



## Women's Participation in Training on The Processing of Economic Value Rubber Seeds and Local Wisdom Based in Curahtakir Village, Jember

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**Abstract:** Curahtakir Village, located in Jember, is affiliated with PTPN XII and serves as a prominent rubber-producing community. A significant proportion of the village's population comprises women who are actively engaged in rubber-related labor. A significant quantity of rubber seeds is discarded and commercially traded at a price range of IDR 2000-3000 per kilogram. The absence of sufficient knowledge regarding the local potential necessitates the provision of training programs focused on the conversion of rubber seeds into high-value food products. The rubber seed chip products have the potential to enhance the local wisdom of Curahtakir Village. This research explains women's participation, empowerment through training for women, and training based on local wisdom. The study involved conducting interviews with female rubber workers, trainees, and members of the local community. The village chiefs serve as supplementary sources of information to obtain insights on the involvement of women in training programs. The findings indicated a significant level of active participation among women. During the pre-planning, the activities aimed at promoting women's participation persist in their planning and evaluation, despite encountering various obstacles, such as the challenges posed by their existing work commitments. The implementation continued to run well, the participants continued to follow the activity process to completion.

**Keywords:** empowerment, participation, training, local wisdom

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### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is primarily an agricultural country, with the majority of its population, particularly those in rural regions, relying on agriculture as their main source of income. In the process of their development, individuals engaged in farming tend to have a lower proficiency in adopting new innovations.

In addition to natural resources that can be developed, the potential of individual expertise is the main goal of community empowerment. Empowering farming communities poses a recurring difficulty for both central and regional governments (Handono et al., 2020). According to Sumodingrat in (Sulaiman et al., 2022), community empowerment is a strategic approach aimed at enhancing the well-being and social standing of individuals who find themselves trapped in a state of underdevelopment, hence seeking to uplift their worth in society. Thus, the objective of community empowerment, particularly in the context of farmers, is to enhance their capacity to achieve independence and acquire the necessary skills to address social and economic issues.

Rubber farming is a significant export commodity that plays a crucial role in strengthening the country's reserves of foreign exchange. Rubber demand has steadily risen



from 1.0 million tons to 1.3 million tons over the last two decades. Consequently, foreign exchange income in 2021 witnessed a significant growth of approximately 45%, equivalent to USD 6.377 billion. Jember Regency in East Java is a significant rubber-producing region, accounting for 28.26% of the total production in 2021 (Central Bureau of Statistics East Java, 2022). Rubber produced in Jember will be exported in its raw form and distributed to various regions of Indonesia to meet the demands of the food industry and automotive companies. Rubber is a vital commodity in daily human existence. Rubber is widely employed in various aspects of human mobility, including the manufacturing of vehicle tires, transmission belts, rubber sandals, and shoes.

In relation, Curahtakir Village, located in the Jember area, is a significant rubber-producing region under the control of PTPN XII. Notably, most workers involved in rubber production in this village are women. Based on observational data, rubber workers frequently collect rubber seeds and subsequently engage in trading them at a price range of IDR 2000-3000 kilogram. Due to a lack of knowledge in rubber seed processing, individuals are compelled to offer rubber seeds for sale at minimal or no cost. Furthermore, certain female workers in the rubber industry attempted to process rubber seeds, but the resulting products were deemed unable for consumption. Previously processed rubber seeds can cause negative side effects such as nausea and dizziness.

Insufficient public awareness regarding local potential and to address the limited information and knowledge regarding the processing of rubber seeds into chip food, it is imperative to introduce innovative training programs. These programs aim to enhance the skills required for processing rubber seeds into chips or other high-value products. Rubber seed chip products have the potential to showcase the local wisdom of Curahtakir Village. Rubber seeds have essential nutrients for the human body, including unsaturated fatty acids and vegetable oils.

In the journal of news research and development of industrial plants conducted by (Listyati & Ferry, 2014) explained the content of rubber, more precisely rubber seeds can be processed into processed nutritious food products, because they contain protein and amino acids that are needed by the body. The rubber seed sector has significant potential to enhance the well-being of the community, particularly for rubber workers. The conversion of rubber seeds into food products presents business and economic prospects for women workers and housewives. Innovative rubber seed products can be introduced to the community through appropriate processing methods, utilization of necessary materials, effective packaging, and strategic marketing techniques. The women's empowerment program involves training in rubber seed processing, accompanied by a mentoring component. Training plays a specific educational role, because it involves participants to do something, this is explained by Ife and Tesoriero (2008) (in Saugi & Sumarno, 2015). The role of training will have an impact on the community to improve their quality of life. In addition, the existence of women's empowerment activities through training can also encourage women's participation in innovating processed food products from rubber seeds in Curahtakir Village, Jember, East Java.

Further, women's involvement is crucial for community involvement in processing abundant rubber seeds in Curahtakir Village. The involvement of women in training activities is crucial as it plays a significant role in empowerment programs. This position has the potential to promote the acquisition of knowledge, development of skills, and implementation of marketing strategies. Setyawati et al., (2020) emphasized that the significant role of women in creatively is by utilizing natural resources for sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development necessitates both participation and ongoing training, including a mentoring stage, to enhance environmental quality.

Levinson argues that the existence of roles can cover several things including norms related to the position of individuals in society, concepts regarding individual activities for an organization and important individual behavior in the social structure of society (in Soekanto,

2012). Also, women's participation has a correlation with environmental quality, it is proven that women are actively processing the natural resources environment around them into preparations with high selling value. Women are also the best and most creative managers in processing available natural resources (Irwan, 2009).

Moreover, The Millennium Development Goals in 2015 have a goal that women must be involved in empowerment activities, so that women have skills and see opportunities to play a role in processing their natural resources. Women's empowerment programs seek to enhance the well-being of women by implementing activities that promote their autonomy and serve as an alternative approach to community development. According to Septiani, (2018), autonomy enables empowerment by enhancing individuals' knowledge and skills, thereby improving their quality of life. According to Inverson (in Aji et al., (2018), skills can rapidly develop through training and an individual's willingness or active participation.

To realize the form of empowerment, a study was carried out on rubber seed processing by women based on local wisdom. This study focuses on the empowerment of women rubber plantation workers, housewives, and PKK mothers in Curahtakir Jember Village through innovative rubber seed processing training. The Family Welfare Program (PKK) is a social organization operating within society. The primary objective of the PKK is to achieve family welfare.

The transforming of rubber seeds into chips enhances the economic status of the family. Based on the background that has been described, the researcher wants to answer the problem of first, women's involvement in the innovation of processing rubber seeds that have economic value and are based on local wisdom. Both forms of women's participation in empowerment programs, specifically through training, have a significant socio-economic impact.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive research design utilizing a qualitative methodology. Qualitative opinions from Creswell (in Komariyah & Satori, (2017) research in the form of a question process about understanding a thing to obtain data, information, texts of informants' views on social phenomena, problems or humanity.

Qualitative research aims to comprehensively understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, including behavior, perception, motivation, and action. This understanding is achieved through descriptive analysis using words and language, within a specific natural context, and employing diverse natural methods (Moleong, 2017).

This qualitative study spanned a period of five months, from July to December 2021. The research site chosen for this study was Curahtakir Jember Village, selected through purposive area.

The informants for this study included female workers from the PTPN XII plantation, village chiefs, and members of the surrounding communities. The informant determination process employed purposive sampling techniques, whereas data mining techniques utilized snowball sampling. The researchers collected data through various techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Also, The researchers employed participatory observation as an observation technique, actively engaging in the observed activity. Furthermore, the researchers employed structured interview techniques, utilizing a pre-established and systematic format. The researchers also utilized documentation techniques to enhance the acquired information.

The techniques used to ensure the validity of research data were primarily descriptive and focused on inductive reasoning. In this study, the researchers employed three techniques to validate the data: observation extension, increased persistence, and triangulation. The researchers extended the observations for two months, starting in mid-September. However, the researchers were unable to obtain complete data that aligned with the study's objectives.

The researchers extended the study until November to collect data that aligns with the study objectives.

To ensure reliability, the researchers conducted periodic interviews at various time intervals to reevaluate the data. To ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data, the researchers employed source triangulation, engineering triangulation, and time triangulation in this study.

The study employed several techniques in data analysis which involved collecting, reducing, presenting, and drawing conclusions from the data. The researchers collected data through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data reduction involved the concise and clear summarization of research findings, which aided in facilitating further research. The researcher provided a concise description of the data to facilitate comprehension and comparison, enabling researchers to draw meaningful conclusions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Analysis of Village's Condition**

The represent area of Curahtakir Village is 7,865 hectares. Curahtakir Village is situated at an elevation of approximately 42 meters above sea level, indicating a moderate topographical profile. Curahtakir Village, located in Tempurejo District, consists of 8 hamlets: Curahjambe, Curahrejo, Kalibajing, Kalisenen, Karangrejo, Krajan I, Krajan II, and Punco. The administrative data for Curahtakir Village in Tempurejo District remains within the authority of Jember Regency. Agriculture plays a crucial role in the economic development of Curahtakir Village. The agricultural commodities cultivated in Curahtakir Village encompass rubber, tobacco, rice, corn, chili, long beans, and various other crops. The primary source of income for the residents of Curahtakir Village is employment in the rubber plantation sector, which is owned by PTPN (PT Perkebunan Nusantara) XII Jember. Rubber serves as a significant economic asset for the inhabitants of Curahtakir Village, thus, rubber is one of the local wisdom owned by the village.

Furthermore, a significant portion of the village population is engaged in manual labor, with a subset involved in informal employment. This leads to women assuming the responsibility of providing for the family and assuming the role traditionally held by the husband as the family's leader. The limited income of rubber workers and their involvement in farming indirectly leads to women, as mothers or wives, taking on a role in managing the family's finances.

### **Women's Involvement**

Women's empowerment based on local wisdom through rubber seed processing training aims to empower Curahtakir Village women in increasing knowledge, skills and economic income.

Training is expected to improve women's empowerment more efficiently due to its ability to achieve empowerment within a relatively brief timeframe. Empowerment can be readily achieved. Training is an activity aimed at enhancing knowledge, expertise, experience, and modifying individual attitudes (Simmamora, 1995, as cited in Kamil, 2012).

In the process of empowerment, it is crucial to engage women in the development of innovative methods for processing rubber seeds that hold economic value, drawing upon local knowledge and practices. Cohen and Uphoff's theory (in Nurhalim, 2021) highlights the significance of societal involvement in various aspects such as implementation, utilization of results, planning, and decision-making.

The term "involvement" or "participation" is derived from the English language, specifically from the word "participate," which refers to the act of taking part or participating (Rosmita, et al., 2011). According to Davis (2018), involvement entails individuals' cognitive and affective engagement in group settings, fostering a continuous flow of ideas towards achieving collective objectives and assuming accountability for them. Involvement is defined as engaging

in activities.

Women play an integral role in community activities, contributing to various stages of the development process such as program preparation, planning, development, policy formulation, and decision making (Huraerah, 2011). According to Fahrudin et al., (2022), involvement can be categorized into two types: real involvement and unreal involvement. Active involvement through financial contributions, material possessions, personal effort, and expertise. The involvement encompasses intangible aspects such as thoughts, social interactions, evaluation, and decision-making.

Women's involvement is crucial due to their significant role in development and innovation within training activities, as they possess the ability to address and resolve various emerging problems. Involvement encompasses more than just financial or material contributions; it also includes providing moral support.

### **The Degree of Women's Involvement**

Involvement encompasses collective engagement in shared activities. It includes multiple levels in practical implementation. According to Soegijo (as cited in Dwiningrum, (2011), there are four levels of involvement, which are as follows: 1) Sharing information together. The implementer will disseminate information about the program to be planned or provide information about the decision to invite women to give the decision as well. 2) Feedback, involving the community by soliciting suggestions and criticisms from the community before making decisions. 3) joint decision. Women in designing and decision-making activities together with the organizers. 4) Control, women also have the power to directly supervise decisions to be taken and refuse the implementation of decisions. Rejection is based on mutually agreed performance procedures.

In addition, according to Sukesu, pointing to Supartinah, (2010), women's involvement in decision-making processes can lead to decisions that are not in their own best interests.

### **Women's Involvement Through Rubber Seed Processing Training**

During the training activities, women's participation in Curahtakir Village has provided several ideas starting from the planning stage to the implementation and evaluation stages of the program. The training participants were PKK Curahtakir mothers consisting of rubber workers and housewives.

1. The Pre-training of rubber seed processing with PKK's members in Curahtakir Village.

During the pre-training activity process, the members and activity organizers shared information about the training event. The process of preparing training activities requires several steps, namely invitations to all members of the PKK. Introduction of local village foodstuffs, independent manufacture of products and evaluation of activities.

The pre-training activity stage was attended by core members of the PKK, including the head, secretary, treasurer, and village business unit managers. Core members have a significant impact on the participation of other members in the training activity process. The sustainability of women's empowerment is contingent upon the involvement of key stakeholders. This aligns with the concept of community-driven development as proposed by Wrihatnolo and colleagues (in Pebrian et al., 2012). Community-driven development (CDD) refers to an approach that seeks to enhance the community's capacity to identify issues and participate in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, implementers and core members collaborate to ensure effective coordination for the training event, with a specific focus on promoting meaningful participation of women. During the pre-implementation process, two types of participation were observed: real participation and unreal participation. The involvement of PKK's members in gathering and preparing materials for rubber seed processing training serves as evidence of their active participation. The involvement of

PKK's members in contributing ideas and decision-making regarding the implementation of training activities was significant.

2. The implementation of rubber seed processing training activities with PKK's member in Curahtakir Village

The core team members are responsible for coordinating the attendance of other PKK members in training activities. The initial activity involves educating the community about the local village wisdom regarding rubber seeds, emphasizing the importance of utilizing this knowledge. Furthermore, the socialization event included a presentation on the advantages and constituents of rubber seeds.

On the first day of training activities, approximately 20 participants, out of a total of 40 PKK members, displayed a significant level of enthusiasm. The involvement in PKK is extensive due to effective coordination by core members. In addition to the core members of the PKK, the involvement of the village head plays a significant role in facilitating the participation of women in Curahtakir Village in various activities.

The chief of village delivered a speech and actively oversaw the training event until its conclusion. After providing the socialization material, the activity proceeded by forming groups for the practical exercise of removing the outer layer of rubber seeds. Group division is implemented to facilitate the smooth operation of activities. The participants are divided into two groups, each led by one facilitator provided by the activity organizer to supervise the practical activities.

Stripping rubber seeds is a practical exercise aimed at training individuals in the proper techniques of peeling, distinguishing, and cleaning rubber seeds. Participation occurs when one trainee possesses knowledge of rubber seed cleaning practices. One participant shared his knowledge and encouraged others to engage in practical discussions.

The implementation activity proceeded smoothly, with the executor and participants exchanging information. This resulted in a reciprocal response during the initial day of training. Other participants were observed engaging in the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to the sorting of rubber seeds, specifically focusing on identifying seeds that were unsuitable for processing and those that were deemed suitable for further processing.

Following the initial day of training, members of the PKK expressed mutual encouragement. Some participants arrived late and lacked knowledge in stripping. They mutually supported one another by motivating fellow participants to focus on the demonstration of effective rubber seed stripping techniques. Participant participation is interrelated during the training process. This enhances trainees' skill development.

Each group is assigned the task of processing peeled rubber seeds by soaking them in water for a duration of five days. Water changing activities occur three times daily, with each facilitator accompanying PKK members. During this phase, maternal participation declined due to the inability of rubber workers who were also mothers to participate simultaneously. Rubber women workers are required to work night shifts in order to return home in the morning.

On the second day of training, the focus was on the processing of rubber seeds into rubber chips, as well as the subsequent packaging of these chips. The level of participation was moderate. Interviews revealed that several informants involved in rubber seed processing faced obstacles, resulting in a lack of participation during the implementation of activities on the second day. Some women were unable to participate on the second day due to their work as rubber workers.

The research findings indicated that female rubber workers in Curahtakir Village perceive a high level of busyness due to their work commitments. The leisure

time available to female rubber workers is limited to approximately two to three hours per day, specifically during daylight hours. In the morning, women often prioritize rest, such as sleeping, before engaging in household chores and childcare responsibilities.

In comparison to those who do not engage in employment or solely remain at home, they possess a relatively substantial amount of leisure time in relation to others. During training sessions, housewives tend to have a higher presence due to their relatively lower level of engagement in other activities. The daily activities include cooking, cleaning, childcare, and participating in group gymnastics sessions with other mothers.

Another factor contributing to trainee's low participation is the lack of trust among mothers regarding the processing of rubber seeds. During an interview with researchers, the chief of Curahtakir Village reported an incident in which mothers consumed poisoned rubber seeds while processing them. The lack of trust resulted in decreased participation on the second day, indicating a relatively low level of involvement from members of the PKK. The attendance on the second day of the training activity was lower, with only 15 participants, which contrasted with the higher attendance observed on the first day.

The training participants demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm during the activity. The feedback process between implementers and participants proceeded smoothly. They meticulously observe the process of rubber seed processing. The processing of rubber seeds involves imparting knowledge about the variations in rubber seeds and ensuring they are thoroughly washed prior to processing. The rubber seeds are washed in a careless manner, rendering them unfit for consumption.

A question-and-answer session was held as part of the activity. In addition, rubber seeds are processed into chips and flavored with innovative rubber chip flavors. The PKK's members made a collective decision to engage in joint activities. As a result, it was agreed upon that chips would be processed with two different flavors: Balado (spicy) and original. The training participants actively engaged in the process of frying rubber seeds into chips, exchanging ideas and contributing to the overall participation.

After completing the production of rubber chips, the facilitator proceeds to provide information regarding the packaging options available for rubber seeds. Rubber packaging goes through socialization to enhance the market value of the produced goods. During an interview, the head of the PKK discussed how socialization can enhance women's creativity in designing appealing food packaging. Rubber chips are packaged using standing Ziplock packaging. The activity organizer provided a single pack of standing Ziplock bags to be distributed among the members of PKK.

### 3. The Post Implementation of Rubber Seed Processing Training in Curahtakir Village

The training outcome is a rubber chip product that would be marketed and developed in collaboration with the Village of Curahtakir. According to interviews conducted by the chief of Curahtakir Village, it has been decided that rubber seed chips products will be sold in various stores in the village. This decision was made in collaboration with the Head of PKK's members and the secretariat of PKKs. The participant engagement increased significantly during the final moments of the training session.

Subsequently, individuals who were absent initially arrive after rubber seeds have been transformed into rubber chip products. Rubber workers on a short break seek to exchange information with other participants regarding the processing of rubber seeds into chips. Several participants expressed their desire to manufacture rubber seed chips and subsequently market them to the central city. Many grocery

store owners also take the initiative to produce rubber chips with traditional packaging, priced at IDR 2000. The active participation of members in this step was demonstrated.

4. The Evaluation of Rubber Seed Processing Training Activities in Curahtakir Village

Training evaluation activities are conducted post-completion of the entire series of events. The evaluation took place at Curahtakir Village Hall with the participation of 18 members of the PKK. The researchers facilitated sharing sessions with the training participants, during which they posed questions related to the training. Several mothers participated by providing their opinions on the training activities. A trainee reported that the training process was successful. Participants comprehend the facilitator's explanation on rubber seed material. The participants' happiness was also attributed to the facilitator's distribution of booklets on rubber seed processing.

Moreover, involvement was actively generated during the evaluation of activities. Training participants, who are members of the PKK, were empowered to voice their opinions and engage in the exchange of ideas to enhance future training activities. This participation is characterized by emotional bonding between individuals.

Participants and implementers of rubber seed processing training engage in a reciprocal exchange of feedback regarding the ongoing training program. The learning method employed in the training process is a lecture, which requires evaluation. Participants found the training to be highly suitable, particularly enjoying the final day's cooking competition. The participants exhibit high levels of enthusiasm due to the anticipated rewards associated with the training activities. The village head, in addition to their administrative role, served as a judge in the rubber chip cooking innovation competition.

Furthermore, the researchers employed a questionnaire to assess the level of satisfaction among participants in the training program. Regrettably, a significant number of individuals lack literacy skills and encounter challenges when attempting to complete the questionnaire. The participants exclusively recorded their suggestions and impressions on the questionnaire form.

When the researchers looked for to collect data on feelings experienced during training activities. Three participants were selected for interviews by the researchers. They expressed a strong desire for retraining in the field of rubber seed processing. Members of the PKK have acknowledged that they received significant assistance from this training. They believed that they acquired fresh knowledge, skills, and motivation to establish a business by placing their products in nearby stalls.

The evaluation was facilitated by the active involvement of the members, leading to a smooth process. The training yielded satisfactory results by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and engagement of PKK members in utilizing the local wisdom of Curahtakir Village. Training is essential for acquiring knowledge on processing rubber seeds into chips and effectively neutralizing the toxic properties of rubber seed poison. The acquisition of skills contributes to the expansion of knowledge. Moreover, there was a significant increase in participation when the members of the PKK made the decision to collaborate on the development of joint products. The chief of Curahtakir Village strongly advocates for the involvement of mothers who have completed training in rubber seed processing. Village funds, known as BUMDES, are also available to provide capital for groups of PKK members to market processed rubber seed products.



## CONCLUSION

The involvement of women in rubber seed management training activities, which are based on local wisdom, is highly active in Curahtakir Village. They possess a strong comprehension of the provided information. The members exhibit high levels of enthusiasm in expressing their opinions, ideas, and agreements during the pre-activity phase. PKK members also engaged in pre-activity procedures by actively searching for rubber seeds in rubber plantations. They are additionally involved in the process of determining the training activities to be conducted, including the day and location of the activity.

Women's participation in activity planning is significant. Numerous trainees attended the Curahtakir Village Hall on the initial day of participation. On the second day, participation decreased slightly due to the presence of several trainees employed as rubber workers. However, their enthusiasm persisted as they actively exchanged knowledge with their fellow participants. Reduced visibility and decreased activity in participation can be observed during the five-day process of washing rubber seeds. The obstacles faced by rubber laborers hindered their ability to engage in this task. However, the enthusiasm of housewives to replace or assist other groups was notable. This suggests that there is a correlation between emotional closeness and active involvement in the PKK women's group in Curahtakir Village.

The local Village chief promotes ongoing motivation and active participation among women through various evaluation activities. The participation of women can be categorized into real and unreal forms, which encompass various aspects such as ideas, thoughts, energy, time, and financial contributions. These two forms of participation are interconnected. Furthermore, they can engage in physical activities, such as actively participating in the process of producing rubber chips.

The primary barrier to women's participation lies in their engagement in landscaping activities, which limits their availability to attend training sessions due to time constraints. The Curahtakir Village Government aims to sustain and enhance the development of products derived from training. In order to enhance the enthusiasm of the PKK members, it is important to focus on the development of the village's local potential.

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