

# **GENDER EQUALITY IN SEA WATER MANAGEMENT IN GRESIK EAST JAVA**

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Abstract:

It is widely known that 70 % of the territory of Indonesia is made up of seawater, with the land mass accounting for just 30%. The onshore population benefit from the sea as it has become the primary source to earn a living. In Gresik, East Java, apart from being utilized for salt water fish ponds, seawater is also used for salt ponds. In the old days, the salt farm laborers used a traditional tool called a SEBOR, which required much physical strength to operate. As a result, it was generally operated by males, with female laborers playing a supporting role. However, today the use of such tool, is rare and it has been replaced by a windmill, a more modern tool. The windmill can be operated by either female or male laborers and, moreover, it allows for the flow of seawater more quickly into the available plots. As a result, salt manufacturing is now being done by both male and female laborers. This shows now gender equality and the shift of women's roles from domestic to public ones are taking place among salt farm laborers. Today a lot of work can be done by men and women together.

## **Gender Equality in Sea Water Management In Gresik East Java**

Water has always played a crucial role in human life. According to data issued by the United Nations, the Earth contains 2.75% groundwater and 97.25% seawater (Kompas, 2004). Seawater is widely spread across the Earth.

Geographically, in Indonesia seawater occupies 70% of the overall area of the country (Azis 2000). Thus, for Indonesians who live on along the coast line, seawater is the primary source for earning a living with locals catching fish, growing seaweeds and obtaining seashells for trade. It is also used for saltwater fishponds or making salt. In areas such as Gresik and Madura, seawater is the primary material for salt production manufactured by male and female laborers.

### *Gender equality in the process of salt manufacturing*

Seawater is the primary material for salt manufacturing and the process is very much dependent on natural heating from the sun, which is why salt is usually manufactured during the dry season.

Initially, the owners of salt ponds located close to shores, prepare plots to vaporize seawater. Then, they let seawater flow into available plots using a traditional tool called a sebor. This tool is usually operated by male laborers assisted by female laborers. After being vaporized in the first plot, the water is then flow along to the next plot. Interestingly, when this kind of work utilizes a windmill rather than a sebor, it can be done by both male and female laborers. After that the water is flowed into another plot then measured to find out the salinity since the more it vaporizes the greater the salinity. Such a task is usually conducted by both male and female laborers.

A month and a half later, the salt is harvested and packed into available plastic bags and later placed into a barn ready for sale. Both male and female laborers are engaged in this kind of work. However, the number of male laborers is slightly larger than for females. Then, comes the division of the crops in which the owner of the farm obtains 2/3 while the laborers get 1/3. This kind of job is usually done by either male or female laborers. This kind of division has been mutually conducted according to the local tradition for a long time and considered a fair transaction.

#### *The shift from domestic to public role*

Previously, salt manufacturing was mainly conducted by male laborers. Prior to the availability of the windmill as a more modern tool than the other traditional sebor, the manufacturing required male laborers to operate the tools as they needed the physical strength of male laborers. With the windmill replacing the traditional tools sebor, female laborers can easily make the seawater flow into the available plots. This means that the role of female laborers have received wide recognition from the local community as their role has moved up from approximately 20% to 40% of the process.(Mochid, 2004)

The process of manufacturing salt from seawater can now employ female laborers is who were previously engaged in domestic activities. This fact is in line with Umar's (2004) prediction that gender equality will materialize eventually, but take a long time to achieve it. So the activities of academics, NGOs and women movements have to be optimised.

As female and male laborers can mutually benefit from seawater by turning it into salt, women are no longer marginalized from the manufacturing process (Fakih 1997).

The shift from domestic roles to public roles signifies progress and is becoming widely accepted practice in community.

It can be concluded that the utilization of seawater supported with sophisticated technology can bring about gender equality by allowing women to move from domestic to public roles in society. By working together, women are able to show that they are as capable as their male counterparts.