

# Communication Empowerment Of Aceh East Coastal Communities In Maintaining Mangrove Ecosystems

## (Study Of Meunasah Asan Village, Madat District, East Aceh Regency)

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### ABSTRACT

Empowerment communication as a new approach in community empowerment with the spirit of voicing the voiceless, building the empowered, placing humans as subjects not objects. Contribute to the development process in the context of the diffusion of innovation as a means of modernization with the presence of information technology to make it easier. Powerlessness is a reflection of the failure of the human-centered development process. This study aims to identify and describe the communication of coastal community empowerment in Meunasah Asan East Aceh Village in increasing active participation in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem. Revealing socio-economic changes in the participatory development process as an illustration of the empowerment of coastal communities in maintaining mangrove ecosystems with an empowerment communication approach, communication actions based on local wisdom, social welfare and strengthening social capital. Data were collected through observation, interviews, focus group discussions and documentation. The results showed; when the community's mindset changes at the Gampong level in utilizing, maintaining the mangrove ecosystem is able to bring it to a different pattern of behavior than before. This change can be seen in the process of helping themselves to get out of the stigma as poor marginalized coastal communities by utilizing and maintaining the potential of mangroves and other coastal areas. Active participation shows the community's empowerment in communicating which drives a living condition based on the existence of religious values, norms, customs, culture as local wisdom that is mutually agreed to strengthen social welfare and social capital. Social capital works internally in the Meunasah Asan community in forming exclusive social ties as a social bridge with external parties who have relatively different characteristics. The pattern of relationships that occur is bound by trust, mutual understanding and shared values that bind the community in acting together efficiently and effectively. The role of the community caring for mangroves is to create a public space for coastal communities to communicate, express, so as to foster mutual concern. Social groups as the most effective forum for empowerment enable individuals to organize themselves in groups so that a dialogical process occurs that fosters and strengthens mutual awareness.

**Keywords:** *empowerment communication, communication action, social capital. mangrove.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The life of the coastal community of Aceh is known as a community with strong resilience, able to survive in any difficult situations and conditions,

including conditions of poverty and marginalization. They are still able to laugh at the reality of life. This is partly influenced by the foundation and philosophy of life of the Acehnese people in general and coastal communities in particular, namely religious values, customs and local wisdom, including hadih maja rooted in life.

This endurance is the main supporting capital in accelerating the participatory empowerment process with an empowerment communication approach.

The people of the east coast of Aceh, especially Gampong Meunasah Asan, Madat District, East Aceh Regency are heterogeneous and pluralistic communities that live in harmony and modesty. In this case, the community is divided into two categories, namely those who inhabit coastal areas and highlands or hills, including urban communities as well as rural communities. The people of the East coast of Aceh, besides those who work as fishermen, pond farmers, salt farmers, marine tourism businesses also work as traders, Toke Bench or skipper, breeders, secondary farmers, the service sector, state civil servants, other craftsmen. However, in general, those who live on the coast work as marine product catchers, pond cultivators, buying and selling traders, there are a small number of bench geckos as well as processing them. Their routine lifestyle is carried out throughout the year, if marine and fishpond resources are abundant, they will automatically reap profits through traditional fishing, cultivation, and processing.

On the other hand, when there is a famine or crop failure, they have no source of livelihood. The shortcut is that they owe money to a bench shop or skipper, as well as subscribing to basic food shops. As a result, they have never been promoted from poverty. They have no other alternative source of life during famine and crop failure. The most fortunate parties are large-scale marine and fishpond traders, toke benches or intermediary traders. These traders are actually the economic rulers in Meunasah Asan Village as well as other coastal villages. Such conditions continue to happen without having to know how to end it. Therefore, coastal communities are categorized as vulnerable communities which always attach to the image of the poor.

The results of the Aceh BPS data review until 2020 to 2021, the Acehnese population is recorded in 23 districts/cities. The total population living in coastal areas is 4,384,894 people (86% of the total population of Aceh as a whole) spread over 18 regencies/cities. Most of the population in coastal areas make a living in the marine resource utilization sector such as fishermen and fish cultivators. The fisheries sector contributed 4.83% of Aceh's gross regional income (GRDP) in 2016

and experienced an average increase of 5% per year. This condition illustrates that the economy of coastal communities is getting better even though it is still in slow motion.

Data from the BPS 2020-2021 shows that Aceh is a province located at the northern tip of Sumatra Island and is the westernmost province within the territory of the Republic of Indonesia with an area of 56,758.8482 km<sup>2</sup>. The total length of the coastline is 2,817.9 km. The east coast of Aceh (Lhokseumawe City, North Aceh, East Aceh and Langsa\_Red City), has extraordinary coastal and marine resources and potential; capture fisheries, marine tourism including mangroves, aquaculture, and mining.

Utilization of the potential of the coastal area has not been maximized, because there is still a lack of coordination and integration between stakeholders in the planning process, databases and information regarding resources and policies that overlap. So that the development of coastal areas is not integrated, less than optimal and there is no clear resource utilization status.

This means that the above problems are also described in the process of preparing the Zoning Plan for Coastal Zone and Small Islands (RZWP3-K) document which is a direction and reference for marine space for resource utilization and management. It is important that the preparation of the RZWP-3-K is intended to create a balance in the use of space so that development can support human life by utilizing resources in a sustainable manner.

It was revealed from the initial data that, problems in the utilization of mangrove coastal areas include the lack of coordination and integration between stakeholders in the planning process, lack of data and information regarding overlapping resources and policies, and less participatory empowerment processes. The impact of these problems is that development is not integrated, less than and there is no status of utilization of existing resources. Controlling the use of space to build a balance of economic, ecological and social aspects.

The coastal community of Mmeunasah Asan has various advantages in utilizing natural resources compared to outside residents. Natural resources,

mangrove resources, historical sources, customs, culture, community potentials are potentials that can be developed into sources of welfare that offer specific, unique, original activities, and have strong socio-cultural nuances, customs. The development of this potential based on local communities requires a lot of time and careful planning. Therefore, support from all relevant parties is needed, including the government, universities, NGOs, relevant stakeholders and others.

In addition, there are also environmental problems in the coastal area. Preliminary studies show that community and coastal management must have at least three functions, namely disaster mitigation, regional economic development and ecosystem protection. The integration of these three functions is expected to lead to the development of sustainable communities and coastal areas that are environmentally friendly.

Shows that the coastal area's environment is getting damaged, if left unchecked, an ecological emergency of mangroves can occur. This damage worsens the welfare of coastal communities. In addition, various regulations, qanuns, and regulations governing the environment are still so easy to violate. Damage to the coastal environment, such as mangrove forests or mangroves, is now shrinking, becoming new ponds without clear permits, even though mangrove forests have many sources of livelihood for coastal communities.

This has happened along the coast from the Tanah Jambo Aye coast to the Madat Coast of East Aceh, apart from mangroves, it seems that the damage to coral reefs which are a source of fish for fishermen is also getting worse. There is a need for harmonization between the environment and development or in opening up new land. Including a correct understanding of the community and the coastal environment, so that development activities do not reduce or damage the capacity of the environment in providing its services to humans. The coastal area is a space that has high ecological and economic value. Various economic activities are in this space. Coastal area as a space that has ecological and economic value, sometimes each activity in that space can influence each other. The degradation of the coastal environment due to industries, for example, can reduce the productivity

of marine fisheries. Conversion of mangroves or mangrove forests into industrial areas or aquaculture can reduce the function of the coast as a place for *spawning* and rearing *fish*, thus affecting the availability of fish in the ocean.

### 1.1 Research Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the research are to; describes how the communication of community empowerment in Meunasah Asan Village, Madat Aceh Timur sub-district, in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem for prosperity.

### 1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The formulation of the problem in this study are; how to communicate the empowerment of the people of the east coast of Aceh in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem. The study was conducted in Meunasah Asan Village, Madat District, East Aceh Regency.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main literature review used is the theory and concept of community development, empowerment communication, communication action theory, social capital, Acehnese local wisdom to answer the problem formulation.

### 2.1 Development Community

Development Community development in principle; generate human resources, create opportunities, provide knowledge, and skills to increase capacity in determining a prosperous future. Providing broad opportunities for the gampong community to determine their own direction of life.

Community empowerment in Chambers's (1995) view is a concept of economic development that encapsulates social values reflecting a new paradigm of development, which is *people centered development, participatory, empowering, and sustainable*. This concept developed from several ideas about alternative development, one of which is Friedman's idea, which requires

*'inclusive democracy, appropriate economic growth, gender equity and intergenerational equity'.*

Departing from the goal of community development to generate human resources, the core of community development is to educate, make community members able to do something by providing the necessary strength or means to empower them. It takes the values of openness, equality, responsibility, opportunity, choice, participation, mutual benefit, reciprocity, and continuous learning (FCDL in Zubaedi, 2014).

In terms of community involvement, Tahoba (2011) states that community development programs have an impact on communication differences between participating communities and non-participating communities. People who participate experience more changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes due to the delivery of messages or innovations offered compared to people who do not participate. People who do not participate tend to show an indifferent attitude or are lazy to find out about the message conveyed.

**2.2 Empowerment Communication** Is the emergence of a new paradigm in development communication which is marked by the awareness that the communication process in development must be guided by the community's ability to plan, implement, and evaluate development. In this case the community is not the object of development, but the subject of development, therefore community participation is a very important factor.

Communication is carried out in a convergent manner, communication interactions are carried out in a more democratic and participatory manner. Communication activities are not giving and receiving activities but rather "sharing" and "dialogue." So far, community involvement has only been seen in a narrow context, meaning that the community is only seen as the recipient of development innovations alone, without being involved in planning and decision making and not developing creative power from within and having to accept decisions that have been taken by outsiders. As a result, people are dependent on other parties, helpless and independent.

Community empowerment communication is an alternative paradigm of development with the aim of

bringing the community to empowerment and independence. To lead to community independence, efforts to achieve prosperity are the main thing. A prosperous society will be able to cope with the necessities of life, both material and non-material needs. As stated by Mardikanto (2010) that the goal of development is a comprehensive change that includes various aspects and the order of life of the community concerned, both material and non-material.

Community empowerment is an activity that requires a continuous process, so good communication is needed between the program initiator and the community as well as between community members. The empowerment process will not achieve its goals, if it is not supported by a participatory communication process. In this case, the active participation of all citizens is needed to realize the ideals of the desired change. Community participation is very influential on the formation of communicative actions in accordance with the characteristics of the community.

The presence of empowerment communication in the realm of development communication is basically intended to contribute to the development process, especially in order to accelerate the process of diffusion of innovation. The diffusion of innovation in this development is an effort to meet the demands of modernization. The powerlessness of the human individual when dealing with communication technology is an illustration of the failure of the development process and human-centered social change. Society is often powerless to stem the hegemony of communication technology. Therefore, empowerment communication becomes a new perspective in development communication education with the spirit of *voicing the voiceless*.

In relation to social processes, communication becomes a way of making social change. Communication plays a role in bridging differences in society because it is able to re-glue the social system of society in its efforts to make changes. In this case, communication will not be separated from its social context, meaning that the communication process will be colored by the attitudes, behaviors, patterns, norms, and

institutions of the community (Nurudin, 2004).

The role of communication in society is stated more specifically by Dewey (Mulyana, 2002), that society exists through communication, the same perspective, the same culture, emerges through participation in the same communication channel. Through social participation shared perspectives within the group are internalized and different views emerge through different contacts and associations. Through interaction or communication, people can exchange meanings, values and experiences using symbols and signs. Similarly, the theory of Social Construction, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman (Basrowi and Sukidin, 2002), that social reality is a social construction created by individuals. Individuals are human beings who are free to carry out human relations and become the determinants, not victims of social facts, but as a medium of production as well as creative reproduction in constructing their social world. Such empowerment communication is a participatory communication process (Mulyana, 2007). The communication model is convergent, which means striving towards mutual understanding among communication participants in terms of attention, understanding and needs. This convergent communication approach is very effective in community-based development planning. In addition, this approach will pave the way for the growth of creativity and community competence in communicating their ideas.

### 2.3 Theory of Communication

Actions Communicative action as a theory according to Habermas (1984) refers to actions directed by mutually agreed norms based on reciprocal expectations between subjects who interact by using symbols, especially everyday language as a medium for these actions. Communication is the starting point for this theory, and praxis is the central concept. Praxis is not defined as blind behavior based on mere instincts,

but the basic actions of humans as social beings who are illuminated by rational consciousness. Ratio is not only seen in the activity of conquering nature through work, but also in intersubjective interactions that use everyday language.

The assumptions of the Communicative Action Theory have four claims, namely: (1) truth claims, namely agreements about the natural and objective world; (2) claims of rightness, namely agreement on the implementation of norms in the social world; (3) claims of authenticity/sincerity, namely agreement about the compatibility between the inner world and one's expression; and (4) claim for comprehensiveness (comprehensibility), namely the ability to explain the above claims and reach agreement on them. Every effective communication must achieve the fourth claim and people who are able to communicate in the sense of producing these claims have "communication competence" (Hardiman, 2009).

Habermas (2015) asserts that the public sphere plays an important role in the democratic process. The public sphere is a democratic space or a vehicle for public discourse, where citizens can express their opinions, interests and needs discursively. Public space must be autonomous, without intervention from the government or any other party. Public space is a means for citizens to communicate, discuss, argue, and express attitudes towards all problems.

### 2.4 The Concept of Social Capital

Theoretically and conceptually, social capital is a concept that has different meanings. But in general, social capital has three main elements, namely trust, norms and networks<sup>1</sup>. Social capital works internally in the community to form exclusive social bonds based on values, culture, perceptions, traditions and customs. Working social capital also works as a bridge between external groups that have different characteristics from their own. According to Woolcock<sup>2</sup>, among

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, *The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life*. Tersedia pada <http://prospect.org/article/prosperouscommunity-social-capital-and-public-life>, 1993)

<sup>2</sup> Marwoto, *Peran Modal Sosial Masyarakat dalam Pengelolaan Hutan Rakyat dan Perdagangan Kayu Rakyat (Kasus di Kecamatan Giriwoyo, Kabupaten Wonogiri)*, (Bogor: IPB, 2012).

different social classes there are social relations (social linking) without distinguishing class and social status. Fukuyama (1995) explained that there is a "radius of trust" in relationships both within the community, between communities and between social classes. Parties outside the community such as the government can have a positive influence, such as in the field of education and the completeness of public facilities. However, there are negative effects that can arise if the intervention on functions that have been running well in the community fails. Indeed, in coastal communities, each group has different norms, levels of trust between members and distinctive relationships.

Group norms Religion-based norms will differ

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from economic-based group norms and there may be norms for distrusting groups others. Rothstein (2005) states that the *logic of separation* that underlies the ties of relationships or groups such as the basis of religion, politics, gender, ethnicity and interests. Economic interests are one of the bonds of coastal community relations. For actors involved in it, economic relations are a forum for get material benefits. There are other interests based on non-economic relations where the relationship that occurs is a forum for obtaining non-material economic benefits. In Untung's statement there are two arenas in society, namely the economic arena and the non-economic arena.

While the network refers to regular social relations, consistent and slow for a long time, the relationship does not only involve two individuals, but also many people or individuals<sup>3</sup>. Trust means that a person is willing to accept all risks in his social relationships based on the belief that the other person will do something as expected and act mutually beneficial. Believing also accepts and ignores the possibility that something will not be right.

Hasbullah (2006), defines norms as a set of rules that are expected to be obeyed and followed by

community members in a particular social entity. Where the arena is a space where actors compete with each other for material resources or symbolic power. The area can be a business arena, Education. Actors are individuals who are free to move as they wish and are part of the existing structure. Capital or capital according to Bourdie consists of economic, social, symbolic and cultural. Community interaction in an arena is dynamic, a relationship can experience ups and downs and changes from cooperation to competition or even conflict to get material resources. In the economic arena, actors who interact to get resources that become commodities are traded for profit. In the life of a rural coastal community, one person can be involved in several groups and it is possible to meet other people who are the same in different groups. Every interaction

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that will contain elements of social capital in the form of trust, norms and networks.

Referring to the definition of the World Bank, (1998), that social capital is something that refers to the institutional dimension, the relationships created and the norms that shape the quality and quantity of social relations in society. In the coastal communities of Aceh, it shows that every relationship pattern that occurs is bound by *trust to mutual understanding and shared values* that bind group members to make the possibility of joint action to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the method used is descriptive research. Excavation of information from informants is carried out in depth with a perspective that represents the selected groups. In *assessment*, individual and institutional informants must be considered as active subjects who can develop information based on the questions raised. Moleong (2005), mentions the research method is a procedure carried out by

Pendapatan Keluarga di Beberapa Desa di Kabupaten Aceh Besar, (Bogor: Institut Pertanian Bogor, 2007)

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<sup>3</sup> Fadli, Peran Modal Sosial dalam Percepatan Pembangunan Desa PascaTsunami, Kasus Pembangunan Perumahan dan Peningkatan

someone to obtain data or information to obtain answers to research problems. Qualitative research is an approach in conducting research that is oriented towards natural phenomena or phenomena. Rachmat (2006), the qualitative paradigm is more emphasized on the problem of depth (quality) of data, and not the amount (quantity) of data. That all research that uses a qualitative paradigm aims to explain the phenomenon as deeply as possible through indepth data collection. The Data Collection Techniques, namely; initial assessment, observation, interview, Focus Group Discussion, and document or literature study. While the Data Analysis and Writing Techniques, namely; snow ball informant and cross checks, synchronization, Compaction (*Process of Concise and Abbreviating*) and Conclusion. The data analysis technique proposed by Miles and Hebermen (Basrowi 2008) is also used, namely reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION a. Meunasah Asan Community Empowerment Communication in Protecting Mangroves**

Communication on Empowerment of the Meunasah Asan Community in Maintaining Mangroves Empowerment communication for the Meunasah Asan community is illustrated by the shared awareness in the community that the communication process in development must be guided by the ability of the local community to plan, implement, and evaluate development. In this case, the Meunasah Asan community should not be just the object of development, but the subject of development, therefore the active participation of the community is a very important factor in empowerment communication.

The Gampong apparatus and the Meunasah Community Asan realize that in achieving

the success of Gampong development with harmonious human relations in every process of Gampong development and people, the art of effective communication is important. This is also illustrated by the expression of Geuchik Meunasah Asan Bukhari (55).

*“...of course we at Gampong in planning, implementing, and evaluating development in any form, we must communicate both at the level of the Gampong apparatus and subsequently with the community. Sometimes on the contrary, we communicate starting with the new community at the Gampong apparatus level...”<sup>4</sup>*

The communication process for empowerment that occurs in the Meunasah Asan community is generally going well, of course further strengthening of approaches is needed, such as the *peoplecentred development*, participatory level, sustainability and a combination of vertical and horizontal combinations.

That empowerment through

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communication for the empowerment of the Meunasah Asan community is certainly an effort to increase the dignity of all levels of society who have been unable to escape the trap of incompetence and underdevelopment. Empowerment communication in this case is how to enable and empower the community.

Empowerment in the eyes of the Meunasah Asan community is a way for the empowering party to convey knowledge, educate, train and assist, and develop it so that the community is able to be independent and enhanced his dignity.

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<sup>4</sup> Field visit and interview, 14 July 2022

This was sparked by the mangrove care community, Madat Muksalmina District (42);

*“...for us, anyone who has an empowerment program for the Meunasah Asan community, we welcome it with open arms. Especially when there are activities related to the existence, maintenance and utilization of mangroves, we will definitely be actively involved, because mangroves have become one of our sources of income, indeed there has been no ongoing assistance, including in the use of mangroves..”<sup>5</sup>*

Regarding the communication of empowerment in maintaining ecosystems, the existence of mangroves is one of the sources for the economic life of the local community, both men and women. In addition, the existence of mangroves that are well maintained is also an effort to prevent coastal abrasion, becoming a great environment for the lives of thousands of biota, rivers and Krung tho estuaries.

That the existence of mangroves is a very important place for various biota that live in them to breed which in turn becomes a source for the economic life of the community, both fish, shrimp, crabs, shellfish, birds, proper use of wood and others. Of course not only limited to ecology alone, but very closely with the economic life of the surrounding community. This is emphasized by Geuchik Meunasah Asan Bahktiar (55);

*“.... the existence of the mangrove area in the surrounding Meunasah Asan Village with all its habitats is a source of life for the surrounding community. Starting from the use and conversion of land functions to the use of mangrove wood which is used as a wood charcoal industry. But on the other*

*hand, the existence of mangroves is also a big home for various types of estuary and river biota, both underwater biota such as various types of fish and shrimp and crabs, as well as various flora and fauna above them as well as various types of coastal fowl which are a big house for them”<sup>6</sup>*

The mangrove care group, who is also the tuha peut of Gampong Meunasah Asan, said that the mangrove area in the surrounding Meunasah Asan has created its own food chain. Starting from the types of fish and shrimp below, cranes and other predators such as monitor lizards and snakes which are also part of the food chain in the mangrove area. In addition, mangrove plants also provide such benefits high levels of efforts to provide nutrients and the roots can neutralize toxic elements in the water and can maintain the surrounding temperature and also contribute to maintaining the global climate.

As a coastal plant, mangroves also have a big role in overcoming various threats of sea water overflow. Starting from the threat of abrasion and full tidal waves to the threat of a Tsunami. So that the presence of mangroves can reduce the impact of these various disasters. For the people of

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Meunasah Asan, the mangrove ecosystem in this area has become the economic and socio-cultural life of the people who live around the mangrove area which also has a big impact on the economy, because most of the people who live in the mangrove area depend on it for their livelihood.

As mentioned by Boidi (40), the Meunasah Asan community works as a collector of Bangka (mangroves) wood, they carry out activities to cut mangrove wood to make

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<sup>5</sup> Interview, 14 July 2022

<sup>6</sup> Interview, 14 July 2022



charcoal, because since the last few months in 2022 the demand for mangrove wood to be made into charcoal has increased by more than 50 percent, but entrepreneurs admit constrained by raw materials due to the ban on simultaneous cutting of mangrove trees in East Aceh.

The description of the use of mangroves from the community's point of view is clear that at this time mangrove wood is only used as raw material for charcoal, besides that there are also those who take the fruit for nurseries when there is a demand. Communities around mangroves, take advantage of the mangrove ecosystem; starting from looking for fish and shrimp and shellfish to opening up aquaculture areas and also using mangrove wood as raw material for the charcoal wood industry.

Of course, the activities and utilization of mangrove areas that displace the existence of flora and fauna become unfriendly and damage the ecology of the area. Thus, it is necessary to focus on the process of empowering communication between communities and stakeholders for the use of mangroves in the area as an effort to sustain the mangrove area.

#### **b. Mangrove Utilization of Meunasah Asan Village**

The use of mangrove forests is also for the life of various biota that is utilized by the community in various ways, including fishing and fishing. In addition, there are also those who use it as fishing tourism and mangrove tourism with boat rentals in the Meunasah Asan TPI Area.

It can be described when heading to the Gampong Meunasah Asan area, especially when heading to a small island which is geographically still included in the Gampong

Meunasah Asan often called Kruengtho. Getting to Krueng Tho is not as difficult as imagined for those who like adventure in mangrove forests and fishing hobbies. From the direction of the Medan Banda Aceh road, precisely in the Jambo Aye river bridge area, then enter the road to the north. About 10 Kilometers into the district of Madat, until arriving at Gampong Meunasah Asan.

By following the road that divides the residents' aquaculture area, the journey continues towards the Fish Landing Place (TPI). At this TPI location there is a small dock and also a small building as a resting place and activities for pond farmers, coastal business communities, and wood seekers in the area.

At this TPI location, there are several small and medium-sized boat units that can be rented out for any activity, including research as well as for anglers or just enjoying a walk along the tributaries of the mangrove area. Along the way, you can enjoy a row of mangrove trees whose roots grip the edge of the beach. Seen types of cranes looking for small fish between the mangrove roots.

Motor boat driver Basyaruddin (50), said that before the Aceh conflict, the small island of KruengTho was a stopover for fishermen. During the conflict no one dared to come to the island, and after the conflict many people stopped by. Hope that there will be no more conflict.

Jailani (55), a watermelon farmer in Krueng Tho Meunasah Asan, admitted that he is currently living on Krueng Tho island to wait for the watermelon harvest while looking for fish, crabs and shrimp as mangrove biota that surround the island. watermelon farmer is a access to transportation to the island. He said

transportation to bring the harvest costs a lot of money.

The Meunasah Asan community said that the Krueng Tho island covers an area of more than 600 hectares. Named Krueng Tho Island, which means dry river. When, when the sea water recedes, it looks like the river estuary on the island becomes shallow and even dry.

Information was obtained that several years ago, when the Camat was still Mukhtaruddin, a Madat District Leadership Meeting (Muspika) was held with the discourse of building an economic area on Krueng Tho Island, Meunasah Asan Village. Including, the government will open access to the island so that new settlements are formed. In addition, a mini port will also be built. The existence of life on the island can be a source of community economy. In addition, to avoid things that are not desired by certain parties, such as the smuggling of illegal goods.

The area, partly is a community aquaculture. In this area there are many rivers that branch through the mangrove area. Some of them have mangrove plants and some are already clean from mangroves. Along the flow of the small river, many people's ponds can be seen, which are used to cultivate milkfish and shrimp as well as various types of fish for other market commodities.

As expressed and hopes by Samsul (45), a local community leader, it is necessary to increase knowledge about the existence and management of mangroves as one of the areas that must be protected and empowered without having to eliminate its main function (existence) and remain a big house for all estuary and river biota and become a source

of local economy. *“...for us the people, the mangroves in the Meunasah Asan Krueng Tho area are a source of opinion, it's good not to cut them down, especially the small ones, in the past we still found large mangrove trees, but now they are very reduced. In this case, we and the community need good knowledge and understanding of mangroves so that there is no mistake in using them”*.<sup>7</sup>

Saying that maintaining the mangrove ecosystem in East Aceh includes maximizing the Aceh Hijau program. In a follow-up field visit on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, the research team witnessed the process of planting mangroves with the East Aceh Regional Government together with PJ Regent Ir. Mahyuddin, stating that the importance of mangrove plants simultaneously and sustainably, because mangrove plants have special features in various ways, both from the physical aspect, ecology and economy. Mangrove plants have a very important role in maintaining the ecosystem because it is a breeding ground for various types of fish and other marine biota.

Mangrove plants can prevent coastal abrasion and even break sea waves and prevent danger. Mangrove plants function as filters for water and air pollution and can also produce wood for building materials and charcoal, as well as produce fruit or

seeds to be processed into various foods or drinks and others. Furthermore, the existence of mangrove forests has enormous potential to be developed into a natural tourism economy.

On that occasion, PJ Regent Ir. Mahyuddin also instructed all heads of regional apparatus organizations (OPD), sub-

<sup>7</sup> Interview August 4, 2022

district elements together with technical OPD UPTDs in the sub-districts of the East Aceh Regency government and the community to be able to care together and continue to be committed to maintaining marine ecosystems.

*“...of course it is the responsibility of all parties, because if the mangroves and the sea are damaged, the impact will be multiproblem starting from the economy, defense, social and others. Therefore, we invite all elements to always protect our mangroves and seas from damage, including the wise use of mangroves”.*<sup>8</sup>

The Regent of East Aceh, Ir. Mahyuddin, Msi in his report said, Aceh Green (Aceh Hijau) is Aceh's flagship program that emphasizes environmentally sound and sustainable development that is sensitive to the risk of natural disasters. The Aceh Green Program, one of the commitments of the East Aceh Regency Government regarding saving the environment is very strong and concrete. *“...the world and all of humanity have realized the importance of forests, land, water and air which are the sources of human life, and we all have an obligation to protect them, the vision of Aceh Green is basically not only aimed at to maintain the balance of Aceh's nature, but also to support the spirit in overcoming climate change which is an international issue today,”*<sup>9</sup>

Basically all the information obtained in this study, shows a great desire and hope in maintaining, exploiting the potential of mangroves for the benefit of the local community. Realizing that East Aceh

Regency has a fairly large coastal area and wants to do something for the common good.

Mangrove ecosystems can prevent sea abrasion and avoid sea water seeping into the soil layer, which can result in the mixing of sea water with ground water. As a preventive measure in order to preserve resources against any activity that threatens environmental damage, mangrove resources. Hope can restore the ecosystem that has been damaged so that we can pass it on to our children and grandchildren.

The field research process coincided with the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2015 and celebrated annually on 26 July. So that the research team used it to socialize the preservation and proper use of mangroves.

As is known, the purpose of commemorating this mangrove day is to raise awareness of the importance of the mangrove ecosystem and provide solutions for sustainable management and conservation.

A discussion via telephone with Yusmadi Yusuf (15 July 2022), as one of the environmental activists from AWF, mentioned that the key word in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem in 2022 is Wetlands for Humans and Nature. The message that I want to convey to the audience is *Value Manage Restore Love Wetlands*. Value is appreciating wetlands for their various benefits to human life and planetary health. Manage is to manage wisely and sustainable use. Restore is the restoration of degraded wetlands. AWF as an institution that focuses on the protection, management and utilization of mangrove forest areas in Aceh

<sup>8</sup> Field visit, 23 August 2022

<sup>9</sup> Field visit, 23 August 2022

invites all parties, especially key stakeholders to speak out against all forms of environmental crime, especially in mangrove forest areas.

The east coast of Aceh is the area that has the largest mangrove forest in the province. Its distribution starts from Aceh Tamiang Regency, Langsa City, East Aceh, North Aceh, Lhokseumawe, to Bireuen. Based on the data inputted by AWF, the mangrove area in Aceh Tamiang reached 15,447.91 hectares, Langsa City 5,253.15 hectares, East Aceh 18,080.45 hectares, North Aceh 959.11 hectares, Lhokseumawe 88.34 hectares, and Bireuen 25.57 hectares. The criticality level of mangrove land in East Aceh Regency is classified as heavily damaged covering an area of 36,064 ha, moderate damage covering an area of 28,729 ha and only 7,548 ha not damaged.

On the east coast, mangrove forests consist of three families, namely Rhizophoraceae, Sonneratiaceae and Euphorbiaceae and 7 tree species: *Bruguiera gimnorrhiza*, *Excoecaria agallocha*, *Rhizophora apiculata*, *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Rhizophora stylosa*, *Sonneratia alba*, and *Sonneratia ovata*. This mangrove forest continues to shrink due to being used as plantation land, ponds, settlements and illegal logging. The area of mangrove forests on the east coast of Aceh continues to decrease, largely due to illegal logging for charcoal.

Mangrove forests in addition to producing various fishery and forestry commodities, also play a role in preventing coastal abrasion, stabilizing coastal areas, filtering waste naturally, preventing sea water intrusion, as habitat and spawning grounds for several species of animals that live in

mangrove areas. By maintaining and saving the mangrove ecosystem, not only protects the land from abrasion, but also maintains the stability of the marine ecosystem. It must be realized that every conservation effort that we do will have a huge impact on the future of the earth.

From discussions with the community, it was also revealed that the use of mangrove fruit studied by USK students resulted in product innovation that used mangrove fruit as the main ingredient of body lotion. Mangrove fruit was chosen because of its abundant availability, especially in areas that are at risk of being affected by the tsunami. This is also part of efforts to reduce disaster risk and protect ecosystems. These commodities are known to contain several active antioxidant components that are useful as an antidote to free radicals that cause negative risks to the body, especially the skin. Maximizing the utilization and increasing the diversification of mangrove fruit.

The use of mangrove fruit for skin plays an important role for coastal communities such as Aceh. This is due to the very minimal use of mangroves other than as an effort to tsunami risk. With the utilization of this part of the mangrove, mangroves will be increasingly cultivated and preserved so that they can have a real impact on the community and the environment.

### **c. The social capital of the community in maintaining mangroves**

Each group has different norms, levels of trust between members and distinctive relationships. The norms of religion-based groups will be different from the norms of economic-based groups and there is a possibility of distrusting other groups. Rothstein (2005) states that the logic of

separation that underlies the ties of relationships or groups such as the basis of religion, politics, gender, ethnicity and interests.

Economic interests are one of the ties of relationship in the community Mns. Asan Madat Aceh Timur. Like the actors involved in it, economic relations are a place to get material benefits from the natural potential of Meunasah Asan. There are other interests that are based on noneconomic relationships where the relationship that occurs is a forum for obtaining non-economic material benefits. In the statement of Bahtiar (55) Geuhik Meunasah Asan, after the reduction process; that there are two arenas in the Asan meunasah community, namely the economic arena and the non-economic arena.

*"...of course, the relationship in the community is different, each has business and non-business relationships related to agricultural products such as fishponds, marine catches including Mangrove wood. The relationship with the community must run harmoniously in the meunasah asan. Yes, common affairs in society, such as social, cultural, customary and religious matters must continue with any status whether toke, civil servant, fisherman, fisherman, farmer, trader, village apparatus are all the same, mosques and meunasah become gathering places for these matters..."<sup>10</sup>*

The economic arena is defined as a separate arena from the non-economic arena, the non-economic arena is a forum for obtaining non-material benefits. The economic arena is a business arena where fisherman actors struggle to get resources

in the Asan meunasah which are the source of the community's livelihood.

This separation occurs because of the *logic of separation*, where there is a logic that separates the social and economic arenas. The economic arena is defined as matters relating to sources of livelihood. The social arena is defined as a business that related to common interests and carried out together, gotong royong is a form of togetherness interaction in bearing common interests.

Community leader Meunasah Asan Tgk. Baihaqi (56) reinforces Geuchik Bahtiar's argument that there are indeed two arenas in society that mutually reinforce each other, even though both are arenas that are separate from each other.

*"...the problem of togetherness in society is a shared affair, carried out together, shared, shared care, such as mutual cooperation, cleaning mosques, prayer rooms, retreats and others, if the business of earning a living in carrying out the profession is a matter of responsibility as the head of the family to provide for it..."<sup>11</sup>*

Mr. Baihaqi statement, clarified the separation of arenas, although not collaborating for business in Meunasah Asan indicated he was not involved in cooperation in the economic arena. Cooperation in terms of customs, social culture such as alms building mosques, prayer rooms, recitations is a form of cooperation that is not based on economic transactions.

Social capital as something that refers to the institutional dimension, the relationships created and the norms that shape the quality and quantity of social relations in society.

<sup>10</sup> 10 Interview, August 6, 2022

<sup>11</sup> Interview, August 6, 2022

Every relationship pattern that occurs is bound by trust to

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mutual understanding and shared values that bind group members to make the possibility of collective action to be carried out efficiently and effectively.

#### **d. Strengthening customary law**

law Strengthening customary law is one of the recommendations and great hopes for various elements of the Meunasah Asan community, both the Penglina Laot Institution, local government, industry, private parties, non-governmental organizations and others. Without paying attention to the interests of coastal communities and the environment, it will be able to cause various problems including problems of pollution, environmental destruction.

In addition, environmental pollution destroys habitats and coastal ecosystems which results in the death of marine life and reduces the abundance of fish resources. Pollution will automatically kill fish, coastal ecosystems including mangrove, and natural metabolism, as a result, fishermen's catches will certainly decline. The results of the discussion, with the coastal community of Madat, revealed that currently the coral reef ecosystem including mangroves in most of the waters has been damaged. Irresponsible people catch fish using trawlers, bombs, even poison, clearing mangrove forests for charcoal and other raw materials.<sup>12</sup>

The solution that emerges is offered, it is necessary to strengthen the customary law of the sea with clear sanctions for the benefit of fishermen or coastal communities. These rules are in the form of abstinence from fishing, drifting goods customs, social customs, and

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environmental preservation customs. If someone violates it, they must be severely punished. In protecting the environment, the existing regulations are beneficial for the growth of the mangrove ecosystem, as well as coral reefs.<sup>13</sup>

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions and suggestions that can be conveyed are that the communication for the empowerment of the Meunasah Asan community in protecting mangroves is illustrated by the shared awareness in the community that the communication process in development must be guided by the ability of the local community to plan, implement, and evaluate development.

The act of communication, in this case the Meunasah Asan community, should not be just the object of development, but the subject of development, therefore the active participation of the community is a very important factor in empowerment communication. The potential and utilization of mangrove debt by the community is only limited to the need for raw materials for charcoal, locations to find fish, crabs, shrimp, shellfish and others, nurseries, and incidentally to mangrove tourism and fishing. So, it is very necessary for continuous follow-up communication actions including mentoring.

Social capital is related to the social capital of the community in maintaining mangroves, as something that refers to the institutional dimension, the relationships created and the norms that shape

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<sup>12</sup> Informal Discussion at Warkop, Madat District, 7 August 2022

<sup>13</sup> Informal Discussion at Warkop, Madat District,

the quality and quantity of social relations in the Meunasah Asan community.

Social capital shows that every relationship pattern that occurs is bound by mutual *trust* towards *mutual understanding* and subsequently forms values values - *shared values* that bind group members to create the possibility of collective action to be carried out efficiently and effectively in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem.

The community has not been directly and actively involved in understanding properly and correctly

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about the function of mangroves and in maintaining the ecosystem. In fact, what has happened has raised the problem of mangrove habitat that has become so severe and requires serious handling by all key stakeholders of the Government, the community and concerned stakeholders. Thus, prioritizing the protection of wetlands as forest areas that have high conservation value. This includes immediately revoking the permit of forest concession owners in mangrove habitats that have been proven to violate forest area governance.

Synergy, apart from the government, there must be a synergy by involving indigenous communities/customary institutions, universities, Mangrove Care Community, NGOs, Cooperatives, Companies and other stakeholders related to the utilization and management of mangrove forests in Gampong Meunasah Asan. Local/district/city governments must issue regulations/qanun on the management of mangrove forests by indigenous peoples.

Customary law, it is necessary to strengthen customary law with clear sanctions, for the benefit of fishermen or coastal communities. These rules are in the form of abstinence from fishing, drifting goods customs, social customs, and environmental preservation customs. If someone violates it, they must be severely punished.

Seeing that the problems in mangrove habitat have become so severe and require serious handling by the Government related to forest management, they must prioritize the protection of wetlands as forest areas that have high

conservation value. The government must immediately revoke the permit of forest concession owners in mangrove habitats that have been proven to violate forest area management. The government also needs to involve indigenous communities/customary institutions related to the management of mangrove forests on the east coast of Aceh. There is a need for regulations/qanun regarding the management of mangrove forests by indigenous peoples. Governments from all levels must restore all degraded mangrove habitats for human life and the health of the planet.

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