

Income Distribution among Women through Local Wisdom in Indigenous Communities (Saemaul Undong Spirit Approach)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines communities' efforts to address income distribution inequality by leveraging local wisdom mechanisms. Income inequality is observed at regional and national levels and manifests in gender disparities. This research aims to explore how local wisdom, particularly the practice of "picking nutmeg seeds," serves as a mechanism for mitigating income inequality experienced by women. This study seeks to understand women's income distribution behaviors through the lens of local wisdom. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions (FGDs), while data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report emerging patterns. The findings reveal that the traditional practice of nutmeg collection functions as an informal insurance mechanism, ensuring the sustainability of household livelihoods, particularly for widowed women in the Negeri Booi-Samahu Amalatu Indigenous community. Furthermore, the research highlights the role of local institutions within the nutmeg farming community in fostering a system of shared prosperity rather than shared poverty. This collective well-being is achieved without the exploitation of community members, including women, particularly widows. Additionally, according to the Saemaul Undong principle, local wisdom strongly correlates with rural development and community empowerment. Through active participation, resource management, and self-reliance, local wisdom is a foundation for sustainable community development and equitable economic opportunities.

KEYWORDS: *Income Distribution Inequality, Local Wisdom Mechanism, Nutmeg, Rural Community, Women*

INTISARI

Penelitian ini mengkaji upaya penanganan ketimpangan distribusi pendapatan dalam komunitas melalui pemanfaatan mekanisme kearifan lokal. Ketimpangan pendapatan tidak hanya terjadi pada tingkat daerah atau nasional, tetapi juga mencerminkan disparitas gender. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi penanganan ketimpangan pendapatan yang dialami

perempuan dengan memanfaatkan mekanisme kearifan lokal, khususnya praktik "memungut biji pala." Pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode etnografi digunakan untuk memahami pola distribusi pendapatan perempuan dalam kerangka kearifan lokal. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus (FGD). Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik, yang melibatkan identifikasi, analisis, dan pelaporan pola atau tema yang muncul. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik "memungut biji pala" dalam komunitas adat Negeri Booi-Samahu Amalatu berfungsi sebagai mekanisme jaminan informal (informal insurance) yang mendukung keberlanjutan ekonomi rumah tangga perempuan, terutama perempuan janda. Lebih lanjut, kearifan lokal ini membuktikan adanya sistem kesejahteraan bersama (shared prosperity) yang tidak didasarkan pada eksploitasi sumber daya manusia, tetapi pada mekanisme distribusi yang adil bagi seluruh anggota komunitas, khususnya perempuan janda. Selain itu, dalam kaitannya dengan prinsip Saemaul Undong, kearifan lokal menunjukkan keterkaitan yang kuat dengan pembangunan masyarakat pedesaan dan pemberdayaan komunitas lokal melalui partisipasi aktif, pengelolaan sumber daya berbasis masyarakat, serta peningkatan kemandirian dalam mengelola sumber daya yang tersedia.

KATA KUNCI: Ketimpangan distribusi pendapatan, Mekanisme kearifan lokal, Perempuan, Komunitas pedesaan dan Pala.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of income inequality among communities has become a significant area of focus in reducing poverty while maintaining the sustainability of household livelihoods. Income inequality is not exclusive to the levels of nations, regions, or community groups; it also manifests between individuals and between genders, representing the most basic unit of economic activity. In macroeconomics, the issue of income inequality also impacts the economic growth of regions and countries (Aiyar & Ebeke, 2020; Bilan et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021). It is evident that the phenomenon of income inequality experienced by women is not exclusive to those residing in impoverished or developing countries. Rather, it is also prevalent among women in developed countries. As evidenced by studies conducted by Savitha (2020) and Malik et al (2020), approximately 70% of individuals classified as poor globally are women, particularly in developing countries. The existence of impoverished women is a phenomenon that is particularly prevalent in rural areas (Chernet & Cherie, 2020). In Indonesia, the female population, which constitutes the majority of the Indonesian population, is a marginalized group. This term is often used to refer to a vulnerable

group of people who are marginalized by the social order in various fields, including the economic, political, and cultural realms. Furthermore, the income inequality experienced by women has an impact on efforts to meet the basic needs of life, thereby exacerbating the marginalization of women (Banks, 2020; Killian & Hyle, 2020; Sharma et al., 2020). In fact, women represent a demographic with the potential to become a significant source of income if provided with the necessary resources and support. In relation to income inequality, failure to address the issue in a serious manner may result in the emergence of a range of additional problems in the future (Agus et al., 2020; Benczúr & Kvedaras, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). In light of the detrimental impact of income inequality on society and economic development, the government (at the central and local levels) has attempted to address this issue through the implementation of diverse policies and work programs (Lang, 2021; Okoi et al., 2022; Omar & Inaba, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose & Storper, 2019). It is acknowledged that the government's efforts in macroeconomic spheres are commendable; however, there is a concern that these measures may inadvertently foster a culture of dependency among the general public. It is as though the government is the sole entity capable of resolving the issue of income inequality (Bhattarai & Benjasak, 2021; Wu et al., 2002; Zheng & Su, 2022). In fact, in certain communities, particularly the Indigenous communities, there are established "mechanisms" based on local knowledge, customs, or culture that are utilized as a means of addressing the income inequality and poverty within their communities.

In the context of rural poverty, the Saumaul Undong Movement (New Village Movement) was first established by South Korean President Park Chung-Hee between 1963 and 1979. The objective of this movement was to eradicate poverty in rural communities by fostering a collective spirit and developing a balanced economy through the advancement of agriculture and industry. In the initial phases of the initiative, a number of enhancements were implemented with the objective of improving the quality of life in rural communities. These improvements were particularly focused on the development of physical infrastructure. The subsequent phase entailed the enhancement of fundamental infrastructure, while the concluding phase focused on the expansion of agricultural and non-agricultural employment prospects, in addition to the pursuit of other initiatives that could elevate the income and well-being of local communities (Darini, 2010).

This evidence indicates that a similar phenomenon is present in rural Indonesia, manifesting as a spirit of cooperation and independence aimed at enhancing the quality of life for local communities. This condition is exemplified by the *Negeri* (village) Booi community, which is an indigenous community that continues to adhere to traditional customs and practices in their daily lives. One such example is the system of asset inheritance, specifically *using* (s) (gardens), which is based on patrilineality. In this context, sons are entitled to "special" rights compared to daughters. The implementation of this inheritance system also regulates ownership rights for women. Nevertheless, these ownership rights are subject to release upon marriage. The aforementioned asset ownership rights must be returned to the clan or extended family.

The system of inheritance of assets has, without the girls' awareness, placed them in a position of vulnerability regarding the loss of this source of income. In light of this, a convention has been established with the objective of protecting the interests of women in Negeri Booi. This is achieved through the implementation of a "nutmeg-collecting" mechanism, where women are allowed to collect nutmegs that have fallen from the trees, even in the absence of ownership or affiliation with the nutmeg trees.

In the context of the indigenous community of Negeri Booi-Samahu Amalatu, this behavior can be seen as an equalizing mechanism for the distribution of income to those in need. When integrating the principles of Saemaul Undong with local wisdom, similarities will be drawn, namely improving the local economy. This will emphasize that an approach that respects the cultural values and traditions of the local community is absolutely necessary. Then, it is important to understand that local wisdom includes knowledge and practices that have stood the test of time in a particular social and environmental context. Therefore, in implementing Saemaul Undong, local wisdom values need to be recognized and utilized as a basis for planning and implementing development programs, especially those related to village development. Thus, the integration of Saemaul Undong principles with local wisdom can be understood not only at the level related to improving the quality of life of the community but also strengthening cultural identity and environmental sustainability.

The system of inheritance of assets to male heirs based on patrilineal lineage has indirectly placed women at risk of the loss of livelihood assets or sources of income. Furthermore, in the event that the woman is married, all of her livelihood assets must be returned to her clan or extended family. This signifies that women are no longer entitled to claim ownership of these assets. Consequently, women who are economically disadvantaged are effectively trapped in a deeper cycle of poverty. At this juncture, the Indigenous community of Negeri Booi has come to recognize that women, particularly widowed women from Negeri Booi, continue to play an integral role in their lives. This has prompted the indigenous community of Negeri Booi to implement a local wisdom mechanism designed to improve the lives of women. This mechanism takes the form of a practice known as "collecting nutmegs," which involves collecting the fallen nutmegs from the ground. This mechanism has become an unwritten convention and has been observed for centuries, continuing to the present day. This convention ensures that women are able to fulfill their household needs in every dusung within the Negeri Booi community, regardless of whether the dusung belongs to their clan or extended family. This rationale underpins the historical practice of "collecting nutmegs" that have fallen on the ground in the traditional community of Negeri Booi, which was traditionally performed by women. However, in recent decades, the local wisdom mechanism, which had previously been exclusive to women, has begun to be performed by men as well.

The violation of the local wisdom mechanism of "collecting nutmegs" by men is driven by the growing demands of household life and exhibits temporal variability. This situation presents a challenge for them in meeting the needs of household life. It is acknowledged that men's violation

of the local wisdom mechanism of “collecting nutmegs” has not yet had a notable impact on the outcomes achieved by women. However, if this trend persists, it is plausible that in the future, an increasing number of men may engage in the same violation, potentially undermining the efforts to meet the needs of women’s households, particularly widows. However, over time, the efforts to fulfill the basic needs of life have become a significant challenge for all individuals. This has resulted in unintended consequences for the “nutmeg-collecting” mechanism, which was originally intended for women, particularly widows, but was also carried out by men. This behavior causes women to experience anxiety, as their primary source of income within the household is increasingly controlled by men.

RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative research methods with an ethnographic approach were used in this study to understand the income distribution behavior of women through local wisdom. Qualitative research methods are very important for understanding complex phenomena, especially in research that emphasizes human experience, perception, and behavior. This approach emphasizes collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, allowing researchers to explore meaning and interpretation rather than focusing solely on measurable outcomes (Niaty et al., 2024). Negeri Booi on Saparua Island was chosen as the research location for 4 months, from May 2024 to September 2024.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations and focused discussions (FGD) with 14 informants including female nutmeg collectors and nutmeg farmers or Dusung owners as key information. Meanwhile, community leaders, traditional leaders, and village heads are used as informants with certain characteristics and techniques to test the legitimacy and validity of the data. Meanwhile, the criteria for selecting informants are as follows: informants master or understand the local wisdom mechanism of "picking up nutmeg" and the habit of using nutmeg plants through an enculturation process so that these traditions and habits are known and lived. Second, the informant has utilized the mechanism of "picking nutmeg" as a source of household income. The data collection process involved stakeholders related to this research to obtain valid and credible data. The data was then reconstructed using triangulation techniques to ensure that there were similarities in the data from interviews, observations, and FGDs. Researchers also used FGD to explore information from key informants who described the dynamics of the local wisdom mechanism of "picking nutmeg" by women in Negeri Booi as a way to overcome income inequality.

Qualitative data analysis techniques are essential to interpreting and understanding the rich and complex data produced by qualitative research. For this reason, thematic analysis techniques are used to solve problems by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes). This method allows researchers to capture the essence of participants' experiences and points of view (Nurmala et al., 2024). For this reason, data analysis was carried out during and after the research. The data

obtained includes interview results, observation results, and secondary data in the form of documents. For each interview result, the researcher retypes it by adding information regarding the location of the interview, date, time, name, age, and occupation of the informant. The results of the interviews were transcribed. The researcher created a recap matrix of existing interview transcripts from these transcripts. This is then followed by creating an outline and, finally, categorizing themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Addressing Inequality of Income Distribution by Rural Communities

The inequality in income distribution did not entail that all individuals should be provided with the same income, but rather that they should be afforded the same “employment opportunities” so that each individual could meet their needs and the sustainability of their households could be ensured independently. For this reason, income inequality cannot be viewed in macroeconomic terms alone; it must also consider the availability of resources and the practices of the community, including local wisdom, which could help individuals and communities to improve their conditions. This perspective underscored the necessity to recognize that an emphasis on labor and market dynamics predominantly shaped mainstream economists' prevailing view of income inequality.

The unequal income distribution could be examined by investigating the evolution of property rights from generation to generation, employing comprehensive studies. It was widely acknowledged that the issue of income inequality or alterations in income distribution patterns between individuals in a region was not universally applicable across communities but rather contingent on the specific characteristics of the community in question. Therefore, it would be addressed effectively even if confronted with a “critical juncture” scenario. This view is based on the fact that, so far, the government has always handled inequality in income distribution through various programs and policies, both at the central government and provincial, city, and district levels. As a result, people become dependent and assume that the government can only handle the government can only handle inequality in income distribution.

In reality, people in certain areas, especially rural communities, have mechanisms to help themselves and their communities through local wisdom, habits, beliefs, and social capital. While related to the principles of Saemaul Undong, there is a strong connection with the local wisdom of picking nutmeg seeds. The Saemaul Undong principle recognizes the importance of local wisdom in community development. Local wisdom is considered a valuable resource for building better community livelihoods. The use of local knowledge mechanisms carried out by the people of Negeri Booi to get out of poverty, especially women, is also carried out in the Saemaul Undong principle to solve the problems faced by the community. Then, the local wisdom applied by the people of Negeri Booi can also be linked to the Saemaul Undong principles, where the Saemaul Undong principles emphasize the importance of community participation and community empowerment so they can

manage their resources and community independence. In this case, addressing the income distribution disparities between individuals might entail leveraging the mechanisms employed by the community, including:

Customs. The social and cultural practices observed in rural communities continued to reflect a commitment to traditions that were perceived to benefit their collective well-being and social interactions. This perspective had not been entirely endorsed by traditional economists, who viewed customs as impediments to economic development. The prevailing reality of community life in rural areas continued to prioritize social interaction as a central aspect of daily activities. Nee (2005) stated that the development of economic theories had overlooked traditional informal elements, such as the desire to share and prioritize social care (altruistic values). These community behaviors demonstrated were not merely an innate tendency but necessitated guidance to be effectively enacted.

In the context of the custom of picking nutmeg in Booi, this habit is only aimed at women, especially poor female widows. This is related to the patrilinealistic system in Booi Country and Maluku generally. As a result of this patrilinealistic system, inheritance is only directed to sons based on their father's lineage. As a result, this system makes women vulnerable to losing their source of household income. The right to manage the *dusing* (garden) becomes the son's right. Aware of the existence of women who are part of Negeri Booi, women are permitted to pick nutmeg in all hamlets within the *petulant* (customary rights) of Negeri Booi, even if the hamlet does not belong to them or even their family. The habit of women in Negeri Booi picking nutmeg seeds can still be found today. Picking nutmeg seeds can be done anytime and is not limited to the number of nutmegs one finds. The activity of picking up nutmeg depends on the woman's ability to search for nutmeg that has fallen on the ground. Empirical findings show that women can pick nutmeg seeds 2 to 3 times a day. The more time they give to pick nutmeg seeds, the more results they will get.

Local wisdom institutions. The daily activities of rural communities continued to be influenced by local wisdom, which served as a guiding principle in their activities (Wahono, 2005). At this level, the local wisdom extended beyond the ethical domain, encompassing norms, actions, and behaviors. This suggested that the local wisdom might be regarded as a “religion” guiding the community in daily life. Similarly, Kherallah (2001) identified local institutional arrangements, including traditions and social conventions, as informal institutions that regulated relationships and influenced the management of resources, thereby impacting the community economy and alternative household income.

The activity of picking nutmeg is a practice and knowledge accompanied by values developed by the people of Negeri Booi based on experience, traditions, and the community environment, so the activity of picking nutmeg can be said to be local wisdom possessed by the people of Negeri Booi (Tuasuun, et al., 2023). Empirical findings show that, in carrying out the activity of picking nutmeg, every woman is free to enter the existing village. Sometimes, they met

the owner of the nutmeg village and exchanged greetings between them. Starting from just asking about news to giving each other information regarding the whereabouts of "trading people" in the town in the previous few days. There were no objections from the hamlet owners to the presence of women who picked nutmeg. The activity of picking up nutmeg seeds that have fallen and fallen on the ground is a tradition among fellow "country children," as explained by the informant below:

I was free to pick nutmeg seeds in every hamlet... the owner never forbade me. This is a tradition that we Booi people have, but in other countries, it is not like this. I have to maintain the trust of the dusung owner by not taking the nutmeg that is still on the tree; even if the nutmeg has been "split," it is not mine; it is mine if it falls on the ground (AH, nutmeg collector, 62 years old).

Based on the informant's experience above, there is trust and respect for other people's property (in the tree belonging to the village owner). According to informants, this behavior guarantees that they will be able to return to picking nutmeg seeds in the future. The length of time it takes to pick nutmeg depends on each woman. The informant's experience shows that, on each nutmeg tree, the informant can pick up 6 nutmeg seeds, and if the informant is careful enough in looking for nutmeg seeds among the dry leaves, the informant can get 11 nutmeg seeds. The yield of nutmeg obtained by these women also depends on the nutmeg season. In the traditional community of Booi country, the nutmeg harvest season is known as the baby banya nutmeg season. When the baby banya nutmeg season arrives, it is a "blessing" in their lives. Usually, in one day, informants can collect between 250-300 nutmeg seeds. However, if it is not the baby banya nutmeg season, the informant only gets less than 100 nutmeg seeds daily.

Shared belief. In addition to the local wisdom, religion also played an important role in the activities of rural communities. It could be argued that religious teachings were more prevalent in rural communities than in urban ones despite the latter's comparatively more advanced levels of education and economic prosperity. The study by Guiso et al (2003)) demonstrated that the impact of religious beliefs on individuals' attitudes could facilitate economic growth. For instance, among Protestant Christians, there was a tendency to share incentives with low-income individuals as a form of obedience to the teachings of their religion, which emphasized the virtue of "love."

One informant said that the results of picking nutmeg seeds for each woman were very different. Sometimes, people get a lot of results; sometimes, they only get a few nutmeg seeds. The habit among these women is that if they see that their friend's harvest of nutmeg is still small and they meet in the same nutmeg village, then the woman with a lot of nutmeg harvest will choose to leave that village and move to another town. These women did not hesitate to show the location of the nutmeg seeds that they had deliberately not picked up for their friends. The nutmeg-picking women above believed that their behavior toward other people at that time would bring blessings to their personal and domestic lives and even to their descendants. The informants' beliefs are based on their understanding as Sarani (Christians), and coincidentally, all members of the indigenous people of Negeri Booi are adherents of the Protestant Christian religion.

Social capital. In addition to the findings above, social relations within society exerted an influence on income distribution. As Congar (2002) demonstrated, the resilience of households to economic challenges was supported by marital relationships, including those with parents or siblings. This phenomenon might imply that familial relationships could influence income distribution, as evidenced by the findings of this study. Subsequent studies conducted by Woolcock (2000) and Barro (2013) similarly demonstrated that strong group relationships facilitated members' awareness of group identity and collective action to pursue shared economic welfare objectives. These relationships were analogous to social capital. The social relations that emphasized a sense of community within the group were referred to as bonding social capital. In contrast, social relations that cross-group boundaries were referred to as bridging social capital.

As a unit of the indigenous people of Negeri Booi, the binding social capital is reflected through the clan or clan, thereby strengthening social ties and increasing a sense of trust and solidarity. Women can collect nutmeg seeds apart from their possessions but can also collect nutmeg seeds from the hamlet belonging to their extended family (clan/clan). Meanwhile, the context of bridging social capital is illustrated through the existence of women as part of the indigenous community entity of Negeri Booi. Where the activity of picking nutmeg can be carried out in all hamlets in the Booi Country petulant, even if the hamlet does not belong to the extended family (clan/clan) itself. These findings also show that bridging social capital focuses on expanding networks and increasing access to resources and information.

Distribution of Women's Income Through Local Wisdom "Gathering Nutmeg"

Women have always been identified with bed, kitchen, and well activities. This activity is considered natural for women, and at the same time, women lose the opportunity to earn a better life. This situation is further exacerbated by limitations in accessing sources of income through potential natural resources, which makes women only "housekeepers." Meanwhile, men are identified as "strong people" and heads of the household responsible for all efforts to meet their household needs. Recently, economic activity, especially the household economy in rural communities, has shown a drastic and significant increase in needs and diversity. As a result, men's ability to fulfill all their household needs is no longer optimal.

In the context of the indigenous people of Booi country, Saparua island, Central Maluku, the main household livelihood source is the nutmeg plant. Overall, the area of nutmeg plantations cultivated traditionally by the indigenous community of Booi is 13 hectares out of 31 hectares, with a total nutmeg production of 10.5 tons per year. It turns out that the potential of the nutmeg plant is so large that it is not only used by the owner but also by people who are not the owners of the hamlet. This behavior is illustrated by the tradition of picking up nutmeg seeds specifically intended for women and orphans. This tradition is motivated by the awareness of the Booi country community that not all members of their community have a nutmeg village. This is what encourages them to share nutmeg seeds. Empirical findings show that this tradition has existed for a long time. This

behavior was "allegedly" influenced by the arrival of Protestant Christianity (around 1600-1630) in Booi Country, brought by the Dutch. This is what causes the entire Booi Country community to be adherents of the Protestant Christian religion, so the above understanding is certainly inseparable from the influence of the church based on the teachings of the Bible. For this reason, this behavior can be seen as a form of obedience or religiosity for followers of the Christian religion.

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that income inequality, particularly among women in the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* on Saparua Island in Maluku, Indonesia, could be addressed through local customs and wisdom. In the context of the Indigenous community of *Negeri Booi*, the income distribution for women through local wisdom was closely related to the inheritance system of assets (*dusung*) intended for male descendants based on paternal lineage. Conversely, women's ownership of the *dusung* could be terminated in the event of the owner's passing, marriage, or the absence of a male heir. In such instances, the *dusung* would be transferred to the ownership of the extended family. The practice of inheriting the *dusung* to sons had made women vulnerable to losing income sources, particularly widows. This resulted in a disparity in income between men and women, particularly widowed women. The deceased husband's extended family granted the widowed women permission to collect nutmegs in their *dusung* because they recognized the lack of access to *dusung* as a source of income for widowed women. This was the rationale behind the historical practice of collecting nuts, which women predominantly undertook.

The indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* performed behaviors analogous to Saemaul Undong's principles in South Korea. The Saemaul Undong concept was characterized by a spirit of collective action in building the same village. This spirit was exemplified by recognizing local values and fostering participation and mutual cooperation (Agustina et al., 2022; Puspitasari et al., 2019). The indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* was striving to achieve self-sufficiency and prosperity through the utilization of local wisdom, exemplified by the nutmeg-collecting tradition. This also demonstrated efforts to diminish economic disparities between individuals or the discrepancy between asset holders and the impoverished (those without assets).

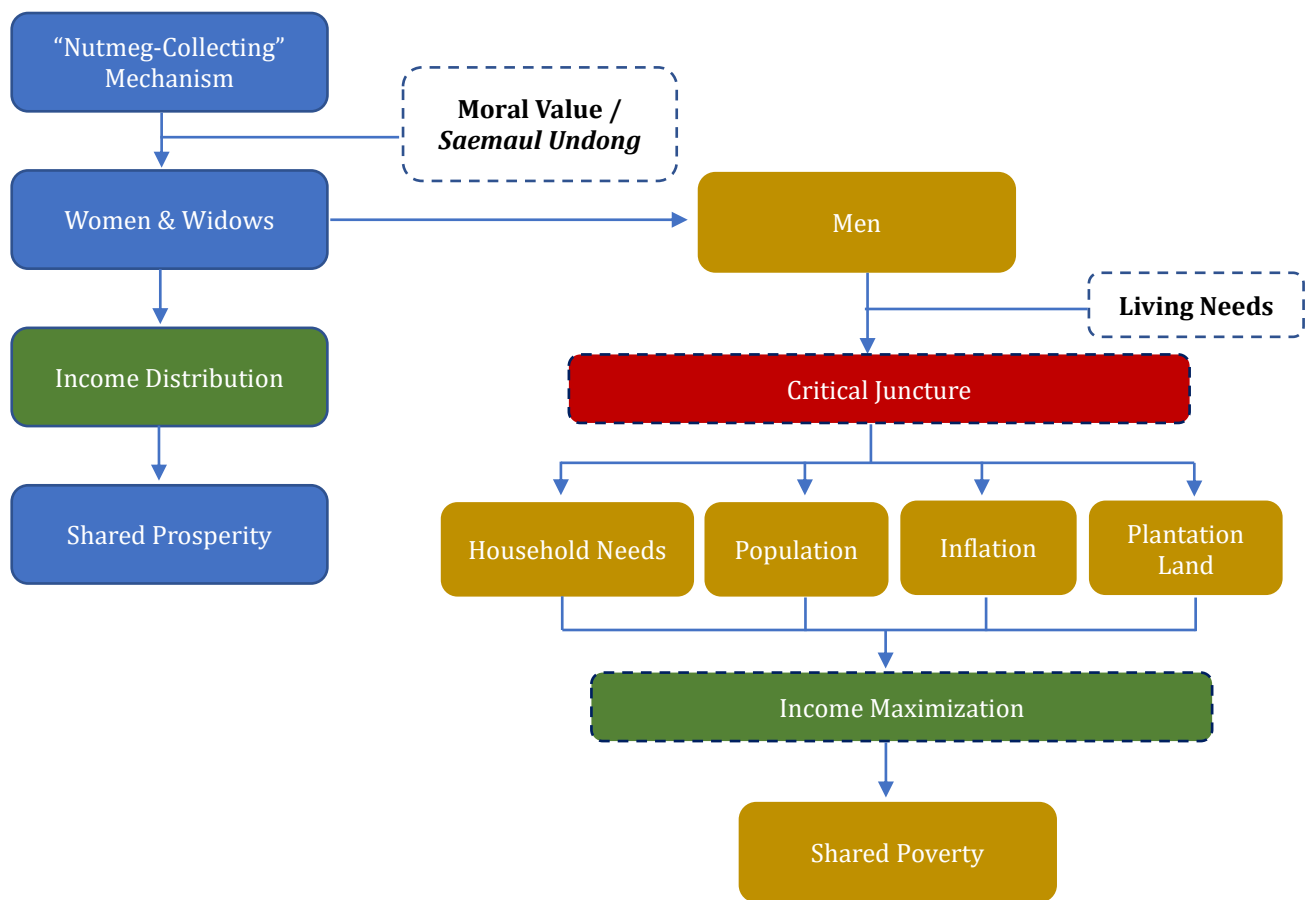


Figure 1. Income Distribution and Maximization

Regarding the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi*, it was notable that the mechanism of collecting nutmegs, which had previously been practiced exclusively by poor women and widows, began to be practiced by men over time. Empirical findings indicate that several factors led to a breakdown in the mutual agreement on the conventions, with men engaging in activities that violated these norms. These factors included the increasing needs of household life, which were subject to change, population growth, rising prices of goods, and the limited plantation land owned. At this level, the causes of the violations that occurred could be seen as a “critical juncture,” wherein the crisis could potentially result in women losing their source of income.

Moreover, as marginalized individuals, women lacked the resources and opportunities to ensure the long-term viability of their household livelihoods. Women were constrained by several factors, including physical, educational, knowledge-based, and cultural limitations. Nevertheless, the “nutmeg-collecting” mechanism based on the local knowledge in the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* demonstrated that certain communities could overcome obstacles in distributing income to their impoverished members. This behavior also demonstrated that the Indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* did not consistently rely on temporary government assistance or policies. Thus, it was important to safeguard the capacity of this community to overcome income inequality, particularly

for women and the economically disadvantaged, from the detrimental effects of the emerging violations.

In this context, “collecting nutmegs” in the *Negeri Booi* community could be viewed as an “informal guarantee” for the sustainability of the livelihoods of women’s households or poor people. This ensured that violations that might impede the efforts to meet the living needs were taken seriously. This encompasses violations committed by men that could potentially disrupt established conventions, values, and norms. In other words, collecting nutmegs was driven by moral considerations to equalize income among fellow *Negeri Booi* communities. Therefore, the emergence of men into the activity of collecting nutmegs was driven by economic needs. This represented a shift in value, whereby the initial intention was for women to undertake the collection work to reduce household economic uncertainty. However, the introduction of this intervention made the boundaries between the roles of women and men increasingly blurred.

At this juncture, this study identifies a need to reinterpret the “role” of nutmeg collecting within the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi*. This ensured the continuity of efforts to equalize the income for those less fortunate. Furthermore, the current practice of collecting nutmegs was an unwritten tradition passed down from generation to generation. There was a risk that this tradition might be lost if it was not documented and preserved. It was, therefore, crucial that the younger generation of the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* be engaged in an intensive reinterpretation of the mechanism, particularly given the existence of this “critical juncture.” Therefore, maintaining the practice of collecting nutmegs through local wisdom and informal institutions, such as customary institutions, was crucial for ensuring that women’s household income was not subject to external influence.

CONCLUSIONS

The distribution of women's income through local wisdom in *Negeri Booi* shows the efforts of the people of *Negeri Booi* to get out of the problems of poverty, especially those experienced by women. The presence of religion can also influence the existence of local wisdom mechanisms. Furthermore, this local wisdom and the principles of *Saemaul Undong* in South Korea have a strong connection in the context of rural community development and local community empowerment. This is reflected in the management of natural resources and the development of the local economy through community participation, community empowerment, and independence in managing community-owned resources. For this reason, the deployment of local wisdom mechanisms in rural communities as a means of addressing income inequality. This local wisdom originated from a convention within the indigenous community of *Negeri Booi* concerning the utilization of nutmeg plants, which were historically reserved for women. Conversely, shifting nutmeg-collecting activities demonstrated a crisis management strategy employed by households lacking assets (i.e.,

poor households) in accordance with established conventions. Subsequently, the findings of the study on the customs of the nutmeg farming community of Negeri Booi with its local institutions provide evidence of a system of shared prosperity, whereby the collective prosperity of the community was not shared equally but rather distributed in a way that benefitted all members of the community, including women, especially widowed women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus far, the income equalization or income distribution mechanism owned by the Indigenous community of *Negeri Booi-Samahu Amalatu* has remained an unwritten convention. Conversely, efforts to fulfill the needs of individual lives and households often compel community members to violate the convention. It is therefore expected that formal regulations will be established to regulate and ensure the survival of Indigenous communities, especially women, in the future.

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