

GOVERNMENT STRATEGY IN IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF FISHERMEN IN LAYABAUNG VILLAGE, WEST SIMEULUE DISTRICT, SIMEULUE REGENCY

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Abstract

Welfare is a social, material, and spiritual system of life and livelihood that includes a sense of safety, decency and inner peace. This concept is in line with the Government's Strategy goal in realizing a just, prosperous and equitable society both materially and spiritually based on Pancasila. This research aims to find out about the Simeulue Regency Government's strategy in improving the welfare of fishermen in Layabaung Village and the supporting and inhibiting aspects of the Simeulue Regency Government in improving the welfare of fishermen in Layabaung village, West Simeulue District, Simeulue Regency. The methods used in this study are qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach to examine primary data obtained from observation and interview results as well as documentation, and secondary data obtained from literature analysis, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the steps taken include counseling activities to improve fishermen's knowledge, providing assistance in the form of goods to support fishing activities, and building facilities and infrastructure to facilitate fishermen's daily activities. Meanwhile, the supporting aspects include a strategic location, good administrative services, an adequate number of service employees, a good working relationship between the Marine and Fisheries Service and the village government, as well as the provision of a special budget for fishermen, and the inhibiting aspects include limited funds, low level of education for fishermen, and the high number of fishermen.

Keywords: Government Strategy, Improvement, Welfare, Fishermen

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country, has abundant resources both from the sea and the land. These natural resources have great potential to improve people's well-being (Amura & Pirhel, 2021) Based on data from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the fisheries sector contributes significantly to national GDP as well as being one of the main economic supports of coastal communities (Nainggolan et al., 2019) However, ironically, fishermen who are the main actors in the management of marine potential are often identified with economically vulnerable community groups (Wika & Baiquni, 2016) Fishermen as one of the members of society generally have the lowest level of welfare which is characterized by the existence of several characteristics, such as poverty, socio-cultural underdevelopment, low quality of human resources due to the average fisherman having minimal education who can only rely on limited skills (Sastrawijaya, 2012).

A country has the goal of creating prosperity for its people in Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 39 of 2012 concerning the Implementation of Social Welfare concerning the implementation of social welfare, it is explained in article 1 that the Implementation of Social Welfare is a directed, integrated, and sustainable effort carried out by the Government, local

governments, and communities in the form of social services to meet the basic needs of every citizen, which includes social rehabilitation, social security, social empowerment, and social protection.

The phenomenon of *the paradox of plenty* or "poverty in the midst of abundant resources" occurs in many coastal areas of Indonesia, including in Simeulue Regency, Aceh. As an archipelagic area, Simeulue has great marine fisheries potential, but the socio-economic conditions of the fishermen are still relatively low. Layabaung Village in West Simeulue District is one of the fishing villages that faces classic problems such as limited fishing facilities and infrastructure, dependence on seasons, low bargaining power in fish prices, limited access to capital, and lack of mastery of marine product processing technology (BPS, 2024).

The lives of the local community are still dependent on nature, so special attention and review and approach from the government are needed to improve the economy of the local community by utilizing the existing potential so that the community can live prosperously. Therefore, a strategy is needed to improve the welfare of vulnerable community groups and face poverty. This strategy focuses on empowerment to achieve social change, with the aim of creating an empowered society, having power, and knowledge and ability to meet their living needs, both in terms of physical, economic, and social, such as having a job and independence in carrying out their life tasks.

The local government has rolled out various programs and strategies to improve the welfare of fishermen, such as boat and fishing gear assistance, institutional strengthening of fishermen groups, and empowerment programs based on local wisdom. However, the effectiveness of the strategy still needs to be evaluated, whether it is in accordance with the needs of local fishermen or faces obstacles in implementation in the field.

A number of previous studies have discussed the government's strategy in improving the welfare of fishermen. For example, research by Juaris, et al., shows that group-based fisher empowerment strategies can increase fishermen's independence, but are still constrained by market access (Juaris et al., 2023). Research by Muhammad Junaidi, et al., highlights the importance of business diversification through harvest processing as a strategy to increase the income of fisher families (Junaidi et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Agus Sulaiman Bolkiah, et al., found that fishing gear assistance programs from the government are often inappropriate because they do not pay attention to the geographical conditions and work culture of the fishing community (Bolkiah et al., 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this study uses the approach of *welfare state theory* and *community empowerment theory*. Welfare development theory emphasizes the role of the state in ensuring the welfare of the community, especially vulnerable groups such as fishermen (Herriyanto et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the theory of community empowerment explains the importance of increasing the capacity, participation, and independence of fishermen in order to be able to utilize the potential of marine resources in a sustainable manner (Afriansyah et al., 2023).

Based on the existing literature, most research highlights government strategies in coastal areas in general, with a focus on national and regional programs. However, research that specifically examines the local context in Layabaung Village, West Simeulue District is still very limited. In fact, socio-cultural factors, geographical characteristics, and local wisdom greatly affect the effectiveness of government strategies in improving the welfare of fishermen.

Thus, the research gap lies in the lack of an in-depth empirical study of government strategies in the local context of Simeulue, especially Layabaung Village, as well as how these strategies are implemented, responded to, and have an impact on the welfare of fishermen.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research (Moleong, 2017). This research aims at understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives involved (Manan, 2015; 2021). It was carried out in Layabawung Village, West Simeulue District, Simeulue Regency. The source of research data was obtained through primary data obtained directly through in-depth interviews, observations, and field documentation with key informants and secondary data in the form of regulatory documents, local government reports, fisherman statistical data, and literature related to coastal community welfare strategies. In-depth Interviews with key informants

(village governments, fishermen, related agencies) to unearth information about strategies, programs, obstacles, and outcomes of government policies. The researchers conducted direct observations on the socio-economic conditions of fishermen, fishing activities, as well as the implementation of government programs in the field and documentation. The collection of data from village archives, program reports, activity photos, and other official documents as supporting data is a data collection technique for this research.

Data analysis uses the Miles, Huberman & Saldana model (Miles & Huberman, 2014) which consists of three stages, namely: reducing data by filtering, selecting, and focusing relevant data, presenting data by arranging information in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, or charts for easy understanding and drawing conclusions and verifications: interpreting data to find patterns, strategies, obstacles, and implications for fishermen's welfare. Then writing provisions so that it can produce a scientific writing about the tittle above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Government Strategy in Improving the Welfare of Fishermen

Based on the results of the research, the government has designed a strategy to improve the welfare of fishermen. One of the strategies used is the Reductive Strategy, which is applied when socio-cultural barriers are found in accepting innovations, especially those related to lack of knowledge, education, or skills in utilizing these innovations. This strategic plan was made to provide guidance and direction to the staff of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service, so that they have a reference in carrying out development tasks in the marine and fisheries sector for the next five years, in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of services to the community can be achieved optimally. The following are the government's innovation programs in supporting the welfare of fishermen:

Table 01. Government Innovation Program to Support the Welfare of Fishermen

No.	Government Programs
1.	Counseling activities for the Fishermen Group Development Program
2.	Providing Assistance
3.	Development of Facilities and Infrastructure for the Needs of Fishermen

Source : *Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service*

Author's Review, 2024

The counseling activity referred to here is a coaching process carried out by Simeulue Regency local government officials, including the gampong government, sub-district government, and service organizations that have the responsibility and function of conveying information and information related to improving community welfare. In addition, this counseling is also a forum for fishermen to share various problems they face and plan activities that suit their needs and conditions. Therefore, there are many programs from the Marine and Fisheries Service that support the community, one of which is the Fishermen Group Development Program. This program not only helps in utilizing the catch, but also facilitates the various needs of fishermen.

The interview conducted with the Head of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service related to counseling programs for fishermen in Layabaung Village included the following:

"If the extension program to the community is indeed carried out on a sustainable basis, one of them is the fishermen's group coaching program, because this is one of the efforts to change the mindset of the community itself, so that it can increase its capacity, including the family. In addition, in improving the welfare of fishermen, we from the service also provide training to increase knowledge and skills".

Based on the results of the interview above, it can be concluded that the counseling program for the community, especially fishermen, is a routine activity carried out by the Marine and Fisheries Service in collaboration with the West Simeulue District government. The purpose of this program is to change the mindset of the community. In addition, the Marine and Fisheries Service also held

training activities aimed at improving the knowledge of fishermen. This can be seen from interviews with fishermen, namely:

"Until now, activities such as training are still carried out twice a year, where the training is very beneficial for the community because it provides additional knowledge".

With the current condition of fishermen, it does need attention from the Marine and Fisheries Service. Therefore, the agency invites fishermen to take part in training that can be filled with useful activities that can provide additional income. For example, fishermen can learn to repair broken boat engines on their own without the need to take them to a repair shop. In addition, they can cultivate freshwater fish to sell in the market, or fill their free time by making various processed fish for sale.

Assistance is a form of providing both material and support through the Marine and Fisheries Service to individuals or groups of fishermen. This assistance is unsustainable and aims to protect and improve the welfare of fishermen. Usually, the assistance provided is in the form of goods. The following is an interview with the Head of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service regarding the provision of the assistance:

"For aspiration funds for nelayan every year, it is always disbursed, only in different forms, for example this year the robin machine or net, and the disbursement is also assisted by the village government".

The form of assistance provided from the Service must be in accordance with the standards of fishermen or in accordance with the basic needs of fishermen. The following is an interview with fishermen in Layabaung Village:

"For assistance from the government, there is indeed a problem, but the goods that come are not in accordance with the one from the center, the machine should be large, but until I got to it the goods were small, both machines and others, but I am still grateful".

From the results of the interview above, in the field of providing assistance provided by the government to the fishing community, it is not effective so that fishermen in Layabaung Village find it difficult to get fish and a lot of results, Therefore, the fishermen in Lyabaung Village are still grateful even though the provision of assistance is even small.

The following are the results of interviews with fishermen regarding the impact of ineffectiveness in receiving assistance from the Government of the Marine and Fisheries Service, saying that:

"You and other friends don't think too much about it, if there is alhamdulillah, if there is no hirabbil'alam, how can we do it, the point is still grateful".

Therefore, the Layabaung Village Fishermen accept it as it is, remain grateful and remain enthusiastic in living it, even if it is in a limited and slightly difficult form.

One of the strategies of the Government of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service is to provide special fishermen cards for those who work as permanent fishermen. The following is an interview with the head of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service:

"We from the Service also provide a Fisherman card, it is specifically for those who really work as permanent fishermen, with this fisherman card we can more easily find out the number of fishermen and prioritize the disbursement of assistance, especially in the form of subsidies".

The following are interviews with fishermen regarding the provision of fishermen cards, which are as follows:

"The fisherman's card is indeed given by the government, in order to provide fuel subsidy assistance, but the assistance sometimes takes a long time, that's how it is".

From the above statement, the researcher concluded that the fisherman's card is very good for creating a sense of security for fishermen and worries about subsidy assistance, because when the Agency disburses the subsidy, fishermen who have a card will get it.

The Fisherman's Card is a professional identity card for Indonesian citizens involved in the fishing business. The benefit of this Fisherman Card is as a data reference for the agency to identify the categories of fishermen groups, so that the assistance provided can be more targeted. Every group of fishermen who will receive or submit a request for assistance to the service is required to have a Fisherman Card.

To support the smooth daily activities of fishermen, both at sea and on land, the Agency implements a strategy for maintaining and building facilities and infrastructure. This is done so that fishermen can easily find and market fish more efficiently. This fact was revealed from the results of an interview with the Head of the Marine and Fisheries Service of Simeulue Regency, namely:

"Some of the strategies that we have implemented from the Marine and Fisheries Service include development programs and improvements of facilities and infrastructure, such as the construction of piers, the provision of fishing gear, and the creation of parking spaces for small canoes. These assistance programs aim to support the smooth activities and livelihoods of fishermen".

The following are the results of interviews with fishermen regarding the implementation of programs that have been realized by the government, namely:

"Related to the construction of piers or canoe parking lots, fishermen's halls, and other physical developments, all of which are built by the agency, as has been seen today. In fact, it really helps us fishermen in our activities on land and at sea".

Strengthened by other fishermen, the following is the interview:

"Indeed, the boat parking lot made by the government is very helpful, especially the condition of the area does not have a bay for boat parking, even though our pier has now been lightly damaged by a large storm resulting in large waves that damage our piers".

From the results of the interview above, it can be concluded that the Service has tried to maintain and build facilities and infrastructure to support the smooth running of sea activities. This effort was well received by the fishing community, who felt that the development was very helpful to them.

2. The Government's Supporters and Obstacles in Improving the Welfare of Fishermen

In an effort to improve the welfare of fishermen, the government has supporting aspects that encourage better job development than before, but there are also inhibiting aspects that affect the work as follows:

Supporting Aspects

The supporting factors of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service in realizing prosperous fishing families in Layabaung Village are as follows: The South Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service provides public services, including simplifying administrative services for fishermen so that they can work more efficiently. Harmonious working relationships are an important supporting factor for the service, because the service cannot work alone. With a good working relationship between the office, sub-district, keuchik, and the commander of the laot, the work becomes easier to do and An adequate number of employees is very important to support the work of the service in serving and meeting the needs of fishermen. The Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service has enough employees in each field as needed, so that the work can be completed quickly.

Inhibiting Aspects

In addition to supporting aspects, there are also inhibiting aspects for the government of the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service in prospering fishermen as follows: Limited funds make it very difficult to improve physical and non-physical development programs. Nevertheless, the program is still being implemented, including the maintenance of facilities and infrastructure and increasing the knowledge of fishermen, even with budget limitations. The low level of education of

fishermen causes their knowledge to be limited, which is an obstacle for the service in carrying out programs and socialization with fishermen. As a result, fishermen tend to only complain and criticize the efforts of the service without understanding the obstacles faced, and the number of fishermen in Simeulue Regency is very large, therefore the Marine and Fisheries Service is a little more draining in the welfare of fishermen, while the existing funds are also limited, on average in each village are generally fishermen, even almost half of the village population.

In general, the strategies that have been carried out have a positive impact, although they are not completely significant. The income level of fishermen who receive facilities and assistance has increased compared to before. In addition, there is a new awareness among fishermen about the importance of managing catches, diversifying their businesses, and educating their children so that they are not trapped in the cycle of structural poverty.

However, the lack of an integrated governance system and consistent supervision makes the results of the strategy not even to all fishermen. This indicates that the government's strategy still needs to be improved both in terms of implementation, coordination between agencies, and program sustainability.

Judging from public policy theory, the government's strategy in Layabaung Village is still at the *output stage* (providing assistance, training, market access), but has not fully touched the *outcome* aspect in the form of sustainable welfare improvement. The existing programs are more short-term (charity approach) than long-term (empowerment approach). From a community-based development perspective, the ideal strategy should emphasize sustainable empowerment, active participation of fishers in program planning, and building local institutional capacity so that fishers are not only beneficiaries, but also key actors in fisheries development in their areas.

CONCLUSION

The government has formulated a strategy to improve the welfare of fishermen. The Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service implements a Reductive Strategy and a Persuasive Strategy in an effort to improve the welfare of small fishermen in Layabaung Village. The steps taken include counseling activities to increase fishermen's knowledge, providing assistance in the form of goods to support fishing activities, and building facilities and infrastructure to facilitate fishermen's daily activities.

In the implementation of the strategy, there are supporters and obstacles from the Simeulue Regency Marine and Fisheries Service in an effort to improve the welfare of fishermen. The supporters include a strategic location, good administrative services, an adequate number of service employees, a good working relationship between the Marine and Fisheries Service and the village government, and the provision of a special budget for fishermen. Meanwhile, the obstacles include limited funds, low levels of education for fishermen, and high numbers of fishermen.

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