

## **SDG 10: Reducing Disparity and Poverty through Local Knowledge-Based People's Economic Empowerment: The Experience of Dayak Indigenous Peoples of Ketapang District, West Kalimantan Province in Indonesia**

### *Institut Dayakologi*

In the early 1990's, Institut Dayakologi alongside Pancur Kasih Empowerment Movement (GPPK), have started promoting sustainable development practice by adopting a local knowledge-based holistic empowerment concept. This is the very practice of holistic empowerment applied to the Dayak Indigenous Peoples in Ketapang District's inland, West Kalimantan Province in Indonesia, who have strictly limited access to development public service infrastructure that includes education, health, electricity, transportation and to financial institution in addition to livelihood sources that include natural resources.

Companies that had pocketed permits of Forest Use (HPH), Industrial Plantation Forest (HTI) and large-scale mono-cultural plantations have operated in the territory of Dayak Indigenous Peoples in Ketapang District since early 1970's. In the name of development, those corporations have exploited their land, forest and sources of living and took the outputs of their operation to the outside. As a result, instead of welfare, such massive exploitation even results in injustice/disparity, poverty to Dayak Indigenous Peoples, and ecological destruction and tradition, custom and cultural degradation. The Data of Plantation Office of West Kalimantan (2009) shows that Ketapang District has the largest palm oil plantation covering 1.1 million hectares compared to 9 other Districts in West Kalimantan.

#### **EXPERIENCES: THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER CULTURE**

Institut Dayakologi (ID) who works directly at grass root level with communities responded to such conditions by seeking solutions that are based on local knowledge values. Being aware of struggling against all such disparity, injustice and structural impoverishment, Institut Dayakologi uses the spirit of solidarity and self-determination long grown and existing among the communities of Dayak Indigenous Peoples as the strength of a cultural strategy for people's economic empowerment movement through Credit Union Movement, which is the right way. Why? Because it is a concept of economic empowerment that is based on cooperation, self-determination and education and that is physical and moral change-oriented. ID has begun holistic and integrated empowerment movement. In order not to be trapped to become business-oriented institution, CU is then managed based on the concept of Indigenous Dayak peasants' philosophy in managing their farms for fulfilling 4 (four) basic needs of the Dayak peasants, these are: (1) Food and Drink (survival needs), (2) agricultural cultivation and storing seeds (sustainability needs), (3) Social-Solidarity (Social Needs) and (4) Ritual - Spirituality (Spirituality Needs). This concept was initiated by A.R. Mecer – a Kalimantan Dayak figure.

CU Movement of Peasants' Philosophy Concept then was named after one of the Indigenous figures and Indigenous Hero who fought against injustice - Gemalag Kemisiq. This is CU Movement of Peasants' Philosophy Concept of Gemalag Kemisiq better known as CU Gemalag Kemisiq (CU GK), which was founded in 1999 and is in operation since then. Up to 2019, CU GK provided services to its 18,588 members spreading across 10 sub-districts or areas of service. Its total activists are 66 people. The ideology and all the services of CU GK are based on the Kalimantan peasants' life wisdom. For the last decades, CU GK has served as Jalai and Kendawangan Indigenous Peoples' means of struggling to defend and continuously develop holistic empowerment. CU GK presence has directly benefited more than 18,000 people comprising of men, women, children and adults and also 70 service staff who also come from the Indigenous Peoples of Dayak Jalai and Kendawangan in Ketapang District—one of 14 Districts/city in West Kalimantan province—Indonesia. Total area of Ketapang District is 31,240.74 Km<sup>2</sup> (21% of the total area of West Kalimantan Province 147,307 Km<sup>2</sup>). Total population of Ketapang District

is 504,008 people (2018). All its members have the same right to access the services that applied the four ways of salvation that is the core of Kalimantan peasants' philosophy.

Through CU GK, its Indigenous Peoples members are able to reduce the impacts of injustice resulting from developmentalism and exploitation, among which by safeguarding their customary territory and lands by not selling them to outsiders, by managing alternative economic sources relying on their own capabilities, by building their home *kampung* themselves, sending their children to higher education, and solving difficulty when their family members get sick or pass away. Moreover, Indigenous Peoples also can freely practise their custom and have financial sources to fund the maintenance of such custom and traditions. Following is the sharing of experience about facilitation and how community self-empowers, stands back up from difficult situation and works together. For example, in 2018 financial year, CU GK recorded IDR 733,821,850 in contribution of health solidarity for medical care and hospitalization costs to its members and IDR 800,294,465 in solidarity fund to bereaved family.

In 2007, CU GK supported by Institut Dayakologi founded the Alliance of Jalai Kendawangan Indigenous Peoples (AMA-JK). This Indigenous organization is specifically tasked with conducting direct facilitation to 10 empowered kampongs (KB) where Dayak Jalai, Kendawang and Pesaguan Indigenous Peoples reside in Ketapang District. Therefore, CU GK supported AMA-JK's programme by creating an Agricultural Saving (PAKAR) that is



Photo: Early Service Point of CU Gemalaq Kemisiq adopting Dayak Jalai traditional architecture to take shape after a paddy barn locally known as *Jurung*. It was built in the middle of ancestral territory known as *Dahas*.

designated for low interest loans in order to support cultural and ecological restoration efforts in the 10 empowered kampongs. The culture of working together between CU GK, Institut Dayakologi and AMA-JK has been continuously intensified up to date. CU GK is fully aware that the power of working together is important to serve as strategy for the sustainability of facilitation to more than 18,000 members spreading across 10 areas of services that face challenging inter-area access in fighting against poverty and disparity. To the author, a senior activist of CU GK said, "*We have to do real actions for our community, no matter what the challenges are. If not us, who else will?*" An example of inspiring and powerful social ecological resilience.