent agents in managing the empowerment programs to overcome their poverty problems.

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