

## HOW TO MANAGE STUNTING PATIENTS THROUGH POLICY: USING COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Stunting is the occurrence of growth and development disorders experienced by children under five years of age as a result of experiencing malnutrition, repeated infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. The purpose of empowering human resources in this study is to increase knowledge and understanding, especially among mothers whose husbands work as traditional fishermen, about health and the need for nutritional intake for their children from infancy to the age of 5 years (toddlers). Empowerment of Fishermen's Wives as an effort to develop human resources reaches a broader dimension than just forming professional and skilled humans who are in accordance with the needs of the system to be able to contribute to the development process but emphasizes the importance of human abilities (empowerment), including the ability to actualize all their potential as human beings. The research method used is qualitative, using research techniques and tools, namely, interviews, non-participant observation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Post-empowerment, it is expected that mothers (fishermen's wives) know and understand about health, as well as changes in mindset and behavior, and follow up on the knowledge and understanding gained in empowerment.

**Keywords:** Empowerment; Stunting; Health.

### ABSTRAK

Stunting adalah terjadinya gangguan tumbuh kembang yang dialami anak usia balita sebagai akibat mengalami gizi buruk, infeksi berulang, dan stimulasi psikososial yang tidak memadai. Tujuan pemberdayaan SDM dalam penelitian ini untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan pemahaman, khususnya Ibu-ibu yang suaminya bekerja sebagai nelayan tradisional tentang kesehatan, dan kebutuhan asupan gizi kepada anaknya dari usia bayi sampai menjelang usia 5 tahun (Balita). Pemberdayaan kepada Istri Nelayan sebagai upaya pengembangan sumber daya manusia menjangkau dimensi yang lebih luas dari sekedar membentuk manusia profesional dan terampil yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan sistem untuk dapat memberikan kontribusinya di dalam proses pembangunan, tetapi lebih menekankan pentingnya kemampuan (empowerment) manusia, termasuk kemampuan untuk mengaktualisasikan segala potensinya sebagai manusia. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan teknik dan alat penelitian yaitu, wawancara, observasi non partisipatif, dan Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Pasca pemberdayaan diharapkan Ibu-ibu (istri nelayan), mengetahui dan memahami tentang kesehatan, juga terjadinya perubahan pola pikir dan perilaku serta menindaklanjuti pengetahuan dan pemahaman yang diperoleh dalam pemberdayaan.

**Keywords:** Pemberdayaan; Penderitaan Stunting; Kesehatan.

### BACKGROUND

Stunting is caused by malnutrition and infections that often occur in children (Wiguna et al., 2021). This condition increases child mortality, intelligence, and motor development, increases vulnerability

to disease, decreases productivity, inhibits economic growth, and increases poverty and social inequality (Priyono, 2020).

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disease, reduces productivity, inhibits economic growth, and increases poverty and social inequality (Norsanti, 2021).

Stunting is one of the nutritional problems experienced by toddlers in Indonesia today (Lolan & Sutriyawan, 2021). Where toddlers experience a condition of growth failure due to chronic malnutrition so that they are too short for their age or height, below the average of normal toddlers (Rahman et al., 2023). Stunting is caused by a lack of nutritional intake for a long time and repeated infections (Hardono & Lestari, 2024). Both factors are influenced by inadequate parenting from the womb to the first 1000 days of life (HPK) (Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2018).

The lives of residents in Pulau Limbung Village experience various problems, one of which is that the quality of residents' health is still low; even in 2021, there were 3 (three) positive resident children suffering from stunting (characteristics of physical conditions, body weight and length are not in accordance with age) (Haryanti & Hayati, 2019). The definition of stunting is "the occurrence of growth and development disorders experienced by children under five years of age as a result of experiencing malnutrition, repeated infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation (Torlesse et al., 2016). The impact of malnutrition can lead to overweight or obesity (Shauma & Purbaningrum, 2022).

In Indonesia, stunting is generally experienced in childhood, especially among toddlers, reaching 27.7 percent (Ministry of Health website, 2019). Spread across all provinces and regencies/cities in the

territory of Indonesia, one of which is in Kubu Raya Regency (West Kalimantan). The handling of stunting sufferers in Kubu Raya Regency is still focused on the Kubu Kubu Raya Regency Health Office. At the same time, other agencies or parties have not been much involved in assisting in reducing stunting sufferers, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The results of the study by the Indonesian Pediatric Association (IDAI, 2016) show there are 2 (two) factors as the cause of stunting cases (Pratidina et al., 2023): (a) environmental factors and (b) genetic factors. IDAI explains that environmental factors are one of the causes of short-term stature, for example, the nutritional status of a mother, feeding patterns to children, cleanliness of the surrounding environment, and the incidence of infections in children. Genetic and hormonal factors cause children to experience nutritional or protein deficiencies. Looking at the IDAI study, which is linked to the occurrence of stunting in residents in Pulau Limbung Village, the two factors above are indicated as causes.

The first factor, food patterns for children, turns out that some of the mothers do not pay attention to the need for a food menu that contains nutritional intake for their children from the age of toddlers. This reality is based on interviews with 10 mothers in the Forum Group Discussion (FGD). While the cleanliness of the surrounding environment, the results of observations (observations) of researchers show that the environmental conditions around the yard of most residents are less clean and less healthy. There are used items mixed with garbage (cans, boxes of used

beverage packaging, plastic bags used as shopping wrappers, and cardboard boxes) scattered in the front and back yards of residents' homes.

The second factor, genetic and hormonal (IDAI study results), children experiencing malnutrition, is closely related to the economic factors of the residents of Pulau Limbung Village, especially as fishermen looking for fish in the watershed area or around the "Limbung River", farmers, and livestock raisers, whose income (income) is classified as low, some of them are even poor. The factors that cause them to be poor are (1) too low education, (2) laziness to work, (3) limited natural resources, (4) limited employment opportunities, (5) limited capital, and (6) family burden" (Hartomo and Aziz in Dadan Hudyana, 2009). Residents of Pulau Limbung Village experience four of the six factors: limited natural resources, limited employment opportunities, and limited capital.

The reality of the lives of the residents of Pulau Limbung Village is described above. The results of interviews with informants (former village head, village midwife, Posyandu cadre coordinator, community leaders, and 10 mothers), as well as observations at the research location, revealed several factors causing stunting experienced by 3 (three) children from Pulau Limbung Village (in 2021); (a) the knowledge and understanding of parents, especially mothers about health is still low; (b) some mothers still pay less attention to the needs of the food menu that contains nutritional intake for their children, and; (c) the condition of the residential environment including in the yard of the

house is mostly unclean, unhealthy and uncomfortable to the eye.

Based on a study by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), Indonesia's stunting prevalence data is the third highest after the Southeast Asian Region, with a percentage above 36.40% after Timor Leste (50.50%) and India (38.40%). Thus, referring to the data that the prevalence rate of cases is still above 20%, it has shown that Indonesia has not achieved success in suppressing stunting cases that are lower than before (Information Data Center of the Ministry of Health. RI 2018). Meanwhile, the results of a study by the Indonesian Pediatric Association (IDAI) revealed the factors that cause stunting in Indonesian children: (a) environmental and (b) genetic factors. Environmental factors, maternal nutritional status, feeding patterns to children, environmental hygiene, and the incidence of infections in children. Genetic and hormonal factors, mostly due to malnutrition (Internet, accessed April 7, 2023). Since 2011, the Indonesian government has taken part in a global movement called the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN Movement) under the coordination of the Secretary General of the United Nations (Widodo, 2021).

Traditional fishermen in the West Kalimantan region are very slow to change if measured by the standards of today's Western society (Adam, 1990 in Sztompka, 2008). Traditional fishermen also illustrate this reality in Pulau Limbung Village, whose area of operation is in the watershed area, using fishing gear "fine plastic nets, nets and Bubu (fish traps)". In terms of work methods, equipment, and means of fishing, they are still traditional; the characteristics of

a traditional system are (a) Less growth-oriented, (b) Less advanced in technology or still simple, (c) Less communication carried out by system members with outsiders, and; (d) Less able to put themselves or see themselves in the role of others, especially the role of people outside the system (Rogers and Schoemaker, in Jabal Tarik Ibrahim, 2003). These four characteristics are experienced by traditional fishermen in Pulau Limbung Village, which has an impact on their lives, most of which are poor.

Effendi (2005) defines poverty as "unqualified human resources, and vice versa, namely improving human resources contains efforts to eliminate poverty" (Effendi, 2005). What Effendi stated is almost the same as that experienced by traditional fishermen in Pulau Limbung Village, which is "part of the poverty experienced by the people of West Kalimantan, that the number of poor people in West Kalimantan is 394,170 people or 8.74 percent of the total population, and that figure is the highest among the four provinces in Kalimantan" (BPS. et al., 2014). The low level of income obtained by traditional fishermen affects the ability to prosper their family members, Mubyarto (2001), poverty is "a situation in which the values obtained by a person legally are insufficient to meet the needs of life properly".

In terms of community empowerment, Mardikanto et al. (2015) explain that empowerment is directed at developing human resources (in rural areas) and creating business opportunities in accordance with the wishes of the community. In relation to this research, the

empowerment of Istiri traditional fishermen of Pulau Limbung Village is focused on aspects of (a) Human, (b) Business, (c) Environment, and (d) Institutional (Mardikanto et al., 2015). These four aspects are related to each other. Empowerment of human resources on health is very important because health is a normal state in a person who has no complaints or absence of symptoms of the disease that are medically identified during the examination process (White, Internet, accessed, April 12, 2023).

## **METHOD**

This research was designed systematically using a qualitative method or approach. The qualitative approach explains the main phenomena exploited in the research, research participants, and research locations (Creswell, 2010). Research techniques and tools: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), review of documents and documentation (taking photos) on the objects studied and explored. Determination of informants to be interviewed using the Snowball Technique as informants in this study: 10 mothers (traditional fishermen's wives), the Village Secretary, the Head of the auxiliary health center, the Former Village Head and the Former Head of Kabau Makmur Hamlet (period 2012-2022), Head of Kabau Makmur Hamlet, Village Midwife, one (Posyandu et al.). The data analysis technique refers to the opinion of Milles and Huberman (1992, in Afrizal, 2014), which explains simultaneously reducing data, presenting analyzed data, and drawing conclusions.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION****Handling Stunting Patients Through Human Resources (HR) Empowerment**

Empowerment, in this case, is an economic development concept that summarizes social values; this concept reflects a new paradigm of development, which is "people-centered participatory, empowering and sustainable" (Chamber, 1987s). The purpose of empowering human resources in this study is to increase knowledge and understanding, especially among mothers whose husbands work as traditional fishermen, about health and the need for nutritional intake for their children from infancy to the age of 5 years (toddlers).

Empowerment of mothers as "Human resource development efforts reach a broader dimension than just forming professional and skilled human beings who are in accordance with the needs of the system to be able to contribute to the development process, but emphasize the importance of human capabilities (empowerment), including the ability to actualize all their potential as human beings (Tjokrowinoto, 1996, in Soetomo, 2010). After empowerment, it is expected that mothers (fishermen's wives) know and understand about health, as well as changes in mindset and behavior and follow up on the knowledge and understanding gained in empowerment. The form of activities in HR empowerment is proposed: (1) Counseling and (2) Guidance on Fulfilling Children's Nutritional Needs".

Counseling, the material presented; (a) knowledge and understanding of health and procedures, as well as types of foods that contain nutritional intake, must be served to children from the age of 3 months

to the age of 5 years; (b) introduction to the 4 (four) pillars of balanced nutrition and encourage consuming varied foods (4 healthy 5 perfect), fruits, and milk; familiarize clean living behavior, do physical activity, and monitor body weight regularly in normal conditions. Guidance on Fulfilling Children's Nutritional Needs suggests that Village Midwives and Posyandu cadres introduce and practice (a) the procedures for preparing a balanced diet for pregnant women and mothers who are breastfeeding their babies and (b) the type of diet for children aged 0-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-12 months, and 12-24 months.

The advice delivered is "an effort to develop community independence and welfare by increasing knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, abilities, awareness and utilizing resources through the establishment of policies, programs, activities and assistance in accordance with the main problems and priority needs of the community" (Bhinardi, 2017). Bhinardi's opinion, as a reference for researchers to increase knowledge and understanding, also makes changes in the mindset and behavior of mothers after participating in activities. Human behavior is divided into 3 (three) types: (1) Behavior in the form of knowledge, namely by knowing the situation and stimuli; (2) Behavior in the form of attitudes, namely emotional responses to circumstances or stimuli from outside the subject (environment), and; (3) Behavior in the form of action, which is already concrete in the form of actions against situations and a stimulus from outside (Setiyorini, 2008: 34). The three human behaviors put forward by Setiyorini are also reflected in the lives of residents of

Pulau Limbung Village, for example most mothers are still concerned about providing a food menu that contains much nutritional intake for their children.

### **Handling Stunting Sufferers Through Empowerment of Traditional Fishermen's Businesses in Pulau Limbung Village**

Empowerment of traditional fishermen and their wives is a way for people, communities, and organizations to be directed so that they are able to control or have power over their lives (Rappaprt, 1984, in Mardikanto, 2015). The objectives of empowerment are: (1) increasing the income of traditional fishermen as their main livelihood and (2) fulfilling the daily needs of their family members. Therefore, empowerment is implemented "to shape individuals and communities to become independent" (Sulistiyani, 2004). Independence in thinking, acting and controlling what will be done. For the realization of independence through a gradual process so as to gain the ability to increase their income. Income, in this case, is "the amount of income received by the population for their work performance during a certain period, either daily, weekly, monthly or annually" (Sukirno, 2006).

Meanwhile, to fulfill the needs of daily life, fishermen need to increase their income. Income in economics "is the maximum value that can be consumed by a person in a period by expecting the same situation at the end of the period as the original situation (John J. Wild, 2003). The needs of life in the family always change. The changes they feel are not only related to the fulfillment of basic needs such as "food,

clothing, housing, education and health care (Edi Suharto, 2005). Rather, the demands of social life needs and secondary needs are in accordance with the "conditions of life or a state of well-being, namely the fulfillment of physical, spiritual and social needs" (Edi Suharto, 2005).

In the form of business empowerment activities directed at traditional fishermen's wives, researchers propose (a) developing a new business of cultivating (planting) various types of plant seeds in Polybags and (b) collaborating with various parties at the Village or District level. Developing the business of "cultivating (planting) various types of plant seeds in Polybags" is part of the national community empowerment program (PNPM-Mandiri) through business capital assistance to develop agribusiness businesses in accordance with agricultural potential. The business is suitable for mothers (fishermen's wives), considering the geographical condition of the Pulau Limbung Village area, which is in the lowlands and very close to the watershed. Flooding often occurs during heavy rains (river water overflows).

The business of cultivating (planting) various types of plant seeds in Polybags has not yet been carried out; therefore, the researcher hopes that institutions in Pulau Limbung Village, such as combined farmer groups (Gapoktan), family welfare empowerment (PKK), will play a more motivating role for mothers. "Motivation is a condition that moves a person to be able to achieve the goals of his motives" (Amirulah, 2004). These activities, in addition to reducing poverty and unemployment through the development of

agribusiness in rural areas in accordance with regional conditions, are also "the development of an entrepreneurial spirit related to optimizing business opportunities based on and supported by local advantages" (Mardikanto, 2015).

They are fostering the business of fishermen and their wives to improve the economy by giving traditional fishermen's wives the freedom to determine the type of business to be planted. In addition, fishermen's wives are directed to instill modern cultural values today, such as hard work, frugality, openness, responsibility and others, which are the main part of empowerment efforts (Mardikanto, 2015). They also direct these fishermen's wives to realize the efficiency of management or expenditure arrangements accompanied by a frugal life, not consumptive and wasteful. Likewise, in fulfilling household expenses, I prioritized the main needs of family members, such as food, clothing, health, and education needs.

The importance of increasing the income of Pulau Limbung Village residents, including those who make a living as fishermen, the Village Head seeks to collaborate with private companies which are part of "human activities or efforts in fulfilling the needs (needs and desires) of their lives" (Noor, 2010). All human activities or activities related to economic issues, for example, which relate to the fulfillment of human needs and wants in life, are a goal to be achieved from empowerment "to form individuals and communities to become independent" (Sulistiyani, 2004). This independence is in addition to the independence of trying and controlling what has been obtained, and

independence is not always dependent on others.

The Head of Pulau Limbung Village has cooperated. It is currently being realized with 2 (two) oil palm plantation companies, namely PT Sawit Jaya Makmur (SJM) and PT Kusuma Alam Sari (KAS). Both companies operate around Pulau Limbung Village or within the Sungai Raya District. The form of cooperation is the recruitment of local labor from Pulau Limbung villagers (men and women) to work in the two companies. Their employment status is positioned as "laborers" (daily workers). In one week, they work 4 (four) days, entering work at 07.00 a.m., then resting at 11.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m., and then re-entering at 12.00 p.m. - 2.00 p.m. The salary received per day is Rp 105,000, and the salary is paid once a month (every 15th of the following month).

### **Handling Stunting Sufferers Through Environmental Empowerment**

Researchers have observed the alarming condition of the environment in the residential location of Pulau Limbung Village and suggested environmental empowerment. The objectives of environmental empowerment in the residential areas of Pulau Limbung Village: (1) Increase the knowledge of Pulau Limbung Village residents, including mothers, about environmental cleanliness is very important for health, and (2) Encourage residents of Pulau Limbung Village to create a clean, healthy and comfortable environment. Maintaining "environmental cleanliness is inseparable from human life and is a fundamental element in the science of health and prevention. (Laila, accessed,

November 9, 2018) <http://laila-kebersihanlingkungan.blogspot.com>).

Humans really need a living environment that is clean, healthy and comfortable and does not become a nesting place for common animals and viruses as a source of diseases such as dengue fever, vomiting, severe diarrhea and itching on human skin.

The creation of a clean, healthy and comfortable living environment can (1) avoid diseases caused by an unhealthy environment; (2) make the environment cooler; (3) make it free from air pollution; (4) water becomes cleaner and safer to drink, and; (5) more calm in carrying out daily activities ". (Email This Blog! Share to Twitter Share to Facebook Share to Pinterest, January 2012. The creation of a clean, healthy and comfortable living environment is not easy, it depends on "human behavior is one of the main factors in realizing individual health status" (Sudarma, 2008), including health around the location of settlements or the yard of each house.

The first form of activity that needs to be carried out to empower the environment in the residential area of Pulau Limbung Village is First Counseling. The material that must be delivered to residents and mothers: (1) explaining that environmental cleanliness is very important for human health; (2) explaining the impact caused by an unclean environment on human health, and (3) explaining environmental conservation by planting various types of productive plants, in addition to protecting the home yard, is beneficial to increase the family economy. As a reference for the implementation of counseling (Law No. 32/2009), it is stated:

"as a unity, and living things including humans and the welfare of humans and other living things". Therefore, maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability are two things that cannot be separated from human life, and both are fundamental elements when studied in health science.

Secondly, carrying out a cleanliness movement aims to keep the environment clean, healthy and well-maintained. This kind of activity is rarely carried out by residents, with stunting experienced by 3 residents' children (in 2021), so researchers recommend and encourage residents, as well as mothers, to initiate Environmental Cleanliness Movement activities, as the motto "Environmental Development". For example, gotong-royong (community service) cleans up used goods and garbage scattered in the yard of the house by planting or burning.

Third, the Productive and Useful Tree Planting Movement activities like this are also rarely carried out by residents of Pulau Limbung Village. Hence, the researcher suggests that the production tree planting movement is very necessary. This activity aims to keep the environment around the house yard clean, healthy, comfortable, and beautiful and to create a cool atmosphere. The types of trees planted have a relatively long life span, produce quickly (shorter harvest time), and the results are easy to sell.

### **Handling Stunting Patients Through Institutional Empowerment in Pulau Limbung Village**

The objectives of institutional empowerment in Pulau Limbung Village are: (1) to increase the role of institutions in



the development of health infrastructure and facilities; (2) to increase the role of institutions in handling health problems and stunting experienced by children of Pulau Limbung Village residents, and; (3) to increase the role of institutions in developing the businesses of Pulau Limbung Village residents. Based on the results of interviews, not all institutions at the village level have been involved and contributed to these three matters, except for the Village Government of Pulau Limbung, in accordance with its authority referring to Law No.6/2014, article 18. The Village Head organizes Village Government, implementation of Village Development, Village Community Development, and Village Community Empowerment based on Community Initiatives, original rights, and Village customs. Article 26 (paragraph 1) emphasizes that the Village Head organizes the Village Government and implements Village Development, Village Community Development, and Village Community Empowerment.

The role of the village government in the development of health infrastructure and facilities in the form of activities is to facilitate and fight for the Kubu Raya Regency Government and the private sector at the village level. Within the Institution, there is a set of behaviors expected by others for a person according to their position in a system (Moeliono, 2018). Through the struggle of the Village Head, with reference to Government Regulation No. 43/2014 (article 119, paragraph 2), "proposing the needs of Village Development to the Regency / City Government). Alhamdulillah, as a result of the hard work of the Village Head and the support of the

Kubu Raya Regency Government, the construction of health infrastructure in the form of a Village Health Center (Puskesmas) was realized in as many as 2 (two) units.

The role of Pulau Limbung Village Institutions in handling the health problems of residents and stunting sufferers by 3 children of residents (in 2021) only the Village Government has concerns, while other institutions have no contribution. The Village Government's activities include: (a) providing assistance in the form of allocating funds from the village budget (ADD) for the medical expenses of 3 children suffering from stunting and buying additional food ingredients that contain nutritional intake, which is managed by the Village Midwife together with Posyandu cadres, and; (b) improving social services on health by activating Posyandu cadres at the village and hamlet levels to monitor the health of residents and their children, and always consulting with the Head of the Puskesmas of Sungai Raya Sub-district and the Head of the Puskesmas of the Sub-assistant unit in Sungai Asam Village, Sungai Raya Sub-district, and with 2 (two) midwives on duty in Pulau Limbung Village.

As for the role of institutions in developing the businesses of Pulau Limbung Village residents, the Village Government cooperates with the oil palm plantation companies operating around Pulau Limbung Village. One form of activity is to accommodate and expand the marketing network for the results of the community's business, both the results of long-established businesses and new businesses (cultivation) of various types of plants that mothers will develop. In addition,

Vol.10, No.2, 2024  
Doi: 10.24198/cosmogov.v10i2.56524  
<http://jurnal.unpad.ac.id/cosmogov/index>

the company is willing to recruit villagers (men and women) as local workers (day laborers) at 2 (two) companies, PT Sawit Jaya Makmur (SJM) and PT Kusuma Alam Sari (KAS). Work 4 (four) days a week, enter work at 07.00 a.m. and go home at 14.00 a.m. The salary received per day is Rp 105,000,-.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to address the issue of stunting in children under five in Indonesia, which is caused by malnutrition, recurrent infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. The research uses a qualitative approach, using techniques such as interviews, non-participant observation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The study focuses on improving the health of children in the Pulau Limbung Village area, which has a high rate of stunting.

The Indonesian Pediatric Association (IDAI) identifies two factors contributing to stunting in children: environmental factors and genetic factors. Environmental factors include the child's status, food availability, environmental hygiene, and risk of infection. Genetic and hormonal factors are also significant. The

World Health Organization (WHO) reports that stunting prevalence in Indonesia is high, with 36.40% in Southeast Asia and 38.40% in the West. Traditional practices in the West have been criticized for their lack of change, including lack of guidance on nutrition, lack of technology, communication with local authorities, and the ability to harm others.

The study explores the impact of traditional education on children's health and nutritional needs using qualitative methods. It focuses on the role of traditional education in improving knowledge and understanding among children, especially those working as traditional health educators. The study also emphasizes the importance of addressing environmental issues in the development of Pulau Limbung River Valley Village. Institutional empowerment in Pulau Limbung Village focuses on developing health infrastructure and facilities, handling health problems and stunting experienced by children, and increasing businesses. The Village Government cooperates with oil palm plantation companies operating around Pulau Limbung Village, accommodating and expanding the marketing network for community businesses.

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Vol.10, No.2, 2024

Doi: 10.24198/cosmogov.v10i2.56524

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