

# SEA NOMADS IN BATAM: A PHENOMENON IN DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN BERTAM ISLAND, BATAM

Atik Rahmawati

## Abstract:

Sea nomads are one of the indigenous people that inhabit the waters of Riau Island with the greatest number recorded in the Department of the Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia database 1988, with which 11,23% is concentrated on Batam waters, located in Malaka and Philip Straits, and South China Sea. It is called Sea Nomads since its people live nomadic by doing the whole life activities in a boat or watercraft covered with *Kajang*. Nomadic Life in the Sea Life certainly does have risks that can sometimes be life-threatening if the sudden bad weather comes, besides the lack of social services affordability they should get as citizens including education, health, and housing. It is also recalled that since 1973 Batam as a strategic area of border regions grew into regional industry, commerce, shipbuilding, and tourism which has the authority of developing the region. The rapid development in Batam certainly has an impact on the lives of the sea nomads, including the development program proposed the Ministry of Social of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly their placement in the settlement since 1989, which involved the elements of the local community, the Social Organizations called Social Communication and Consultation (SCCF) of Batam located in Bertam island, Batam. This paper attempts to describe the life of the sea nomads who have experienced life changes that are settled on the Bertam island of Batam by presenting the impact caused by the development policy.

Keywords: Empowerment, Policy Impact, Indigenous Communities, Sea Nomads

## Introduction

Remote Indigenous Community Empowerment (*Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil*, PKAT) Program for sea nomads on the Bertam island is the flagship program of the government under the coordinations of Department of Social Affairs and is a pilot project through the Sea Nomads community participation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and a social organization called Social Welfare Activities Coordinator (Koordinator Kegiatan Kesejahteraan Sosial/KKKS), formerly known as Batam

Communication and Social Consultative Forum (Forum Komunikasi dan Konsultasi Sosial/FKKS).

PKAT is one of the government's concerns and commitments to accelerate the development process for those who still have not been reached by the national development process which is generally located in remote areas that are difficult to reach<sup>2</sup>. As a pilot project, the program involves a lot of support from a number of parties: The government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Coordinator for Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Research and technology; also supported by non-governmental organization such as KKKS Batam including NEBA (Nedherland Batam) foundation as international donor; and the academicians of the University of Indonesia and the Bandung Institute of Technology.

This program brings Bertam Island transformed into a bustling settlement with the construction of additional housing units and some supporting facilities, ranging from housing construction carried out from 1988 until 1993, the buildings of posyandu, Elementary School and mosque, multipurpose hall, monument of boats, wells, *yetti* (wharf), paths on land that have been disseminated, ring roads, until the solar-based electricity.

### **The Problems to Discuss**

With Bertam island as a pilot project, it does not make the island grows into a well-developed settlements from the increasing the number of facilities and

infrastructure as well as the number of sea nomads who settled on the Bertam island, as revealed by the Secretary of RT 20 of Bertam island, as the interview results the author recorded as follows:

First time I entered the settlement, a lot of help came from the government, KKKS Batam, also groceries from NEBA, home-making, and the bridge which now has a lot of holes, also health facility with doctors and nurses, school buildings with teachers assistance.. but now the government rarely come, more help, likewise, comes from Mrs. Dar (Mrs. Dar is Mother Sudarsono, the chairman of KKKS Batam), groceries every Ramadan, fasting break, school uniforms and shoes for children. Even now there are many people who go back into the sea or move to the back of the field. The house is not there, fallen. The only owned is the boat. So, it now remains 114 people. If this continues Bertam could be more quiet (September, 2009).

The life the Sea Nomads community has been through especially after their placement in Bertam is that they experience various problems such as in terms of economic, social, health, and education. This study attempts to answer the question of "How Community Development Policy the life of Sea Nomads Communities on the Bertam Island, Batam?".

### **From Nomadic Life in the Sea to the Residential Communities on the Bertam Island, Batam**

Bertam Island is one of a group of islands in the region of Batam, Riau Island province, precisely in the Kasu village, Belakang Padang district about 7 miles away from Batam Island to the port of Tanjung Uncang or 10 miles away from the port of Sekupang Batam. Geographically, Batam has an area of 1570.35 km<sup>2</sup>, consisting of 186 large and small islands with which the largest one is Batam

island with 415 Km<sup>2</sup> or known as the Bonded area, meanwhile the surrounding small islands called the Hinterland region includes the island Bertam therein.

The output of the PKAT program for the Sea Nomads communities in the Bertam Island is that one of those to which the Sea Nomads communities can live permanently on the Bertam Island, Batam. Living permanently causes a change in life that would be certainly very different from his previous life as the sea nomads at the surrounding waters of Batam.

Based on the results of the study indicate that they tend to choose to have a permanently stable life in the settlement compared to the previous one they lead. Stable preference to living in the settlements is closely related to the realization of which the desire of citizens prepare their future generations primarily through formal education and maintaining the safety of their family life because it can avoid the danger of malignancy marine weather, and the condition of the body began to adapt to the ground so that their body will begin to feel pain when they live on the ocean for long time.

Therefore, the stable life they live will permanently affect the peace of mind/spirit so that they can plan for a better life for their family, especially for the future of their children through education. Education is a means for improving the quality of people; the quality of social human serve as community assets that are beneficial to the community development. Adi (2008) mentions it as human capital.

**Sea Nomads of Bertam Island Batam as an "Already Empowered" Community**

The legal basis of the Empowerment Program for the Sea Nomads communities on the Bertam Island Batam is motivated by the Development policy for Social Welfare and Pattern of Social Welfare Problems handling by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Social Welfare Development Society Alienation (PKSMT). In the implementative level, this program has experienced several nomenclatures (code name) changes from which it was firstly referred to "Remote Tribe", then "Remote People" until later in 1992 it was called as "Remote Indigenous Communities" in accordance with the Presidential Decree of The Republic of Indonesia No. 111 entitled "Fostering the Social Welfare of Remote Indigenous Communities".

These changes are not made spontaneously, but through an assessment and evaluation of the previous program. It means that there are methods reforms and improvements in the implementation. Similarly, this change is also applied in nomenclatures from "Remote People" to "Remote Indigenous Communities". The difference can be seen in terms of its execution, where the program puts forward the concept of empowerment PKAT (bottom-up) with its emphasis on aspiration, initiative, and participation of the target community in every activity started from the preparation, execution, until the evaluation phase. It is done to grow the attitude and confidence of the Remote Indigenous Communities in managing their potential to break away from the remoteness, geographical and psychological barriers and poverty. While the implementation of empowerment PKSMT is packaged in the form of coaching and tends to be top-down.

Both approaches above are opposite ones for they tend to apply *top down* atau *bottom-up* approaches in their implementation which can affect differently on the targeted community. Pressman and Wilavsky in Parsons (2008, p. 468) explain that the top-down model contains ideas of “implementation is to make people do things instructed, and to control the order stages in a system”. Similarly, Kusumanegara and Nugroho (2010) mention the similar proposition that the *top down* approach is only focused on bureaucracy to implement only political decisions, rule out interactions and men’s feelings. Fermana (2009) and Parsons (2008) further state that in a coercive social relation which discusses about who the object of decision is, the *top-down* paradigm fails to create social justice for all people for it is tyrannical and elitist. It has too much emphasis imposed on the objective definition above, not on the role of the workers in the field.

This is of course different from the use of bottom-up approach, as expressed by Parsons (2008), Kusumanegara (2010), and Nugroho (2010) that the bottom-up approach is more prescriptive approach and puts forward the elements of decentralization in the implementation of the program and has a requirement of a public policy that embraces democratic model formulated from the bottom (bottom-up) so that it enables the emergence of empowerment for those who are considered as the target of the decisions.

The implementation of community policies on sea nomads based on the data from the Ministry of Social Affairs recorded in 2006 which was updated in 2008 showed that the sea nomads known as the remote Indigenous Communities (KAT) on the Bertam island, Kasu village, Padang Belakang District, Batam, has

been recorded as "already empowered", with the implementation of the program at beginning of the year 1989/1990 until the end of the year 1993/1994. The updates suggest that the original program which tends to be top down (PKSMT) is then necessarily categorized as bottom-up program (PKAT).

### **The Fading Arts of Cultural Traditions "Silat Jung and Joget"**

The sea nomads are a developed nation (Neolithicum), part of the ethnic groups (Indigenous People) as the natives occupying Batam waters who can live for centuries with traditional values passed down from generation to generation and attached to their daily life. Involvement of cultural traditions can strengthen the indigenous cultural communities and effectively help them have a real control to their own group. Cultural participation is an important way to build social capital, strengthen communities, and affirm identity, as revealed by the Ife and Tesoriero (2008). Similarly, Putnam disclosed in Suharto (2008, p.98) mentions that "social capital will not be depleted if used, but increasing. The destruction of social capital is more often caused not by use, but because it is not being used".

What happened in the Sea Nomads communities on the Bertam Island related to aspects of the current culture is the fading tradition of their culture including Silat, Jung, and Joget which are originally institutionalized in their lives as a medium of entertainment where people unwind after a day at sea looking for fish. One tradition that still exists today is "Joget". However, it also begins to change from the procedure and equipment used. If Joget is previously free entertainment media

in the Sea Nomads community, it has turned into entertainment media which can encourage people to behave an extravagant life. "Joget" Shows are performed by 10 dancers who are all still in their teens and come from outside Bertam with stomping modern music and no fixed rule and conditions about how the dancers have to move their body. This custom takes place spontaneously every three months as a residential entertainment to unwind after a day of fishing.

Therefore it typically starts at 12.00 am after they return from sea and ends at 2:00 am or less than 2 hours. For once shaking dance, a person should pay IDR 4000 with duration of less than 5 minutes. Thus, the total money paid by all people for Joget performance is  $(2 \times 60 \text{ min}) / 5 \text{ min} \times \text{IDR } 4000 \times 10 \text{ dancers}$ , or approximately IDR 960 000, and for 1 year they can collect money approximately IDR 3.84 millions. Ife and Tesoriero (2008) call it as the commodification of culture.

Besides the direct negative impact that can be viewed from the cultural aspect is the emergence of the people's dependent attitudes on aid. Dependency properties arise resulting from a negative view towards the Sea Nomads community; the result tends to spoil the people in implementing the program with the help of a charity. The programs are accidental (one shot program) or charity is a program that is less visible benefits in the long term, as revealed by the Adi (2008). Dependency is not an objective of public policy, as proposed by Nugroho (2006, p. 22), that the best public policy is to encourage all citizens to build their competitiveness, and not to get into the pattern of dependency ".



This dependency is caused by, one of them, the implementation of the program which tends to spoil the community to accept grants as charity, resulted in an assumption that when a program is accomplished, it indicates that the grants such as the constructions of facilities and infrastructure are completed. By the end of the PKAT program for Sea Nomads community on the Bertam Island, the Batam FKKS is no longer responsible for the program sustainability. For further actions, the development program for Bertam people will be adjusted to the program distribution mechanism decided by the government or through MUSRENBANG. Meanwhile, the MUSRENBANG mechanism encourages prioritizing the local needs with which the prerequisite is by submitting prioritized need analysis-based proposal. This condition complicates Bertam people, because most of them, old men in particular, cannot read and count so that to meet the prerequisite is a hard thing to do.

This often happens because it is also caused by the *disfunction* of the RT officer; unsupported health condition and physical performance are no longer enabled. The local government is less concerned with the current situation and condition of their people which in turn make this problem never last. Another consequence is that there have not any people who received capital financing for productive economic empowerment, as revealed by one of informants who are noticeably the head division of community empowerment, market, cooperatives and small medium enterprises of Batam.

It indirectly indicates that in evaluating the program implementation, the executor has not involved people participation and is less aware of human resources from

the targeted community. Adi (2008, p. 252) mentions “Evaluation as monitoring process from community and officers toward the running program on community development is suggested to be conducted by involving people participation; involving them is expected to create a community system in doing internal monitoring so that for long-term purposes it is expected to make the community more “independent” by utilizing the existing resources”. If this monitoring activity does not involve the targeted community, it will only affect on the people dependency on aid.

Further impact is that low awareness to maintain and possess facilities and infrastructure obtained from the program implementation. It can be seen from the facilities and infrastructure conditions: decayed and even collapsed house, bridges and *yetti* (wharf), broken and no longer used modem as solar electricity tool, collapsed multipurpose hall, broken and no longer used health facility, monument of boats and even broken houses into pieces on land.

The nature of dependency, low quality of human resources and encouraged by the government's lack of attention to the needs of local residents lead to the emergence of Bertam people mobility moving to another place, such as the island of Linga, Batam, or even back to the previous life as seafarers in the oceans, as revealed by the informant (Hs) as follows:

So if the government is now not strong to formulate our sea nomads, we will go back into the sea again. If the government is not strong to lead us.. Yach we will move to the origin again. Our men are still strong down the sea. Yach..we could move out to sea again as the others. (Hs, Beneficiaries Program, October 19, 2010).

This condition indirectly confirms the emergence of the negative impact of the cultural aspects arising from the implementation of the PKAT program especially for sea nomads Community in the Bertam Island-Batam.

### **The increasingly tainted Environment**

The use of semi-permanent house model on the land with wooden stakes as a buffer and wash bath house and latrine models (MCK), which are directly thrown to sea trigger the habit of people who litter. This habit causes the environment to be dirty, the garbage dumped cannot be carried by ocean currents so when low tide arrived the rubbish is still left in the vault under the house-stakes caught by the buffer.

This condition may indirectly cause environmental pollution. Meanwhile the environment is one of the capitals, by which Adi (2008) refers to the “environmental capital” as community assets that support community development. Polluted environment adversely affects the people’s health, or it can be the negative impact of the environment.

### **The Reduced Catch Affecting on Income**

The findings of the Research indicate that pollution in Batam waters is caused by the wastes from the shipping industry that exists around the island of Batam. A relatively close distance between Batam and Bertam Islands causes the pollution

spread to the Bertam waters. Further result of this pollution is the decrease of fish habitat thereby affecting Bertam people's catches, which directly affects their earnings.

Considering the majority of their main occupation is fishing, their income is highly dependent on fish catches. This condition also shows that the feasibility study to determine the location of settlements conducted during the preparation has not considered the environmental conditions around the Bertam Island which may result in the future life. With the least catch fish in Bertam waters and based on knowledge and experience before settling in Bertam make most people do "being like at home (bertandang)".

"Being like at home (bertandang)" activities are carried for days even months to fish in the waters around the Riau islands, bringing with them their wife and children unless they are still at school. As a result, this activity further makes children skip affecting the learning process.

### **Awareness of Land Tenure**

The emergence of Bertam people awareness of land ownership is driven by their anxiety concerning the legality of land ownerships which do not have land ownership certificates. Ownerships of Bertam islands are generally divided into two communities: the location where the settlement stands belonging to some Bertam people and forests in which there is a rubber plantation owned by those from the Kasu Island (the neighbor island), where the first ownership of land for

Kasu people is then followed with the established settlements of Bertam people. As expressed by Ife and Tesoriero, the issue that often arises is the tract of land and indigenous spirituality (2008). The statement implies that the executor is less sensitive to the central issues surrounding the indigenous communities when the program is planned and formulated, implementers tend not to consider the assessment of the sustainability aspects of the implemented program activities.

### **The Emergence of Hoping Attitude on Returns without Hard Work**

The Indirect impacts of the PKAT program for sea nomads community on the Bertam Island is the resource earnings for Batam SCCF Organization and quality of life improvement from the companion officers (Community Workers) when the program is implemented. The successful implementation of SCCF Batam provides benefits in addition to the resource earnings from the activities, primarily from the trusted institutions/organizations having similar goals that can indirectly increase the organization's existence.

However, the activities promoting the Sea Nomads community in Bertam by SCCF also trigger the attitude of expecting returns without hard work, which is caused by the lack of Bertam people's awareness that he has a high sales value to make money, or may trigger the negative aspects of the culture.

## Conclusion

As a pilot project of community development, the implementation of PKAT program for Sea Nomads community on the Bertam Island-Batam has basic weakness that is it does not consider the need assessment on the targeted community, rather than rule out cultural aspects and customs of the targeted community and low human resources indicated with high illiteracy causing the limited *Participation for Material Incentive* at phase level “calm” or categorized as “tokenism”. Tokenism at the worst circumstance will make powerless people more powerless and remote. As consequence, today Sea Nomads community on the Bertam Island is less developed. It is indicated by the existence of the people who move to another island or live as they used to do, *seanomads*.

## Bibliography

- Adi, Isbandi Rukminto. (2008). *Intervensi Komunitas Pengembangan Masyarakat Sebagai Upaya Pemberdayaan Masyarakat*. Jakarta: PT Rajagrafindo Persada.
- Arba, Syarofin dan Rahman, Abdul. (2002). *Menantang Gelombang Kehidupan Suku Laut Di Pulau Bertam Perairan Batam*. Batam: Pustaka Dinamika.
- Badan Pelatihan dan Pengembangan Sosial. (2005). *Pengembangan Model Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil*. Jakarta: Badan Pelatihan dan Pengembangan Sosial Departemen Sosial RI.
- Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil. (2004). *Profil Keberhasilan Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil pada 12 Provinsi*. Jakarta: Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil Departemen Sosial RI.
- Ife, Jim dan Tesoriero, Frank. (2008). *Alternatif Pengembangan Masyarakat di Era Globalisasi Community Development* (Sastrawan Manullang, Nurul Yakin, M. Nursyahid, Penerjemah). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Indihono, Dwiyanto. (2009). *Kebijakan Publik Berbasis Dynamic Policy Analysis*. Yogyakarta: Gava Media.

- Nugroho D, Riant. (2006). *Kebijakan Publik Untuk Negara-Negara Berkembang Model-Model Perumusan, Implementasi, dan Evaluasi*. Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo.
- Suharto, Edi. (2008). *Kebijakan Sosial Sebagai Kebijakan Publik-Peran Pembangunan Kesejahteraan Sosial dan Pekerjaan Sosial dalam mewujudkan Negara Kesejahteraan (welfare state) di Indonesia*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Direktorat Bina Masyarakat Terasing. (1987). *Pola Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Sosial Suku Laut di Batam*. Jakarta: Direktorat Bina Masyarakat Terasing Ditjen BINKESOS-Departemen Sosial RI.
- Direktorat Bina Masyarakat Terasing. (1988). *Ringkasan Laporan Pendataan Masyarakat Terasing Di Daerah Perbatasan Riau*. Jakarta: Direktorat bina Masyarakat Terasing Ditjen BINKESOS- Departemen Sosial RI.
- Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil. (2002). *Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 111 tahun 2009 tentang Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Sosial Komunitas Adat Terpencil dan Keputusan Menteri sosial Republik Indonesia Nomor: 06/PENGHUK/2002 tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil*. Jakarta: Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil-Direktorat Jenderal Pemberdayaan Sosial-Departemen Sosial RI.
- Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil. (2008). *Data Persebaran Komunitas Adat Terpencil tahun 2006 yang Dimutakhirkan Tahun 2008*. Jakarta: Direktorat Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil.