

HEALTH RISKS OF WOMEN ON PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION OF FOOD PATTERNS, JAYAWIJAYA – PAPUA

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ABSTRAK

Kondisi wanita di Asia-Pasifik kini menunjukkan kesamaan dari situasi kemiskinan, malnutrisi, minimnya perawatan kesehatan, dan lingkungan kerja fisik yang tidak sehat pada masa-masa mudanya. Gambaran ini dapat ditemukan juga di Lembah Baliem.

Kurangnya jaminan ekonomi bagi wanita di Lembah Baliem akan menjadikan kondisi yang serius selama musim kemarau panjang, penduduk menjadi kelaparan. Krisis itu tampak pada dimensi gender. Bila dihubungkan dengan mata pencaharian, kegiatan sehari-hari dan konsumsi sangat ditentukan secara kultural berdasarkan status, peranan dan posisi wanita dalam keluarga.

Sebelum krisis nasional, mereka sudah mengalami krisis yang laten dan lebih parah setelah dipicu oleh krisis nasional. Kenyataannya, mereka tetap dapat mempertahankan kelangsungan hidupnya, namun kondisi kesehatannya sangat buruk.

Kata Kunci: wanita, krisis, kondisi kesehatan

INTRODUCTION

Five years ago this paper was presented in WIVS Conference: *Indonesian Women and Crises: Past and Present; Opportunities and Threats*, at the KITLV Institute, Leiden, Ne-therlands (December 9-12, 2000). This topic is still adhered to be discussed today.

The four diseases (malaria pneumonia, diarrhea and malnutrition) are commonly cause a worse health condition in Baliem valley, especially to women and children. This condition is relatively the same in a region where women are to be valued less than men. The poor health condition among indigenous Irianese people (including Da-ni ethnic group) is mostly related to the community level who is still far behind development in all aspects, such as education, socio-economic condition, lack of information on health care, etc. Older women's health reflects their life-long experience of discrimination, deprivation and neglect.

The older women of Asia-Pacific today, which is stated in *Women's and Gender Perspective in Health Policies and programmers* (1999:1) faced similar situations of poverty, malnutrition, poor health care, physical overwork and unhealthy work environments in their younger years. This picture can also be found in Baliem valley, where women's lives are loaded with economic burden. A significant loss of economic security for women in Baliem valley is apprehensive on all that situations.

Furthermore, lack of economic security for women in Baliem valley will be a serious condition during long dry season where people are in hunger. This situation becomes a serious consequence in the economic and political crises in Indonesia. Actually, in Baliem valley the crisis has very clear picture on gender dimensions.

In connection with livelihood, daily activities and consumption in Dani people at Baliem

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valley are strongly defined by cultural definitions of status, role and position of woman in her family. This paper also demonstrates how women in Baliem valley use certain tactics during the crisis. They already had crisis a long time ago as a latent crisis before Indonesian crisis. This crisis is more crucial during and after Indonesian crisis. In fact, some of them could survive but their health condition was worse.

ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING, WEARING AND MEANS OF LIKELIHOOD

Baliem valley is located in the district of Jayawijaya mountain Irian Jaya (Papua) Indonesia, most eastern province. The area is very mountainous. The temperature varies between 14,4 and 25,6 degree Celsius. Because of the high altitude, it is rather cool for a tropical area. Rainfall is moderate and almost the same throughout the year, except for occasional showers in February and March (Kasniyah, 1997:11).

In general, the majority of the Dani peoples still live in the village, quite isolated. Most of the non-Irianese population live in the capital district in Wamena. Dani settlements are centered predominantly around the extended family. The Dani live in round, domed root huts (*honay*). The smallest unit consists of a male house, in which up to ten or twelve men live, and huts where the wives, children and other female relatives of the men live. There is also a long hut, where meals are cooked. The huts are surrounded by fence. The Dani traditionally wear virtually no clothing. Women wear shirts, while men wear only dried yellow grounds, called *koteka*.

The Dani are slash and burn agriculturist and because of the climate, it is possible to plant and harvest sweet potatoes throughout the year. The sweet potatoes are staple diet of the Dani. Besides that, for income per capita, women make vest and shirts as a mean of obtaining extra income. Sometimes they make it for themselves.

POPULATION, EDUCATION AND NUTRITIONAL CONDITION

The Dani people who live in Wauma village are divided into two hamlets, i.e. Wauma and Maplima. There are 40 *osili* (kampong), i.e. the unit of residence in extended family. The total population is 1268; they are low educated and uneducated, particularly in an old age groups. Many students in preliminary school drop out. The most important reason was poverty.

Malnutrition is high among children and mothers. The people give several reasons for this issue for example that men eat first, then children, and the last is women. It is quite common for Dani people and may be in other cultures throughout Indonesia that man eats first because man (father) is household chief. Values and norm in patrilineal pattern oriented likes Dani people is man should be valued to be the highest person in family power. For instance, when they have mutual cooperative work to open the new field, after they work in the field, they together do the *bakar batu* ceremony. In approximately two hours *bakar batu* finishes and men and women then open the traditional oven together. Women are responsible to distribute the food. Firstly, the guests who will receive the food secondly are men, thirdly the children and the lastly the women. Women always receive the food left over because they are the last person who receive food as daily routine and ceremony food distribution as determined by the tradition (Kasniyah, 1995:18). As mentioned by Levelink (1991:40-41) measuring the arm circumferences of women shows that malnutrition is worse during pregnancy and when women have more than one child. Factors that have negative influence on maternal nutrition are worked out. Furthermore, Levelink stated that women, especially pregnant women do not consume enough calories. They loose 100 to 400 kilocalories daily. There is also a shortage of protein of 10 to 40 grams. Unpublished paper of "Malnutrition Problem in Jayawijaya Regency II" from Health Official (Non date:1) reported

that result of the survey indicated that malnutrition rate of under five years and mothers in Jayawijaya regency were worse. It is negative impact for health status and inhibit the development of human resources in Jayawijaya. Some specific factors influencing the malnutrition in Jayawijaya are latent crisis of food production due to unfertile soil, and of work overload. These conditions were complicated by less of frequency and variety of dietary intake which was only two times a day with quality of foods of poor quality.

FOOD PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION

Sweet potatoes, being a vegetable tuber is unlike the grain, which is cultivated by Dani people. Sweet potato is the staple food for people in the high land Jayawijaya, Papua. There is only one kind of plant, which is planting. A low cost processing plant was built using local simple expertise and equipment. In addition, the manpower still practice nuclear family members, especially women (mothers and young women). Sometimes in special job, for instance, to open the new field or to engage in planting a new field, they work on mutual cooperation and men do it (Kasniyah, 1995:16).

There is a very distinct job distribution in gender perspective as mentioned in slash and burn agriculture practices and cultivation technique. Slash and burn technique is man's job and cultivation is purely a woman's job. This source of income system from the beginning in the past as, a long time ago up to in the present, this system still exists in Ja-ya-wijaya mountain areas. The subordinate woman culturally has root in gender job division of labor. This division is based on symbolic association between woman with nature and man with culture. In reality, in the research area, the role division based on gender expresses an unequalibrium because woman is subordinated by man, as a gender imbalance. The manifestation of gender imbalance is in perception that gives a value and decision of

labor between woman and man. Nevertheless, gender analysis on the economic activity can't be separated from analysis of family. Family and economy are two institute which are mutually in contact in the traditional system as in Baliem valley. In their job distribution, woman has full responsibility of work in the agricultural field and in the household. The Dani women have a heavy responsibility (Kasniyah, 1995:16). As also described by Hartati (1994) the sorrow of women in Baliem valley is very dramatic. However, in the reality they never say die. They are always certain in doing their activities. Women work long days and half-day of their time is used for working in the field.

In food production, women's physical work load is very heavy. Their tasks consist of planting, weeding and daily harvesting of food in the field. Women take care of the children and sometimes together with her husband and the pigs. They collect drinking water and cook the meals. In contrast, husband have job irregular of collecting firewood, building or repairing houses and fences and cultivating field. One of the tasks of man is to clean and spade the field. Men work together and usually clean more than one field at a time.

Everyday women work in the field for planting and harvesting sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes could not be stored more than two days, so harvesting is done regularly. The harvest gathered is for sale and family consumption with their family at home. Sweet potatoes are grouped in three kinds, i.e. (1) the big sweet potatoes for sale, (2) medium size variety used for daily meals, (3) the small size variety used for animal food, mainly pigs.

The women also have the obligation of providing food for their family. If their health is worse, it will effect the whole family, especially young children. It is necessary that female relations will help the woman who is sick by bringing food from the unirrigated agricultural field for her family. Nevertheless, man never do this. In this case, when I asked health cadre: "why don't you help or replace her when your

wife can't go to the field? He said that "it is taboo if woman's job is done or delegated by man. The other reason is that man can't find the right potatoes as good as woman". Similarly, with Levelink (1991:45-46) reported that man, who was interviewed, said that "If my wife does not go to the field, I will not eat that day. I don't go the field myself, because I can't find the right potatoes as good and as fast as she does. I am rather lazy".

The Dani women can be reported that traditionally they eat and drink twice a day. This daily food in take doesn't improve the situation. The staple food is only *betatas* or *hapire* (sweet potatoes). Usually they add the cooked leaves of potato plant. Dani woman eats an average of three sweet potatoes a day. The Dani eat in the morning before the wo-men leave to the field and in the afternoon, after they come home. Sometimes, their fields are far from home.

The woman cooks the meal for her family in the communal kitchen together with the other women. The food is also eaten there for women and children, but men eat their food in the men's hut served by their wife. So, a factor that influences to the quantity of food is the distribution within the family. This cultural factors may also play a role in food consumption during pregnancy in quantity as well as quality. It is striking, however, that no taboos or restrictions were mentioned by Dani men and women in relation to pregnancy, nevertheless pregnant women do consume enough calories and proteins.

Food can be made in two ways, either directly in the fire and ashes or in the cookpit. If potatoes are eaten, the Dani put the potatoes in the hot ashes. When there are also vegetables, it's cooked in the whole, in the ground with hot stones (*bakar batu*). Women and children start eating right after the cooking pit is opened. A large part of the vegetables and the biggest potatoes are set a part for men. According to that diet, there is a shortage of calories and protein in the daily food of women, because of their one folded diet.

LATENT CRISIS OF FOOD

During the months of dry season, May-June, there was shortage of food, and almost no potatoes were on sale in the market. Quite a few men have just started cleaning field again. There are also months in which there is not enough food coming from the fields. Since, the Dani don't store their food, and sweet potatoes can be kept only for a short time, there is hunger during these months. This situation regular in the dry season is a latent local crisis.

The latent local crisis was followed by the disaster of long day season in 1997/1998 where people in the high land of Jayawijaya mountain have crisis of food. They couldn't cultivate sweet potatoes. They were hit by hunger. Many people went through hungry. Among them were reported died of starvation, however they didn't know how to fight it. In addition, farmers in particular were careful in the management and very efficient on their food distribution and consumption. They eat only one time a day. Women have strategies to manage food consumption carefully.

The crisis is alternated with national crisis, which make more complicated thing to the hunger peoples. The GO's help the people by giving them a kind of cassava food called *gugik* (Java) something like crude cassava flour, to replace the staple food in Jayawijaya mountain. This program is reported successful and change the system of food pattern.

The NGO's (WATCH Project) also gives the improvement to decline the mortality and morbidity rates in Jayawijaya mountain by focussing on nutritional pro-gram related to general health program. This NGO's program has been taking place until now to improve development in Jayawijaya mountain.

DISCUSSION

The traditional aspect of gender discrimination in Baliem valley discrimination was institutionalized within all usual structures of society: family, the economy, education and

cultural systems. However, it's very easy to demonstrate the significant discrimination against women. Although, this may be partly true, there are aspects of current Dani society that encourage the continuation of this cultural tradition. They live modestly and depend on the natural environment.

Some specific factors influence the malnutrition in Jayawijaya. One thing is a chronic hunger as a consequence from a crisis of food production on the unfertile soil and simple technique, overloading of work and problem with staple food of belonging to the tuber group likes sweet potatoes, and also less frequency, variety and quantity of food are lacking.

The impact of the crisis was in serious on women's malnutrition because women (1) eat left over, (2) often go to the field all day without food, (3) work hard, (4) they miss sources of vitamins, fat and low in calorie-protein. It is because quite common for sweet potatoes and potatoes leaves as daily meal. Livelihood strategies maintained by women, which adjusted with the consumption pattern for look out the latent crisis. The impact of that strategies are that particularly women in worse health because quantitatively and qualitatively food consumption were very lacking of nutrients.

In the past and until at present, Dani women are still apprehensive about the condition as a marginal group in gender dimension. Although, they are still in that situation, mainly they don't care about the distinction because it is as a system in their tradition.

The daily meal substituted with cassava by GO's has been reported successful. We know that there is a difference in cooking cassava and sweet potatoes. It is not so easy on the cassava cooking process for Dani women. They always use a simple way for cooking sweet potato before; only burn or sometimes it's boiled. Nevertheless, Dani women should change suddenly on their patterns and food habits in different way. From the news, the planners said that the system

change is successful. I wonder with successful pro-gram in order to change the pattern and behavior on daily staple food has to acquire a taste of food as of a socially and culturally process. The study on social and cultural influences on food habits and food consumption pattern of families in Indonesia (The Research Teams of Center for Research and Development Nutrition Institute for Research and Development Ministry of Health and the National Development Planning Board/BAPPENAS, 1986:25) stated that from history that those particular communities had maintained their food habits inheritedly for a long time. My question that "what is the appropriate strategy in improving food pattern in Dani people? The three most significant reasons of Dani women to be able to survive are (1) they don't care and submissive, (2) they can't do more and apathetic, (3) continuously catching the economic consequence. So, crisis is not quite necessary. Is it true? To whom they will protest? May be they don't know, and how?

CONCLUSION

The important points make issues regarding women and crisis in Baliem valley that nutrition status worse. Particularly for women, some specific factors influencing in malnutrition are chronic hunger, overloading of work, problem with staple food, less of frequency, lack of variety and quality of food. The condition comes seriously during and after Indonesian crisis and the impact worsens the condition of women health. On the other hand, livelihood insecurity is the bad root cause of women health.

Improving nutrition program and behavior to change the food pattern should be taken into account to increase the health of women in Jayawijaya mountain. In the improvement, nutritional food should be added to supplement potato or cassava as a tuber group. The other consequences are subsistent change from the slash and burn agriculture to non-irrigated cultivation system. Behavior and technique

system on food production and food cooking have to be changed in related to development program. To improve the program, it is necessary to study environment and socio cultural feasibilities in order to increase the potential region in dealing with economic decline, especially economic and political crisis causing exacerbation of social imbalance, and the disintegration threat.

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