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## **Women of the South Coast of Java in Politics and Rural Development**

By Sofa Marwah<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

The discussion of women and politics in Indonesia has been mostly confined to the national and regional levels since a law requiring a minimum of 30% female candidates in legislative elections took effect. There are, however, only a few studies of women and politics at the village level, examining women's contributions to village development. This study aims to explain the gap between the lack of representation of coastal women in rural politics and the extensive contributions of women to rural economic development. This is a qualitative study that involves informants in village administration, women managing business groups, an empowerment program manager, and others. The study's results show that women's representation in politics and village administration is low, even though the female population is comparable to the male population. However, women contribute substantially to development of the rural economy in several sectors. These include empowerment programs, in which women act as managers, initiators, actors, and beneficiaries, as well as the management of fishing, tourism, and environmental conservation groups. The involvement of women in rural economic development is an extension of their traditional domestic role, while they lack the experience and social capital to enable them to actively participate in rural politics. The study highlights the importance of supporting women's representation through affirmative inclusion policies and political education for village women regarding political rights, the functions of village deliberation boards, the rules of village administration, etc. It also identifies a need to train government officials in gender sensitivity, so they can support the goal of equal representation in rural politics.

*Keywords:* coastal women, rural development, rural politics, Java, Indonesia

### **Introduction**

Few studies discuss women, politics, and development in Indonesia at the lowest level of government, namely the village level, particularly in coastal areas. The coastal zone is an area characterised by poverty, low education levels, lack of health facilities, and unsanitary conditions at some distance from the echoes of rural political concerns that currently preoccupy academics and NGOs activists. Studies of women and politics in Indonesia do not comprehensively examine rural women, even though most Indonesian women live in rural areas. Viewing village women only from a political standpoint seems to neglect the major contributions of rural women in other areas of development. Many studies of women and politics in Indonesia highlight the 30% quota of female candidates to office required since the 2004 Legislative Election. Davies (2005), for example, wrote about the development of the public recognition of women's right to participate in politics in Indonesia following the agreement of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Meanwhile, Mörmel and Schweisshelm (2009) wrote that the increase of political representation

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of women in the 2009 Election was attributable to a celebrity factor, because some of the women candidates were the daughters of artists or political figures. Similarly, Soeseno's (2014) study shows low female representation in political parties.

At the provincial and district government levels, Rhoads (2012) attributes low female participation in Bali Province to money politics, the revitalization of traditional customs, the strengthening of local identity through decentralization, and a negative collective memory of the women's movement known as Gerwani, which was affiliated with the PKI (Indonesia Communist Party). Another study from Hastuti Dewi (2015) elaborates on the success of Muslim women leaders as regional heads, such as Rustriningsih (from Kebumen District), Siti Qomariyah (from Pekalongan District), and Ratna Ani Lestari (from Banyuwangi District). According to her, Islam, gender, and social networking are important factors in the success of women who win regional leadership positions. See also the in-depth review of the Hastuti Dewi's study from Afrianty (2015).

Although the aforementioned studies offer complex assessments of women and politics in Indonesia, only a few studies place any emphasis on the importance of women in political and development constellations at the village level, as stipulated in Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, especially in coastal areas. It is generally known that Indonesia is an enormous country, and many of its people live in rural areas. The village is the smallest politically authorized government unit in Indonesia. Thus, a study of women in the context of politics and rural development could actually provide a portrait of the majority of women in Indonesia at the lowest levels of politics and development, including how they participate in political speech and organization as the political map changes in the reform era that has followed the collapse of the Soeharto (New Order) government (1998).

In the New Order period, according to Soeharto's policy prioritizing economic growth and national stability, the village was regulated by Law No. 5/1979 on Villages. That law established the form of village government and did not recognize village diversity based on customs. Throughout the country, the name of the lowest level of state bureaucracy was changed by law from local indigenous structures and names to *desa* (village), following the structural model applied in Java (Maschab, 2013). When reform movement began, villagers had little involvement (Maschab, 2013: 139), because most reforms dealt with urban and educated communities. The fall of the New Order brought about a change in the relationship between central and regional power structures. In this case, village policy is integrated into local government law, namely Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government, later replaced by Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Government. The amendment also provides for the position of the village as an autonomous institution. In other words, the transformation promotes democratization by requiring participation of rural communities and changes in the political behavior of rural communities.

Now that politics in Indonesia is increasingly occupied with political liberalization and decentralization of power from the national to the local level, the study of politics and rural development becomes significant. One important issue is that of women in rural politics, which receives significantly less attention than, for example, female migrant workers from rural areas. The study of women, politics, and rural development is vital and noteworthy, especially in view of the enactment of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, which provides a great opportunity to strengthen village autonomy and to involve rural communities in village-level decision-making processes.

This study aims to explain the gap between the lack of participation of coastal women in rural politics and the extensive contribution of women in the rural economy and development. As a hypothesis, this paper assumes that the apparent disconnect between the low participation of

women in rural politics and the strong contribution of women in rural economic development is due to the lack of experience and social capital of women in the realm of politics, while the active participation of women in rural coastal areas in the economic field is an extension of the work they do at home. This study focuses on villages in the southern coastal areas of Java, especially in Kebumen District. The selection of coastal areas was prompted by the fact that, as rare as studies of women in politics and rural development are, studies of women, politics and the development of coastal villages are even more lacking.

Coastal areas are at present a main concern of President Joko Widodo, who has expressed a desire for the state of Indonesia to become an independent, advanced and strong maritime state that is able to advance its national interests. Consequently, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) has initiated empowerment programs for coastal communities.

This article is divided into six sections. The first is an introduction to the urgency of this study, describing the involvement of women in rural politics and coastal development; the second presents a review of the literature on women in politics and rural development; the third describes the qualitative research method used; the fourth discusses low female representation in the political process and village administration; the fifth presents the important contribution of women in various development programs; and the sixth ties together the depictions of women in coastal rural areas, offering various suggestions for promoting women's representation, especially in politics and village administration.

### **Review of Literature on Women's Involvement in Politics and Rural Development**

Theoretically, women's involvement in village politics cannot be separated from the case made for the importance of the participation of women in the legislature. At the local level, the Village Deliberation Board (BPD) has a function similar to that of the legislative body, facilitating the aspirations of village communities and supervising the performance of village heads through legislation, budgeting, and supervision. Thus, the presence of women on BPDs is actually an important part of representing the interests of village women. Pitkin (in Lovenduski, 2008:38) defines representation as an activity that makes the citizen's perspective, opinion, and voice 'present' in the public policy-making process. Squires (1999: 202), meanwhile, calls representation a form of acting for the sake of the principles being represented. In this context, it is important to bring more women into BPDs, in accordance with the principle of political presence (Phillips, 1995), so that women can present themselves in the political process according to the principle of political equality. Hence, ideally, the number of men and women sitting on BPDs should be proportional to their numbers in the village population. Phillips' statements about the importance of women's presence in politics is in line with Norris's (2003) notion that it can support the emergence of specifically required policies.

In the context of rural development, these intended policies concern village regulations that accommodate the interests of women in rural areas. As the smallest government unit in Indonesia, village government allows the members of each BPD and its community to interact intensively. Cornwall (2004) suggests that there are four levels of political participation; from lowest to highest, these are: consultation, presence, representation, and influence. Participation at the consultation level means citizens are only asked for certain kinds of information, without being involved in the decision-making process. At the presence level, citizens are present during the decision-making process, but this may fluctuate depending on the policy matter at issue. At the representation level, citizens are being represented in the process of policy formulation; in other

words, there is a standard representative function in policymaking. The highest level of participation, influence, is when citizens are able to influence the process and substance of policies. As the smallest government unit in Indonesia, the village allows intensive engagement between the government and the community. Cornwall and Gaventa (2001:3) might view this as an expansion of participation, making it possible to influence the decision-making process, including in realm of social policy. Strengthening citizen involvement is expected to encourage government understanding of needs and perspectives. Village government, therefore, allows intensive community involvement in the political process and development in the village, up to and including participation in the form of influence.

### **Research Method**

This study focuses on assessing women's involvement in politics and rural development along the south coast of Java. The southern coastal areas in this research refer to Kebumen District of Central Java Province, especially Jogosimo Village, Tegalretno Village, and Tanggulangin Village of Klirong Sub-district. This study applies a qualitative method of constructing social reality, cultural meaning, and more focus on interactive processes and events (Newman, 1994:14). The flexibility of qualitative research also makes it easier for researchers to determine the research procedures. To collect primary data, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted, while secondary data were collected through documentation studies. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted involving women managing empowerment programs, women in village government, women in working groups, village government, community leaders and others. Data analysis started with data clarification for consistency, followed by a theoretical abstraction of information and facts from the field, which allowed for the generation of fundamental statements and the drawing of conclusions (Silbergh, 2001:173-175).

### **Political Dynamics and Coastal Village Governance: The Importance of the Presence of Women**

Documenting the history of political and governmental development in a region can be a most difficult task, especially in remote areas like the coastal villages of Kebumen District. Identifying women who participate in political and governmental sectors is even more difficult. Should a woman's name emerge, she does not usually occupy a top leadership job. By and large, women usually occupy the domestic domain.

According to the scant historical documentation of Jogosimo Village, formed in 1946, no women have occupied the position of village head. This means that throughout the period of colonialism, independence, the Old Order government, the New Order, and including the current reform era, men have always occupied the position of top leader of the village government. The same is true of the villages of Tegalretno, established in 1922, and Tanggulangin, established in 1924 (History and Structure of Village Government, 2015: 5-17).

The absence of women as village heads in the coastal villages of Kebumen District from the past to present shows that men are the dominant figures in rural politics in this area. Despite the political agenda of the reform era to increase participation among every element of society, including women, the reality is that the winds of change do not seem to be blowing in these remote coastal villages.

Since the Reformation period, the village has been regulated by Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government, and later by Law No.32/2004 on Regional Government. Both laws require that the village head be chosen by direct election, but the term of office was changed, from ten years to a maximum of six. This change, however, was not sufficient to assist women in occupying the highest rank in village administration, even though the shorter term of office could have opened up opportunities for all elements of society to participate in village governance. Yet the village heads of coastal areas remained dominated by men. With the passage of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, the tenure of the village head was unchanged; however, the terms of the sitting village heads at the time of the law's passage have not yet been completed.

The absence of women in village politics and government over time demonstrates the lack of gender balance. With nearly equal female/male populations in rural areas, women should not be considered a minority. For instance, in 2015, the population composition of Jogosimo Village was 1,377 women and 1,475 men; Tegalretno had 869 women and 984 men; and Tanggulangin had 1,433 women and 1,508 men (Klirong sub-district in Number 2015).

Direct election of village heads should offer a political space that facilitates equal representation of women and men, allowing women to get involved in rural politics. According to the principle of political equality, each person should be counted once, not exceeding the other, so that the number of individuals present in political and governmental institutions ought to be balanced and representative of the actual population. In fact, women do not present themselves in politics according to the concept of political presence (Anne Phillips, 1995:30). Similarly, if we note the current structure of village government organizations in the three coastal villages, the number of women far fewer than men. Out of the 11 levels of government administration in each of the three villages, there is either only one woman in village government, or none at all. Read more in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**  
**Governmental Organization Structure of the Three Coastal Villages**

Position	Jogosimo		Tegalretno		Tanggulangin	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Village Head	-	1	-	1	-	1
Village Secretary	-	1	-	1	-	1
Head of Governmental Affairs	-	1	-	1	-	1
Head of Developmental Affairs	-	1	-	1	-	1
Head of Public Affairs	-	1	-	1	-	1
Head of Financial Affairs	-	1	1	-	-	1
Head of Welfare Affairs	-	1	-	-	-	1
Head of <i>Dusun</i> (sub-village) I-IV	1	3	-	3	-	3

*Source: Governmental Structure of Jogosimo, Tegalretno, Tanggulangin Village, 2013-2019*

Laws and legislation on the election of village heads included in the texts of Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government and Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Government are gender-neutral, applying equally to both women and men, but without providing affirmative policies to help women obtain more executive positions at the village level. This reflects a view of village elections as a free and competitive domain, adhering to a principle of "competitive equality", i.e. there is no need to differentiate between women and men, since the elimination of formal barriers to election is considered sufficient to solve the problem (Dahlerup, 1998:95).

The national political echo of the spirit of gender mainstreaming policy since Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming and the quota policy requiring that women make up 30% of party elective slates to legislature since the 2004 Legislative Election appears to be inadequate to encourage more women to occupy government positions at the village level. The updated Law No. 6/2014 on Villages retains gender-neutral regulations regarding village head elections; this means providing equal opportunities for women and men without undertaking affirmative policies to support the emergence of female leaders. According to Pippa Norris (2003), greater representation among women in politics requires specific policy support in accordance with the condition of the country in question.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the low participation of women in politics and government in coastal villages.

First, instead of working as farmers, women in coastal villages are typically involved in the various socio-economic roles around fisheries, such as the management and marketing of fish, processed fish production, and food production, rather than being actively involved in the political process and village governance;

Second, there are high political costs for women's participation in the village head electoral process, where the average females in coastal villages rely on fish or agricultural products provided by their husbands.

Third, the average educational attainment among women is low, with many having at most completed only primary school. The number of inhabitants of Jogosimo village with no education or with primary school only is as high as 63%, and Tegalretno's reaches 61% (Coastal Zone Profile, 2015). As a result, many women in coastal areas lack adequate resources to take part in village politics and government.

Given the cultural situation in the rural areas, the main contribution of women in the field of development economics is an extension of the work they do at home. Processing food and always trying to meet family food needs is a role commonly filled by rural women, including those in rural and coastal areas. The fisherman, their husband, works outside the home catching fish, where he can often be at sea for several days at a time. Such conditions make women the main figure in meeting the daily needs of their families. Thus, when women work to produce and sell processed fish, this is actually an extension of their customary domestic work. It also causes women on the coast to appear to be shackled in socio-economic work that depends on male productivity as the breadwinner. In order to participate in local politics, then, women need funding support that is difficult to obtain, because coastal women rely more on the livelihood obtained from the fish caught by their husbands; these fish are managed by women, directly sold or become processed fish products. Furthermore, involvement in politics also requires extensive knowledge

that may be difficult to come by in the primary school education obtained by most coastal women of South Java. Moreover, women tend to doubt themselves and feel like they need a stronger support first.

Actually, the underutilization of women in politics and government in coastal villages is not so different from other villages in Indonesia. Results obtained by the YSKK NGO study (conducted in Gunung Kidul District of Yogyakarta Province) and the Puskapol UI study (conducted in Sidomulyo Village of Batu City, East Java Province; Belabori Village of Gowa District, South Sulawesi Province; and Noelbaki Village of Kupang District, East Nusa Tenggara Province) indicate that the limited involvement of women in village politics is caused by 1) the absence of affirmative policies that support women's representation in politics; 2) the high cost of participating in village head elections, which can be a burden to women who largely depend on their husbands' income, whereas the highest political costs are actually used for unofficial expenses; 3) low level of educational achievement among women; and 4) socio-cultural aspects that favor men over women (YSKK, 2013); (Puskapol UI, 2014).

However, there is cause for optimism that the political representation of women may be increased on Village Deliberation Boards (BPD). In accordance with Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, women's participation on BPDs has been increased as a result of affirmative policies. The role of the BPD is to 1) draft village regulations in cooperation with village heads; 2) accommodate and facilitate the aspirations of village communities; and 3) supervise the village head (Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, 2014:18). By law, the BPD must comprise an odd number of members – at least five persons and at most nine – who represent the territory, women, population, and financial capacity of the village. Unfortunately, the number of female BPD members in coastal villages is very low. The BPD in Jogosimo Village consists of 9 members (8 men and 1 woman), while the BPD in Tegalretno Village consists of 7 members (6 men and 1 woman). Interestingly, the head of Desa Tegalretno's BPD is a woman, as is the secretary of the BPD in Jogosimo Village. Of course, it is encouraging to see a female chairperson at all in view of how rare female representation is in this region. Women's representation on BPDs is important, since the female population is almost equal to men, and, like men, they are directly affected by policies approved by their local BPD. Women themselves undoubtedly have the clearest understanding of their own needs, whether the domain be health, social, economic, employment, and so forth. The narrow local scope of BPD work should permit close engagement between village government and community, helping the village government to recognize the demands of the local community, especially those of the female population. Regrettably, this does not occur. With only one woman per village participating in the BPD, women are clearly at a disadvantage with respect to representation and the voting-based decision-making process.

The scarcity of female participation in coastal village politics is in stark contrast to the robust contribution of women to the economic activities influencing coastal development. As mentioned above, this contribution is largely an extension of the domestic work done by women in the home, who are accustomed to supporting and feeding their families. In line with this custom, women occupy strong positions in empowerment activities, community groups, and environmental management. The next section of this paper, therefore, describes the contribution of coastal rural women in economic activities and development programs.



## **Economic Contributions of Coastal Women in Empowerment Programs**

The southern coastal areas of Java, especially Kebumen District, are unique. Despite the dominance of the sea, locals here do not solely rely on fishing for the living, but also practice farming. One reason for this is that strong Indian Ocean waves often prevent fishermen from fishing. They also make the area prone to erosion, tsunamis, and strong winds. Actually, the coastal area has great potential for development of tourism, coastal ecosystems or agriculture, but it has been much damaged by the lucrative sand mining and shrimp aquaculture activities of distant investors. In contrast, the majority of local residents live humbly, with inadequate infrastructure to support their livelihoods.

In view of these conditions, the coastal villages including Jogosimo Village, Tegalretno Village and Tanggulangin Village, were selected to receive support via an empowerment program called Resilient Coastal Areas Development (PKPT), sponsored by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in the period 2015-2016, under the coordination of the local Marine and Fishing Service. As part of this program, the Marine and Fishing Service was assisted by the Coastal Committees Group, which consisted of 4 people (3 men and 1 woman) selected locally. This group is responsible for the PKPT program at the village level. Although the Coastal Communities Group has only one woman per locality, the affirmative spirit demonstrated by the Marine and Fishing Service of Kebumen District in reserving a seat for a woman in each village group should be appreciated as an effort to encourage women's involvement in the management of the PKPT program.

The PKPT program is an empowerment program that combines top-down and bottom-up approaches: the centralized 2015 PKPT Technical Guidelines form the basis of program activities, while a participatory village forum engages locals in the Coastal Development Plan. The preparation of the Coastal Development Plan takes into account the local Village Mid-Term Development Plan. In practice, this creates a kind of dilemma in which the PKPT tries to absorb the aspirations of all elements of coastal villages on the one hand, while on the other, the program activities are still determined by the Marine and Fishing Service under the PKPT Technical Guidelines.

Efforts to introduce the purpose and goals of the PKPT to local residents were undertaken in the early months of 2015 and 2016. Although the PKPT has made nominal attempts to involve all elements of society, its management and village administration have not succeeded in engaging members of the lowest socioeconomic classes; indeed, these community activities have for the most part involved only members of the Coastal Communities Group, village government, and village counseling teams of Marine and Fishing Service. In particular, despite the presence of female representatives on the Coastal Communities Group, women represent only 20% of participants in these community activities.

Similar conditions could be seen in the way the Coastal Development Plan was drafted without the involvement of elements of the broader community. In the preparation of the 2015 Coastal Development Plan, the villages of Jogosimo, Tegalretno, and Tanggulangin were each represented by only 15 people per village, a number that had to include representatives of village government, BPD, Karang Taruna (the youth group), LPMD (the village empowerment group), PKK (the women's group), and community leaders. Moreover, in the preparation of the Coastal Development Plan of 2015 and its review in 2016, not all program activities proved to be in accordance with the real needs of the community. This is complicated by a provision that requires the use of the Village Mid-Term Development Plan as a primary reference, effectively eliminating from consideration many of the citizens' own proposals for PKPT program activities. In addition

to this, mandatory adherence to the PKPT Technical Guidelines restricts flexibility in developing the program of PKPT activity by the Marine and Fishing Service. In other words, forums that are meant to be participatory cannot absorb citizens' aspirations effectively.

The Village Mid-Term Development Plan process does not have an affirmative rule requiring a minimum standard of women's involvement in its preparation, according to Law No. 6/2014 on Villages. Open village meetings are simply held to discuss strategic matters in the administration. Similarly, there is no specified quota of female participation in the drafting of the Coastal Development Plan. Although their numbers are low, women are getting involved in PKPT forums. Of the 15 people who participated in the Coastal Development Plan drafting forum in Jogosimo Village in 2015, 5, or 33%, were women from village government and community elements. In Tegalretno Village, the number was 2, or 13% women, and in Tanggulangin Village, 4, or 26% women.

PKPT programs were conducted in two consecutive years, 2015 and 2016. This program included activities directly related to and involving women, while other programs related to the procurement of facilities and infrastructure. These are explained in detail in the following table:

**Table 2. Women's Involvement in PKPT Programs in Three Coastal Villages**

Village	2015	Women's Involvement	2016	Women's Involvement
Jogosimo	Procurement of fish processing equipment	Procurement ideas, equipment use	Disaster preparedness training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Training in fish nugget production	Trainee, beneficiaries	Institutional training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Training in freshwater fish culture	Trainee, organizing committee		
Tegalretno	Training on <i>nata de coco</i>	Trainee, beneficiaries	Disaster preparedness training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Procurement of equipment for <i>nata de coco</i>	Ideas initiator, equipment use	Institutional training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Planting of pine trees	Initiator and executor		
	Training on palm sugar	Trainee, beneficiaries		
Tanggulangin	Training in fish nugget production	Trainee, beneficiaries	Disaster preparedness training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Procurement of fish processing equipment	Ideas initiator, equipment use	Institutional training	Trainee, Beneficiaries
	Marketing training	Trainee, Beneficiaries	Procurement of Fish processing equipment	Ideas initiator, equipment use

Source: *Report of PKPT Program 2015*, Kebumen: Marine and Fishing Service, 2015; *Report of PKPT 2016 Program*, Kebumen: Marine and Fishing Service, 2016.

Although not all these activities are necessarily concerned with women directly, efforts to initiate programs closely linked to women's involvement are interesting. By requiring the presence of female participants, their ideas can be solicited on matters such as training in fish, *nata de coco* drink and palm sugar processing, joint-business training, even disaster preparedness and institutional training. A study from Cornwall (2016:356) suggests that a contemporary form of women's empowerment and development shall be the way we increase women's access to resources, encouraging them to understand their own needs as women, as citizens, and as human beings.

At the beginning of PKPT activities, the Marine and Fishing Service and PKPT team distributed questionnaires to Jogosimo Village, Tegalretno Village, Tanggulangin Village, to establish a baseline measurement of resilience as manifested in human capital, entrepreneurship,

natural resources, environment, disaster preparedness and climate change aspects. At the end of the program, similar questionnaires were distributed again to ascertain the impact of the PKPT program on these dimensions of resilience. The result of the analysis for Jogosimo Village and Tegalretno Village, in which community resilience demonstrated increases in terms of human capital, entrepreneurship, environment/infrastructure, disaster preparedness, and climate change. No increase in natural resource management was measured, however. The results in Tanggulangin are somewhat different, however. Here, the PKPT program was comparatively less successful in increasing community resilience according to these measures. The evaluation showed no improvement in terms of human capital, natural resources, or disaster preparedness, and climate change. Only the dimension of entrepreneurship showed an increase (Program Report of PKPT 2016, Kebumen: Marine and Fishing Service, 2016).

Although the Marine and Fishing Service evaluation provides an adequate assessment of community resilience in the three coastal villages, it did not specifically identify the impact of the PKPT program on women. In fact, throughout the process, from deliberations to planning and implementation, women were involved, even if their representatives were outnumbered by men. A gender-disaggregated resilience assessment would be useful in evaluating the work of the PKPT programs in specifically encouraging the resilience of women along these same dimensions whether, or not it proves equal to that of men.

As a group with nearly equal population to that of men and possessing equally strategic positions and roles in coastal areas, the contribution of coastal women cannot be underestimated. In the local fishing industry, women play an important role in managing the catch, marketing, and processing various fish products to support family incomes. Their role is equally significant in agriculture, which is another vital sector in the coastal area of Kebumen District. In the arid climate of these coastal areas, horticulture typically raise crops such as corn, peanuts, chili, watermelon, and papaya (Coastal Area Profile, 2015), and women play an important role in their planting, growing, harvesting and marketing.

Another important contribution of coastal women to the local economy is their involvement in various fishing business groups. In Jogosimo village in particular, there are fish farming groups (pokdakan) such as Mina Jaya and Simo Fish, as well as processing and marketing groups (pohlasar) like Mino Rini Putri. The Simo Fish and Mino Rini Putri groups are headed by women. Meanwhile, in Tegalretno, where there are Manok Jaya pokdakan and Sumber Rejeki and Mekar Sari poklhasar, the Sumber Rejeki and Mekar Sari groups are also headed by women. In Tanggulangin Village, the pokdakan are called Mina Sari Lukulo, Muji Rahayu and Karya Mina Sejahtera, and poklhasar called Mino Kencono, Telaga Mina Sar, and Mina Harapan. Here, the Mino Kencono and Mina Harapan groups are led by women. The data shows that women's involvement in the sale and marketing of fish is quite prominent. The frequently dangerous wind, wave and weather conditions of the Indian Ocean sometimes force fishermen to stay at home. As a result, some in these communities have turned to fish farming or gardening. In this context, the contribution of women is relatively well-balanced and equally important to that of men in supporting the economic life of coastal families.

Other important contributions made by women include their involvement in the development of coastal tourism and environmental management. Kebumen coastal areas have high potential for attracting tourism. Its stretches of mangroves, grass, lagoon, and sand dunes add to the beauty of the coast as well as provide protective barriers against tsunamis and seawater intrusion. Regrettably, the increasing development of shrimp ponds around the lagoon and large-scale illegal sand mining is damaging coastal ecosystems. Poorly treated shrimp ponds developed

along the coast also damage the environment. In fact, the management of resources and environment in coastal areas is regulated by Law No. 1/2014 on the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands. As a response to these conditions, women have been involved in maintaining coastal resources and environments through the planting of mangrove, pine trees and ketapang trees. Indeed, the development of a greenbelt of pandanus trees, sea pine, and *nyamplung* trees was part of the PKPT program in Tegalretno and Tanggulangin Village. Currently, coastal vegetation is being increased by the planting of sea pine trees that serve as a barrier to salty seawater vapor. Another PKPT program related to coastal tourism management and involving women's participation is disaster preparedness training conducted via comparative studies in Timbulsoko Village, Demak District.

The description of the support coastal women provide to these rural development programs shows that women can fill important positions and make real contributions. In particular, the scale of the economic contributions of coastal women makes imbalances in the male-dominated political realm that much more obvious. Yet these are the contexts in which coastal women are able to make their presence felt. In the PKPT program, for example, in which Coastal Communities Groups were made up of one woman and three men, ideas shared by the female members were no less strategic. At the initial PKPT programming forum, women were invited to be present at the drafting of the Coastal Development Plan, a form of involvement Cornwall (2004) calls *participation*. When women were asked to identify current issues in the coastal environment and rate them in order of priority, this was *consultation*, according to Cornwall (2004). Although not an ideal model of representation and participation, the PKPT program did yet more, enabling women to *influence* the processes and substance of policy (Cornwall, 2004). This is reflected in various activities relevant to women, such as training with respect to fish processing and industry. So far, the women of the coastal area have shown significant contributions as initiators, implementers, and beneficiaries of various PKPT empowerment programs. This can be compared, for example, to the study by Eder (2005: 147), who found that gender differences in coastal communities affect the extent to which the advantages and disadvantages of coastal resource management programs can be felt by the community. According to him, gender differences can limit community participation, thus it is important for the government to encourage and support the role of local communities in coastal resource management.

In addition to their involvement in the empowerment program, the contribution of coastal women can also be seen in their management role in various fishermen groups. This presents a challenge to generally accepted norms discouraging coastal women from taking an equal role with men. Nevertheless, in certain socio-economic arenas, like the management of these fishery groups, women occupy strategic positions. The fishing industry is influenced by the contributions of women in the management of the sale, processing, and marketing of the catch. Coastal women may not have much of a role in the political process and village governance structure, but in other development sectors, they have made significant contributions. Indeed, their management of these business groups is evidence that women possess sufficient, social capital, especially in the form of networking and leadership experience, to engage in other fields, such as politics and government. According to Robert Putnam et al. (1993:36), social capital is a set of horizontal relationships among people, consisting of networks of civic engagements governed by norms that influence group productivity. It seems clear that women have adequate social capital to become involved in the political governance of coastal areas.

## Conclusion

In closing, this study shows that female participation in coastal village politics is low. Their numbers in terms of attendance and participation in the political and governance process are low and out of balance with men, but this study is nevertheless optimistic that women's representation in politics and village government has the potential to increase. Although there are no female village heads in the three coastal villages of Kebumen District, there are women serving as BPD chairperson and BPD secretary. The study suggests that policymakers could encourage and improve the representation of women in politics and government at the village level by implementing affirmative policies in village head elections and establishing minimum quotas for women's representation on BPDs.

In contrast, the contribution of women to coastal development can be seen via their involvement in the PKPT empowerment program. In this instance, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and Marine and Fishing Service Kebumen District established affirmative policies to ensure women's participation as managers of the empowerment program. Unfortunately, the minimal presence of women at village meetings and forums discussing PKPT programming activities did not support this initiative. Even so, evidence of the engagement of women is apparent in the development of PKPT program activities that relate directly to women's interests. Thus, it is clear that coastal women can act as initiators, actors, and beneficiaries. The contribution of coastal women is also demonstrated by their important positions in the management of fishing groups, tourism development, and environmental conservation. The disparity between women's low rates of participation in rural politics and their outsized contribution to rural economic development is due to their lack of political experience and capital, while their influence in the coastal economy is due to the close links between certain economic activities and the work they do at home. The conclusion of this study is therefore in accordance with the author's hypothesis above.

The leadership practiced by these coastal women in the economic sector has the potential to translate into the kind of social capital needed to initiate political and governmental success through the strengthening and coordination of their social networks. This suggests that political education for women is indispensable, including training in the political rights of citizens, the duties and functions of the village deliberation board (BPD) and village government, the rules of village administration, the management of the village funds, and so on. Political education can be initiated in spaces where coastal women are already active, namely fishing business groups, coastal tourism development groups, and environmental management groups, reaching them in a more efficient and specific way.

Political education will not be sufficient, however, if the officials of the male-dominated village government do not practice gender sensitivity. This means they also need to obtain training on gender equality. It is hoped that the joint process of growth and awareness through political education for rural women and gender sensitivity training for village government officials will gradually bring about gender equality in politics and governance.

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