

Empowering Coastal Women in Ecotourism Development in Bajoe, Tanete Riattang Timur District, Bone Regency

M. Awaluddin, Wiwiek Indriany Sary, Alvia Ahmad, Abud Kahar, Syarifuddin HM

Universitas Cahaya Prima

awaluddin@ucp.ac.id

Abstract

This community service program aims to empower coastal women in Bajoe, Tanete Riattang Timur District, Bone Regency, by involving them in the development of local-based ecotourism. The program was carried out using a participatory approach through a series of activities including socialization, entrepreneurship training, ecotourism management workshops, and digital promotion mentoring. The outcomes showed an increase in participants' understanding of ecotourism concepts, along with the emergence of local business initiatives such as educational tour packages and processed marine products. This activity is expected to contribute to women's economic independence while supporting sustainable development in coastal areas.

Keywords: women empowerment, ecotourism, coastal community, Bajoe, MSMEs

Introduction

As an archipelagic country, Indonesia has tremendous potential for ecotourism development, particularly in coastal areas. One such area is Bajoe in Tanete Riattang Timur District, Bone Regency, which is rich in marine resources and home to the unique Bajo maritime culture. However, women's involvement in tourism development remains limited despite their significant role in natural resource management and cultural preservation.

Various studies have shown that empowering coastal women contributes not only to household economic resilience but also to environmental conservation and cultural continuity (Fitriani, 2022). This community service initiative serves as a platform to involve women more actively in ecotourism through training, mentoring, and capacity building programs.

Method

The program was conducted in Bajoe from March to May 2025 using **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**. The stages were as follows:

1. **Problem and Potential Identification**

Conducted through interviews and focus group discussions with local community members and coastal women leaders.

2. **Training and Workshop Activities**

- Entrepreneurship in ecotourism context
- Homestay management and tour guiding
- Processing marine products and handicrafts
- Digital marketing training (social media, e-commerce)

3. **Assistance and Simulation**

Participants were guided to create tour packages and practiced product marketing via digital platforms.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Conducted through pre-test and post-test assessments and follow-up interviews.

Results and Discussion

Participant Profile:

The activity engaged 25 coastal women from various backgrounds (fishers' wives, seafood processors, homemakers).

Key Achievements:

- Participants' knowledge scores increased from 45 (pre-test average) to 85 (post-test average)
- Two women-led business groups were formed:
 - *Bajo Marine Tourism Group* (tour operators)
 - *Sulam Laut Group* (producers of shellcraft and pandan handicrafts)
- Initial products developed included seaweed chips, seaweed syrup, shell souvenirs, pandan weavings, and traditional Bajo cloth.

Discussion:

The results indicated that participatory empowerment strategies effectively enhanced women's capacity and confidence to engage in tourism-related enterprises. The cultural and ecological assets of the Bajo community served as social capital. Challenges faced included limited access to broader markets and sustainable financing, but participants showed high motivation to continue their initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This community service program successfully empowered coastal women in Bajoe by enhancing their skills in ecotourism development. The initiative fostered the formation of community-based businesses and increased local women's participation in economic and environmental activities. For long-term sustainability, collaboration with local government and private sectors is needed to provide ongoing support, market access, and technical guidance.

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