

Exploring the Reality of Poverty in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. A Sociological Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses about poverty in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia from a sociological perspective. The aim is to find out the causes of poverty and the possible solutions. Using library research and qualitative approach, poverty is discussed and analyzed in order to explore aspects related to it. The findings indicate that poverty in East Nusa Tenggara is multidimensional in its indicators and causes. Three main causes of poverty are natural factors, human factors and structural factors. This study recommends that development in NTT be based on ethical and moral principles such as respect for human dignity, common good, sustainability, participation and cooperation, so that state administrators or public servants in NTT carry out their functions with full dedication and responsibility and avoid corrupt and exploitative behavior. Also, there is an urgent need to develop a “habitus” of bringing this issue into public sphere, in which people of every level in society can participate in public debates on how to overcome poverty in NTT by understanding its root-causes and strategies to solve the problem.

Keywords: poverty; impoverishment; natural factors; human factors; structural factor; habitus.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty seems to remain one of the major problems in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of the Republic of Indonesia places this province as one of the ten poorest provinces in Indonesia in 2022 and is the third poorest after Papua and West Papua.[1] This is not surprising, since NTT has always been in the “top ranking” in terms of poverty. What is really surprising is the fact that this relatively old province has never been able to get out of poverty or reduce the poverty rate significantly, even though various programs from both the central and regional governments have been implemented from period to period to alleviate poverty in the province.

The questions to be answered in this study are: Why does NTT still remain the third poorest in Indonesia? What is the root-causes of this reality? And what actions can be done to eradicate poverty in NTT? These are the main questions to be answered in this article.

Based on the background and basic questions above, this study aims first, to reveal the reality of poverty in NTT during this last six years (2016 – 2022); second, to analyze the main factors of poverty in the province; and third, to offer several possible solutions in the action plan.

This article begins with the presentation of the reality of poverty in NTT Province, including revealing the symptoms and indicators of poverty and its relation to several other phenomena. The second part is a sociological analysis of this reality, which focuses on efforts to see the causes of poverty in NTT from

various factors and possible solutions. This article ends with an action plan, namely alternative and concrete efforts to eradicate poverty in NTT.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a number of studies on poverty in East Nusa Tenggara. Perkumpulan Prakarsa Nusa Tenggara Timur, a non-governmental organization based in Kupang, NTT, in its 2017 study revealed a number of indicators or symptoms of poverty in the province. These indicators include: fuel or energy for cooking, sources of lighting, access to clean water and sanitation facilities, education, health, and standard of living as well as low income below the provincial minimum wage (UMP). According to this study, the first indicator of poverty is the difficulty in accessing fuel or energy for cooking. This study states that 99.8 percent of poor people in NTT cannot access proper fuel.[2] The second poverty indicator is the source of lighting, where 87.2 percent of the poor do not have a proper source of lighting (do not use electricity). The third indicator is the fact that more than two thirds (68.7%) of the poor do not have access to clean water and 67.4% do not have sanitation facilities.[2]

Endang Mahpudin in his study in 2020 analyzed the contribution of local financial performance to the poverty rate. It used panel data regression analysis involving 22 regencies and municipalities from 2015 to 2018. The results of the study showed that the local financial independency ratio in various regencies and municipalities had fewer contributions to the poverty rate. It recommended that local governments needed to increase regional fiscal capacity integrated with efforts to improve regional macroeconomic performance. Moreover, they should increase alignments toward poverty alleviation programs as well as the capacity of regional apparatus.[3]

The study by Frederick Nalle et al. in 2022 found 3 important variables related to the increase in the poor population in NTT. First, that the low HDI and population growth have a positive effect on the increase in the number of poor people, while economic growth has a negative effect on the increase in the poor population. Regarding economic growth, the same study found that the coefficient value of the population variable (X3) was 0.433957 with a probability of 0.0000 or less than 0.05. This shows that the total population growth rate has a significant effect on the number of poor people. These results further prove that the rapid rate of population growth in NTT Province has a significant linearity with the number of poor people which is quite high above double digits. Second, the coefficient value of the HDI variable (X2) is 2.633746 with a probability of 0.0002 or less than 0.05. This explains that the HDI number has a significant effect on the number of poor people. One of the most crucial problems in NTT Province is first, the low quality of human resources and also cases of malnutrition. The results of this study also explain that poor health services and low levels of education have proven to have real implications for people's income generation, which also results in poverty. Third, the coefficient value of the population variable (X3) is 0.433957 with a probability of 0.0000 or less than 0.05. This explains that the total population growth rate has a significant effect on the number of poor people. These results state that the rapid rate of population growth in NTT Province so far has proven to have a significant linearity with the number of poor people being quite high above double digits.[4]

Yulyanah (2023) also conducted a study on poverty in East Nusa Tenggara to find out the determining factors of poverty in the region. Using secondary data obtained from BPS and the Ministry of Finance, namely Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP), data on government spending in education, access to proper drinking water and sanitation facilities, the Gender Empowerment Index (IDG), and real per capita spending were taken as indicators. The study used panel data regression analysis from 2015–2019 data in regencies and cities in the province. The results of the study showed that in 2015–2019, the independent variables that GRDP, decent drinking water sources, decent sanitation facilities, gender equality, and per capita real expenditure had significant effects on poverty levels. In the meantime, government expenditure

on education didn't have a significant effect on the poverty rate. Together, the variables of GRDP, government expenditures in the education sector, access to proper drinking water and sanitation facilities, gender equality, and per capita real expenditure had significant effects on the poverty level.[5] [4] [6] [7]

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Concepts of Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is defined and measured in many ways. Given the complexity of the issues, the best introduction to poverty measurement is through the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon and the different concepts of it. The first concept is the distinction between absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to subsistence below minimum, socially acceptable living conditions, usually established based on nutritional requirements and other essential goods. Relative poverty compares the lowest segments of a population with upper segments, usually measured in income quintiles or deciles. In other words, absolute poverty is the inability to meet basic needs such as food/drink, clothing, health, change, education, transportation etc., relative poverty is a gap in terms of welfare between social classes in society in comparison with one another.[8][9] In the same line, J.B. Banawiratma, S.J. and J. Mueller, S.J. also distinguished absolute poverty from relative poverty. Absolute poverty according to both is:

primary basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health, clean water, sanitation), reasonable work and basic education are not met; let alone secondary needs such as the right to participate, recreation or a pleasant living environment.

Relative poverty concerns the distribution of national income and means that there are stark differences between various strata or classes in society.[10]

Poverty can also be approached from objective or subjective perspectives. According to Lok-Dessalien, "the objective perspective (sometimes referred to as the welfare approach) involves normative judgements as to what constitutes poverty and what is required to move people out of their impoverished state. The subjective approach places a premium on people's preferences, on how much they value goods and services (hence the emphasis on individual utility)."[8]

Another perspective divides poverty into physiological and sociological deprivations. Regarding physiological poverty, Lok-Dessalien explains that:

people are poor because they lack income, food, clothing and shelter. Both the income and basic needs concepts of poverty stem from physiological deprivations (although some advocates of the basic needs concept set the parameters beyond physiological needs). Strategies to reduce poverty emerging from these approaches focus on increasing the income/consumption of the poor and their attainment of "satisfiers" of basic needs, such as health and education.[8]

Meanwhile, the concepts of poverty emerging from the perspective of sociological deprivations, according to Lok-Dessalien, are "rooted in underlying structural inequities and inherent disadvantages. They are based on observations that even when resources are flowing into sectors dominated by the poor, the latter may not be able to take full advantage of them because of structural impediments".[8]

Four other concepts — inequity, vulnerability, exclusion, and underdevelopment — are often related to poverty. Equity is concerned with distribution within a population group. Analysis of poverty often employs indicators of equity because of inherent linkages between the two. The association of poverty and equity indicators is done in a number of ways: disaggregation (i.e., many indicators can be disaggregated by

gender, race or region); associating distributional measures with other poverty indicators (i.e., such as per capita personal income and the Lorenz curve); and mathematical formulae (such as the Atkinson method).[8]

Another concept related to poverty is vulnerability. Although poverty and vulnerability are often related, they are not synonymous. Some groups may be at risk of becoming poor because of inherent vulnerabilities (i.e., different types of discrimination based on class, gender, ethnicity, or factors such as disability, region of residence and family configuration). Furthermore, certain combinations of vulnerability may be strongly correlated with poverty, such as female-headed households or families living in remote and isolated mountainous regions. But not all members of a particular vulnerable group are invariably poor—hence the need to distinguish between the two when dealing with indicators.[8]

Exclusion is another concept related to poverty. Though no broad consensus on the definition of social exclusion, at one end of the spectrum, there are those who define social exclusion within the concept of poverty, focusing on those aspects of social deprivation that impede people from participating fully in their society and its development. At the other end of the spectrum, there are those whose notion of social exclusion encompasses a much broader range of issues, including poverty itself. Needless to say, between these two extremes lies a range of different approaches to the concept. If, however, one's definition of poverty is multidimensional, then it is likely that social exclusion would refer more specifically to issues of participation, empowerment and social rights.[8]

Finally, poverty is related to underdevelopment. Poverty is often viewed as a form of underdevelopment. The Human Development Report 1997 states:

The contrast between human development and human poverty reflects two different ways of evaluating development. One way, the 'conglomerative perspective,' focuses on the advances made by all groups in each community, from the rich to the poor. This contrasts with an alternative viewpoint, the 'deprivational perspective,' in which development is judged by the way the poor and the deprived fare in each community. Lack of progress in reducing the disadvantages of the deprived cannot be 'washed away' by large advances—no matter how large—made by the better-off people.[8]

Given the close relationship between these two concepts, it is not surprising that many poverty indicators are the same as those used to measure underdevelopment.

Suharto further makes a distinction between cultural poverty and structural poverty. Cultural poverty refers to attitudes, lifestyles, values, and socio-cultural orientations of a person or society that are not in line with the ethos of progress (modern society). Meanwhile, structural poverty is poverty caused by structural irregularities or injustice (political, economic, social, cultural, and religious) which does not allow certain parties (especially the grassroots) to achieve an adequate level of physical and mental well-being.[10]

To measure poverty in this study, the definition given by the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (Biro Pusat Statistik — BPS) uses the concept of ability to meet basic needs (basic needs approach). With this approach, "poverty is considered as an economic inability to meet basic food and non-food needs (clothing, housing, education, health) as measured from the expenditure side. So, the poor are residents who have an average monthly per capita expenditure below the poverty line".[1]

The Poverty Line (PL) according to BPS RI is the sum of the Food Poverty Line (FPL) and the Non-Food Poverty Line (NFPL) ($PL = FPL + NFPL$). Residents who have an average expenditure per capita per month below PL are classified as poor. The Food Poverty Line (FPL) is the expenditure value for minimum food needs which is equivalent to 2100 kilocalories per capita per day. Commodity packages for basic food needs are represented by 52 types of commodities (grains, tubers, fish, meat, eggs, milk, vegetables, nuts, fruits, oils and fats, etc.). The Non-Food Poverty Line (NFPL) is the minimum requirement for housing, clothing,

education and health. Commodity packages for basic non-food needs are represented by 51 types of commodities in urban areas and 47 types of commodities in rural areas.[1]

Root-Causes of Poverty

The second aspect to be explored in this study is about causes of poverty. Pancratius Mariatma explains that there are three main causes of poverty. The first is the factors related to natural resources, namely issues related to natural disasters (landslides, storms, and prolonged droughts) which cause crop failures; critical conditions (such as hilly and steep topography) and limited natural resources as well as narrow agricultural land which is in line with the increasing agricultural density, decreasing soil fertility, and others. NTT itself is known as a province that has a subtropical climate with low rainfall (only an average of 4 months a year).[11]

The second is factors related to human resources, namely matters related to the lack of knowledge, expertise and skills in managing the NTT area economically. Apart from that, the NTT people still have the mentality of being extravagant, spontaneous, live only for today, don't work hard, and lack the entrepreneurial spirit. Related to mentality, there is also a very expensive dowry culture which is a burden for the male family to pay for it, and this causes impoverishment. In addition, some people in NTT perceive poverty as a fate or destiny that has been determined by God, which can only be changed if God helps. The human attitude here is surrender while hoping for help from the Divine.[11]

The third is factors related to the structural or systemic resources, namely the view that poverty is the result of social, cultural, political, economic and even religious structures or systems that tend to oppress and marginalize. In this view, those in power economically (capitalists) and politically make a profit for themselves by extorting or exploiting the workers/labourers, farmers or fishermen in order to accumulate wealth in their own hands. Corruption is one way to dredge and accumulate profits. Not paying taxes or not paying workers according to a living wage is another way of the impoverishment process. Also, depositing public funds in banks to earn interest and cutting the development budget that has been allocated for the personal interests of officials and their cronies are other ways that create poverty and impoverishment.[11]

Five Models of Poverty Alleviation

Based on the three main causes of poverty, Mariatma then developed five models of responses to the problem of (social) poverty, which were grouped into two categories, namely consensus models developed by adherents of structural functionalism theory such as Emile Durkheim, and conflict models, which emerged and developed by conflict theorists such as Karl Marx and his followers. Included in the consensus model are the charity model, the input model and the reform model. The first is the charity model. In this model, the causes or root causes of poverty are seen as divine will, given nature (poverty as fate), natural conditions that cannot be changed, or natural disasters. As a response to the problem of poverty, people are encouraged to donate or provide charitable assistance.[11]

The second consensus model is the input model, which is a model that sees the problem of poverty as related to bad mentality in humans such as lack of expertise, skills and knowledge. As a response, those who are deprived are given input in the form of skills courses and trainings to empower the poor. Third, the reform model, which is a model that views poverty as caused by the lack of functioning of structures and systems to serve the interests of the community because the individuals who work in it do not experience an increase in knowledge, skills and expertise in carrying out service tasks in the public sphere so that they are not served optimally, and which in turn causes the birth of poverty or unfavorable conditions for society, including being poor. Therefore, to overcome this problem, the structure is not dismantled or disrupted, but provides additional training, additional education, and additional courses for civil servants, so that they can renew their way of serving the public interest. With that, indirectly, the problem of poverty due to

negligence can be overcome and responded to more quickly, efficiently and effectively.[11]

Apart from the three consensus models above, according to Mariatma, there are two other models which are called conflict models, because they tend to sue oppressive structures and systems. The first conflict model is the liberation model, which is a model that sees poverty and other social problems caused by oppressive social, cultural, economic and political structures, which are controlled by the owners of capital and those in power who marginalize and exploit the people, farmer groups, workers, fishermen and other marginalized groups for their interests. Therefore, to change the situation, it is necessary to reform and change the structure so as to restore the rights of the marginalized and thus they also have equal access to welfare. Apart from that, they can also demand a change from an authoritarian government structure to a democratic government, which guarantees the freedom of every citizen to take part in society—a path of liberation, including liberation from poverty. Here we need a social movement (common movement) as a transforming force.[11]

The second conflict model is the solidarity model. This model also sees that poverty and other social problems occur because social structures tend to marginalize, exploit and oppress the small people (workers, fishermen and farmers). Because of this, it is also necessary to overhaul structures and systems that oppress and marginalize while offering a new, more equitable alternative structure for alleviating poverty. For example, against the capitalist economic system, a cooperative economic system was built which emphasized the importance of solidarity, cooperation, mutual cooperation, volunteerism, shared responsibility and prosperity.[11]

METHODOLOGY

To collect information and data about poverty in NTT, this study uses secondary quantitative and qualitative data from various sources. Quantitative data was gained especially from the annual census of the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia, while the qualitative data was collected from mass-media and social-media news at local and regional levels. Meanwhile, for data analysis, this study employs trend analysis, secondary data analysis and content analysis based on the data and information collected. Trend analysis aims at showing the trend of poverty in NTT during the last seven years (2016 – 2022); while secondary data analysis is used to describe the reality of poverty in East Nusa Tenggara Province using government's (BPS) data. This study also employs content analysis to find the narrative (qualitative) aspects of poverty.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview of NTT Province

NTT is one of 38 provinces in Indonesia. It is located in south-eastern part of the country and consists of three main islands—Flores, Sumba, and Timor—and 1,189 small islands (see Map of NTT Province in Figure 1 below!). This province was formed in 1958, precisely on December 20, 1958 based on Law no. 64 of 1958, as a result of the division of the Lesser Sunda Province which at that time included the islands of Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, Sumba, Timor and other small islands in NTB and NTT.[12]

The population of NTT Province has relatively fluctuated in the last 4 years (2019 – 2022), although this has not happened significantly. As shown in Table 1 below, in 2019 the population of NTT was 5,456,203 people, increasing in 2020 but then decreasing again in 2021 before increasing slightly again in 2022 to 5,466,285 people. This fluctuation in the population of NTT also applies to the total population based on gender. The data in Table 1 shows that the number of men and women in NTT in the last four years has

been almost equal.

Table 1: Total Population of NTT in 2020, 2021 and 2022

Year	Male	Female	Total
2019	2,702,264	2,753,939	5,456,203
2020	2,744,159	2,797,235	5,541,394
2021	2,694,297	2,693,441	5,387,738
2022	2,733,049	2,733,236	5,466,285

Source: [12].

The Reality of Poverty in East Nusa Tenggara

Even though efforts have been made year after year to eradicate poverty, the data shows that the reduction in the poverty rate has not occurred significantly. If the decline every year is as high as 0.5%, then with a total poor population of 20.23% or one fifth of the current NTT population, it will take 40 (forty) years to completely eradicate poverty in NTT. For more details, see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Percentage of People Living in Poverty in NTT, 2016 – 2022

Year	% of the poor	% of poverty decline
2016*	22.19	
2017*	21.85	0.34
2018*	21.35	0.50
2019*	21.09	0.26
2020*	20.90	0.19
2021*	20.44	0.46
2022**	20.23	0.21

Source: [13] [14]

Observing the percentage of people living in poverty in NTT from year to year, it can be seen that in 2022 alone, there are 9 regencies that have 25% or more poor population; 4 regencies have poor population between 20.0% to 24.0%; 3 regencies with 15-19% poor population; and as many as 5 regencies with a poor population of between 10-14%. Only one city has poor population below 2 digits (8.61%), namely Kupang City, which is far below the province average (20.23%). For more details, see Table 3 below.

Table 3: Percentage of People Living in Poverty per-Regency in NTT in 2020, 2021 and 2022

Regency/City	Percentage (%) of the Poor/Year		
	2020	2021	2022
Central Sumba	34.49	34.27	32.51
Sabu Raijua	30.18	30.13	28.73
East Sumba	29.65	29.68	28.22
West Sumba	28.17	28.39	27.47
Rote Ndao	27.54	28.08	27.45
Southwest Sumba	28	28.18	27.16

Timor Tengah Selatan	27.49	26.64	25.45
East Manggarai	26.52	26.5	25.35
Lembata	26.14	26.21	25.18
Ende	23.76	24.13	23
Kupang	22.77	22.98	21.7
North Central Timor	22.28	22.62	21.5
Alor	21.09	21.09	20.25
Manggarai	20.34	20.48	19.84
West Manggarai	17.71	17.92	17.15
Malakka	16.04	16.33	15.26
Belu	15.37	15.68	14.84
Sikka	13.12	13.35	12.61
Nagekeo	12.61	12.91	12.05
Ngada	12.51	12.58	11.93
East Flores	10.84	11.14	10.75
City of Kupang	8.96	9.17	8.61
East Nusa Tenggara	20.9	20.99	20.23

Source: [15]

Poverty Indicators in NTT

We can also mention the low Human Development Index as another indicator of poverty in NTT. Table 4 below shows that the average HDI for NTT Province has always been lower than Indonesia's average HDI in the last four years (2018-2021); despite experiencing slight growth, the average HDI in NTT has always been below 7.0, while Indonesia's average HDI for 4 years has continuously increased above 7.0.

Table 4: Human Development Index of NTT and Indonesia, 2018 – 2021

Year	NTT	Indonesia
2018	6.54	7.16
2019	6.6	7.18
2020	6.84	7.19
2021	6.91	7.3

Source: [16] and [12].

Poverty and Corruption

In the midst of rampant poverty, this study shows that corruption occurs massively in NTT. At least the data for the last 5 years shows that massive corruption occurred when society was experiencing the Covid-19 Pandemic. It is highly suspected that the budget for handling Covid-19 was misused by a number of people to enrich themselves or their cronies. The data in Table 5 below shows the amount of losses in billions of rupiah due to corruption in NTT, both those that have been, are being or will be handled by the High Court, the Corruption Court (Tipikor) and the NTT Regional Police (POLDA) in the last 5 years.[17]

The question is, is there any relationship between poverty and massive corruption in NTT Province? Of

course a more in-depth study is needed, but it can be assumed that when the development budget is corrupted or mishandled and mismanaged, the development funds will naturally become smaller. This further results in the non-existence of, or at the very least the low quality of, the infrastructure being built. A clear example is the construction of a highway in East Manggarai or other areas in NTT which was “random” so that not long after the construction was completed, the highway quickly deteriorated again.[18][19]

Table 5: The Number of Corruption Cases and the Amount of Losses (in Rupiah) in NTT Province, 2018-2022

Year	Number of cases	State losses (in rupiah)
2018	11	7,250,288,518.00
2019	8	12,118,091,388.00
2020	18	1,378,575,559,054.00
2021	28	1,316,000,000,000.00
2022	24	44,247,178,810.00

Source: [17]

Kinds and Root-Causes of Poverty in NTT

This study found some root-causes of poverty in NTT. First, geographically, NTT Province is located in a tropical climate, and this has caused a long dry season which has caused crop failure and a decrease in food production. In 2019, a severe long dry season has caused crop failure [20]; the same situation occurred in 2023 where more than 300 ha rice field in NTT experienced crop failure due to el-Nino (long severe drought) [21]; and this is going to happen again this year (2024) where 193 ha corn field experienced crop failure in East Manggarai Regency, NTT due to long drought and short rainy season [22].

Second, the topography of NTT is generally mountainous and hilly so that access between cities, towns and villages is very difficult to reach. As a consequence, most people who depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihood must experience crop failure and in turn poverty cannot be avoided. Third, the low level of productivity, which aggregately has implications for the low level of economic growth. Fourth, data on the Human Development Index (IPM) in East Nusa Tenggara Province for 2018-2021 shows that except for Kupang City, NTT Province has a relatively low Human Development Index, although there has been an increase from year to year during 2018-2021 as reflected in Table 2 above.[4]

DISCUSSION

The severity of poverty in NTT Province demands some real and concrete actions both at national and local levels. This actions, in my mind, must be based on moral and ethical principles that control the ways in which poverty is overcome. This part sets out some basic principles for poverty alleviation in NTT in a Christian perspective and some tentative possibilities for concrete actions.

Basic Principles of Poverty Alleviation in NTT

The following are some basic principles that can be applied and basis for an action plan to eradicate poverty in NTT. The first principle is human dignity, that is, all efforts made to eradicate poverty in NTT must be seen as an effort to restore the human dignity of the poor, who have been dehumanized by impoverishment. This is along with the second principle of Pancasila—the Indonesian National Ideology, namely “a just and

dignified/civilized humanity” [23], the National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN) of Indonesia, 2005 – 2025 principles no. 2: “promoting the dignity of all people,” [24], and the Indonesian Law No. 39, 1999 on Human Rights, especially article 2 which states: “The Republic of Indonesia acknowledges and holds in high esteem the rights and freedoms of humans as rights which are bestowed by God and which are an integral part of humans, which must be protected, respected, and upheld in the interests of promoting human dignity, prosperity, contentment, intellectual capacity and justice” [25]; article 3 (1): “Everyone is born equal in dignity and human rights, and is bestowed with the intellect and reason to live with others in a spirit of brotherhood”; and article 9 regarding the right to life which states: “Right to Life “(1) Everyone has the right to life, to sustain life, and to improve his or her standard of living. (2) Everyone has the right to peace, happiness, and well-being. (3) Everyone has the right to an adequate and healthy environment.” [25].

The second principle is association/social cohesion in which all poverty alleviation efforts in NTT must uphold community unity as well as reunite the people who have been divided by differences in social class. This is along with the third principle of the Indonesian State Ideology—Pancasila—which emphasizes the importance of “The unity of Indonesia” [24] and the National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN) of Indonesia, 2005 – 2025 principles no. 1: “National Development is carried out based on democracy with the principles of togetherness, justice, sustainability, insight, environment and independence by maintaining a balance of progress and national unity.”[24] Unity must be understood as people living together as brothers and sisters without sharp gaps and class discrimination among the people.

The third principle is participation, in which the poor are not treated as objects of development but rather as subjects/agents of change themselves; and that they must be given space to participate starting from initiating to enjoying the results of development. The National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN) of Indonesia, 2005 – 2025 includes participation as goal no. (d): “Optimizing community participation” [24]. Participation is also an expression of democracy which is the fourth principle of Pancasila ideology which reads like this: “democratic life led by wisdom of thoughts in deliberation amongst representatives of the people.”[23]

The fourth principle is solidarity, in which poverty alleviation efforts must be seen in the framework of building solidarity or a sense of solidarity with the poor. For this principle to realize, efforts have been made by the provincial Government of NTT by promoting NTT as a cooperative Province. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province is the province with the largest number of cooperatives in Indonesia. The number of existing cooperatives reaches 98 thousand 270 cooperative institutions with a very large number of members spread across 22 regencies/cities. [26] The fifth is the equity and equality of all human beings, namely that changes and actions are to be carried out without discrimination either in terms of race, ethnicity, social class or gender. This principle is included in Indonesia’s Human Rights Law no. 39, article 3 (1): “Everyone is born equal in dignity and human rights” [25] as mentioned before. And the sixth principle is common good, in which all efforts to eradicate poverty are to be seen as to achieve physical and spiritual well-being for everyone without exception. This is explicitly mentioned in the fifth principle of Pancasila ideology of Indonesia: “Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia”.[23]

In addition to these six principles, it may also include some more principles set up and declared by UN Member States at the UN General Assembly of the United Nations in the context of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015.[28] These principles are: shared responsibility; sustainability; collaboration and partnership; inclusivity. All of these principles are important to ensure the implementation and achievement of efforts to eradicate poverty in NTT in the years to come.[28] The NTT Government has set up programs to implement SDGs at local level, including SDG1 (poverty eradication) through the Provincial short-term planning 2018-2023 under those guiding principles, especially inclusivity and sustainability [27] along with the Indonesian Long Term National Planning, 2005-2025. [24]

CONCLUSION

This study shows that NTT is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. The reality of poverty in NTT is multidimensional in nature; its roots-causes are also multi-dimensional but the main factor is structural in nature, namely that poverty in NTT is created and perpetuated by a political, social and economic system that marginalizes most of the people (farmers, fishermen and laborers) in NTT and benefits those in political power through corruption and businessmen colluding with officials in the province. This is exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of the performance of law enforcement officials in preventing and eradicating corruption in the region. From a sociological point of view, poverty or, more precisely, impoverishment, is social structural problem and therefore the people in NTT should be challenged and required to make efforts to fight against system and structures that perpetuate poverty and to bring social justice to the people in all its forms: legal, restitutive, retributive and restorative social justice. The people of NTT together with other entities have a moral and ethical responsibility to see and be involved in sustainable and significant efforts to overcome poverty and impoverishment in NTT in the coming years on principles, among others, of human dignity, sustainability, solidarity, inclusiveness and the common good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since poverty in NTT is multidimensional in its essence and root-causes, it needs to take some concrete actions to eradicate it in the coming years. Following are three possible concrete actions to be taken: first, the NTT governments at all levels need to have a “revolutionary mentality” to eradicate or eliminate poverty, a mentality in which they are aware and able to see poverty as an urgent and challenging problem to be handled quickly and more precisely. Leaders and civil servants of the province and in each of its regencies must be provided with ongoing education and awareness of a greater responsibility for ending poverty in NTT in the next 5 years. The selection of leaders must be based on their capacity and capability as well as their commitment to reducing the poverty rate in NTT below double digits in the next five years.

Second, the local and traditional communities in the province need to be educated and formed into cooperative members so that they can save and plan their lives together in the future. This has been proven in several areas in NTT where cooperative members have become more prosperous economically. Third, law enforcement agencies in NTT need to be encouraged to resolve corruption cases that have impoverished NTT over the past few years with a total completion target of the next 3 years. At the same time, civil society organizations (NGOs) in NTT need to monitor the performance of the government and law enforcement officials, so that they can carry out and complete their duties properly and with full responsibility.

Fourth, the local government needs to set a clear plan to send young people to Israel or other countries and regions that have similar climatic, geographical and topographical characteristics such as NTT to receive training in managing sustainable dryland agriculture and then practice it in NTT Province. Fifth, considering that NTT is an archipelagic province and that most of its territory is sea, it is time for the NTT Provincial and local governments to open marine and fisheries schools in order to take full advantage of the potential of the sea.

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