

TRANSMIGRATION IN JAMBI PROVINCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL POLICYMAKERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the current state of ex-transmigration villages and regional policy makers' perceptions regarding transmigration's existence and sustainability. The study was conducted in Jambi Province. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Primary data collection was carried out through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with policymakers at the provincial and district levels. According to the study's results, the implementation of the transmigration program in addition to showing various successes also resulted in a number of negative excesses for the destination areas. These negative excesses are mainly related to the disparity between the transmigration area and its surrounding area, the low leverage of the transmigration area on the surrounding area, and the potential emergence of poverty in the transmigration area. Related to this, future revitalization of the transmigration program must focus on the development of transmigration areas that are functionally related to the surrounding area, based on the expertise required by the local area, and increasing the role of the community and private sector in the diversification transmigrant business patterns.

Keywords: Regional autonomy; Rural development; Transmigration.

INTRODUCTION

Transmigration as one of Indonesia's population and regional development programs has been going on for quite a long time. It began with the Dutch East Indies' reign in 1905 (at that time, transmigration was known as "colonization"). During the reign of the Dutch East Indies (1905–1941), the primary purpose was not only to reduce the population density of the island of Java but also to meet the labor demands of areas outside of Java. Furthermore, under the Japanese regime (1942–1945), the transmigration program was intended to forcibly transfer Javanese to other islands in Indonesia to work for Japanese defense goals (Keyfitz & Nitisastro 1955, referred to in Saleh, 1982; Junaidi, 2012; Dahlan, 2014).

After independence, at the beginning of the Old Order, under Government Regulation No. 56 of 1958 on the Principles of Transmigration Administration (amended by Government Regulation No. 13 of 1959 on the Principles of Transmigration Administration) and Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 29 of 1960 on the Principles of Transmigration, the main purpose of transmigration was to increase the level of security, prosperity, and welfare for all people and to strengthen the nation. In 1965, Presidential Regulation No. 5 of 1965 concerning the National Transmigration Movement stated that the purpose of transmigration was to strengthen the revolution's defense and security and to increase economic development activities, particularly food production (Manay, 2016).

During the New Order era, the purpose of transmigration shifted to non-demographic purposes (Sukmawati, 2016). Transmigration aimed to improve living

standards, regional development, demographic balance, equitable development throughout Indonesia, utilization of natural resources and human labor, national unity, and integrity, and strengthen national security and resiliency (Law Number 3 of 1972).

In the era of regional autonomy, transmigration remains one of the development models. Nonetheless, its implementation faced obstacles due to changes in governance. The implementation of decentralization and autonomy complicates the implementation of transmigration. Regional autonomy has led to a shift of transmigration administration power to the regions. Consequently, its execution is also fully adapted to the region's specific characteristics and conditions.

Law No. 15 of 1997 concerning Transmigration, which was renewed by Law Number 29 of 2009 concerning Amendments to Law Number 15 of 1997 concerning Transmigration, has anticipated these changes. The legislation specifies that the objectives of transmigration are as follows: (1) to improve the welfare of transmigrants and the surrounding community; (2) to increase the distribution of regional development; and (3) to strengthen the national unity and integrity.

However, in the era of autonomy, the placement of transmigrants has decreased. At the end of the New Order (Pelita VI), the average placement of transmigrants was 350,064 families per year. In contrast, during the era of autonomy (2000–2004), the average placement of transmigrants was only 87,571 families per year. This drop continued from 2005 to 2009, when only 41,853 families per year, and from 2010 to 2014 to 5,731 families per year. Furthermore, during the 2015-2021 period, the total number of transmigrants placed was only 251 families (Kemenakertrans 2015; Kemendes PDTT, 2022).

In addition to the limited availability of land, the decline in the performance of transmigration in the regions is also caused by the weakness of the institutions for implementing transmigration in the era of autonomy in the regions and the low regional initiative in building transmigration for reasons of cost (Anharudin *et al.* 2008). The declining performance of transmigration was mostly due to the aforementioned issues. In some regions, the transmigration program is no longer a policy priority. This is due to the fact that the program has only succeeded in improving the welfare of transmigrants and tends to grow as an enclave area, contributing nothing to the growth of the surrounding area.

One of the transmigration placement areas in Indonesia is Jambi Province. The placement of transmigrants in this region began in 1940. Based on the 2014 data, the number of transmigrants reached 100,260 families (Kemenakertrans 2015). This figure has made Jambi Province one of the main areas for transmigrant placement.

However, Jambi Province similarly declined in transmigration performance after the regional autonomy. In the New Order (Pelita I – VI), the average placement of transmigration was 3,568 families per year, which decreased in the era of regional autonomy (2000 – 2021) to an average of only 459 families per year. (Kemenakertrans 2015; Kemendes PDTT, 2022). As previously stated, this drop cannot be separated from various problems in the national implementation of transmigration.

The growth of transmigration still offers opportunities to foster regional development in Jambi Province due to the fact that the population density of this region is relatively low. According to the 2020 Population Census data, the population density of Jambi Province was 71 people/km², which was less than half of the national figure of 141 people/km² (BPS, 2021a; BPS, 2021b). Although in general, there is no land in a relatively wide expanse to develop transmigration settlements such as the pattern of the Old Order period, it is still possible for transmigration development to be carried out spread over land that has not been utilized or in areas with very low population density.

In terms of business opportunities, Jambi Province also has significant development potential, particularly in agriculture, including food crops and plantations. In the last five years (2017 - 2021), the average contribution of the agricultural sector to the total GRDP is 29.57 percent (BPS, 2022)

This study aims to: 1) Analyze the current state of ex-transmigration villages in Jambi Province, and 2) Analyze the perception of regional policymakers on the existence and sustainability of the transmigration program.

This study is expected to be useful: 1) As a source of input in the framework of formulating and developing policies for implementing transmigration in accordance with the demands of the era of regional autonomy, distribution, and population and equitable development; 2) As a reference for future research, particularly concerning the development of transmigration as a program for population distribution and equitable development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The data comprises of both primary and secondary data. Primary data are the perceptions and views of policymakers regarding the transmigration program. Secondary data pertain to transmigration in Jambi Province and are supported by previous research results.

The primary data was collected through a focus group discussion (FGD) with policymakers regarding transmigration at the provincial and district levels. Policymakers who serve as key informants are the Head of the Regional Planning and Development Agency, the Head of the Community and Village Empowerment Agency, and the Head of Manpower and Transmigration Office.

Two locations, Tebo Regency and Merangin Regency were chosen as research samples. The selection of these two regions was determined by the size of the transmigration area and the length of time that transmigration has taken place in this area. Furthermore, secondary data were collected through the document from the relevant agencies or websites.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Current State of Ex-Transmigration Villages in Jambi Province

1. Transmigration of Plantation Patterns versus Food Crops

The main crop commodities in transmigration settlement units or *Unit Pemukiman Transmigrasi* (UPT) in Jambi Province are divided into three types of commodities: rubber plantations, oil palm plantations, and food crops (especially rice). At the beginning of the placement, the majority of UPTs (61.63 percent) in Jambi Province had oil palm plantations as their principal agricultural products, followed by UPTs with rubber plantations (26.47 percent) and rice crops (11.63 percent).

Types of primary crops in UPTs significantly affect the attainment of transmigrants' welfare and the development of ex-transmigration villages. Based on information gathered from stakeholders, it was concluded that ex-transmigration villages with food crops tend to be less developed and have a lower standard of living than villages with rubber or palm plantations. Some UPTs with food crops even showed a lower economic level than the surrounding villages, creating new "pockets" of poverty. The emergence of these pockets of poverty was one of the reasons for the poor acceptance of the transmigration program in the era of regional autonomy in Jambi Province. Regional policymakers believed that the failure of some UPTs with food crops had increased the burden on the regions to enhance people's welfare and reduce poverty.

The low degree of success of the UPTs with food crops is consistent with the findings of Junaidi (2012) research, which indicated that ex-transmigration villages with the highest to lowest levels of development were those with rubber plantations followed by oil palm plantation and food crops. Food crops are varieties of plants that need advanced handling and complicated treatment techniques. In addition, handling crops requires capital, and its growth is highly dependent on weather, pests, diseases, and

soil fertility. The selling of excess production is a further issue in the food crops production. A lack of support from the processing industry during harvest causes a decline in selling prices. This condition considerably impacts the unpredictable fluctuations between earnings and losses. In its economic sense, farmers always expect to generate a profit and minimize losses in their business. Profits and losses do not always have to be in the form of expenses but can also be in the form of opportunity costs such as time and effort. This tendency is demonstrated by learning about the surrounding area, understanding the land's characteristics and mainstay commodities, and marketing products that bring greater profit. Food crop commodities in ex-transmigration villages are unprofitable at the moment. Therefore, most villages that began cultivating food crops have shifted their mainstay commodity to more valuable plantation crops such as rubber, oil palm, and cocoa.

The land conversion from food crops (rice) to plantations also occurs in various areas, such as Bengkulu, Riau, and North Sumatra (Astuti *et al.*, 2011; Saili & Purwadio, 2012; Siagian *et al.*, 2015). The occurrence of land conversion is not only due to economic factors but also due to government policies that prioritize plantation development (Daulay *et al.*, 2016; Sa'ad, 2012; Sriartha & Windia, 2015).

2. The phenomenon of conversion of yard land versus food self-sufficiency

In every transmigration pattern, the transmigrants are allocated a yard in addition to land for business activities (business land I and II). The yard was meant for home construction and cultivating food crops. It allowed transmigrants to meet their basic needs through harvesting food crops before their first and second business lands generated an output. Furthermore, it was envisaged that by cultivating food crops in their own yard, they would become food self-sufficient.

However, current conditions implied that their yards were no longer managed for food crops. It has been converted into plantation land for oil palm or rubber plants. This circumstance increased the burden on local government to achieve food self-sufficiency.

3. Land Fragmentation: New Potential Poverty in Destination Areas.

Transmigration in Jambi Province has been a long time since 1950. It has resulted in the current ex-transmigration villages, the majority of which are no longer inhabited by the first generation of transmigrants but by the second and even third generation (the children of first-generation transmigrants). In addition, land segmentation was found, such as splitting initial land for the second and third generations. This finding is also supported by Junaidi (2012) study of four ex-transmigration settlements in Jambi Province. More than half of the families (61.46 percent) no longer possessed an area of the initial size. The fragmentation not only occurred for the yards (divided into second and third-generation housing) but also for business land I and II.

Land fragmentation or shrinking agricultural land ownership reduced the scale of farmers' businesses (Umyati, 2022). Small land is complicated because some technologies require a certain size of land to operate optimally. They are inefficient when applied to small-sized land, and business management becomes less cost-effective. Furthermore, the decrease in business scale will increase the number of landless farmers (farmers that do not have their land). It will also result in less productive land and encourage farmers to sell their holdings. In other words, while transmigrants have succeeded in improving human resources quality for future generations, there is also new potential for poverty in certain areas. At present, it is becoming apparent in ex-transmigration settlements that many landless farmers are second or third generation. In urban areas, these generations were also laborers in construction works.

4. Monoculture Patterns, Price Fluctuations, Replanting and Poverty Threats

The monoculture farming pattern applied to transmigration areas has been considered to have influenced transmigrant welfare instability, particularly for transmigrants working on oil palm and rubber plantations. The prices of those two commodities fluctuate greatly and are strongly reliant on the amount of international demand. In many cases, a sharp decline in prices has had a negative impact on the socioeconomic lives of those living in ex-transmigration villages.

Monoculture cropping patterns have advantages because plant management is easier, more efficient, and can reduce maintenance costs (Pramono *et al.*, 2010; Darwis, 2017). However, this monoculture cropping pattern is susceptible to price fluctuations (Tapi & Setiawan, 2018).

Aside from price fluctuations, another problem occurred due to the monoculture pattern related to land replanting. Some ex-transmigration villages in Jambi Province, particularly rubber and oil palm plantations, have been inhabited for more than 30 years, while these plantations have an optimal production cycle of \pm 30 years. Therefore, replanting is crucial in these settlements. However, no replanting scheme has ensured that the level of community welfare will not decline throughout the replanting process until there is an output. The absence of a replanting scheme is predicted to impact people's welfare in the transmigration areas negatively.

Perceptions of Regional Policy Makers

1. Leverage of the Transmigration Area to the Surrounding Area.

Transmigration resulted in the establishment of new villages in Jambi Province. Furthermore, transmigration area in Jambi Province had been identified as having the potential to spur the expansion of new *kecamatan* (sub-districts) and *kabupaten* (regencies). Out of five new regencies in Jambi Province, four regencies were established by the development in transmigration areas. The new regencies are Tebo Regency, Sarolangun Regency, Muaro Jambi Regency and East Tanjung Jabung Regency.

However, based on the opinion of regional policymakers, the existing transmigration areas have not been able to boost regional development and the welfare of the surrounding community. Perdana *et al.* (2016) showed that numerous transmigration settlements were exclusive. It resulted in a significant discrepancy between the transmigration area and its surrounding area (non-transmigration). It existed in terms of both regional development and people's well-being. If this situation persists, it could lead to animosity and conflict between communities. These problems were also prevalent in other areas, such as Lampung and Sampit (Sarmita, 2017; Manay, 2016; Miyanti *et al.*, 2017; Budiando, 2020).

Essentially, the establishment of transmigration settlements had been designed hierarchically from the smallest unit, *Satuan Pemukiman* (SP) or Settlement Unit, to larger units: *Satuan Kawasan Pemukiman* (SKP) or Settlement Area Unit/*Lokasi Pemukiman Transmigrasi* (LPT) or Transmigration Settlement Location, and *Wilayah Pengembangan Parsial* (WPP)/*Wilayah Pengembangan Transmigrasi* (WPT) or Partial Development Area/Transmigration Development Area. These units support each other and are integrated in the central nodes of production and distribution of goods and services to establish economic growth and regional administration center.

In this regard, LPT/SKP consisted of 5-7 SPs. In the post-autonomy era, LPT did include not only SPs/PTBs (*Pemukiman Transmigrasi Baru* or New Transmigration Settlement) but also PTAs (existing transmigration settlements or ex-transmigration villages), PDSs (surrounding villages), and *Sisipan* (areas incorporated to PTAs or PDSs). Furthermore, in accordance with Law No. 15 of 1997, one of SPs in an SKP will become the main village or hub of a new urban area. Although there were no clear boundaries for the main village, the tendency was to place it on the SP/PTB or PTA.

WPT consisted of 3-5 LPTs/SKPs, one of which is a "city" that has generally developed and has high accessibility. Moreover, it was oriented in such a way that it might create a distribution service node that served as a development center (WPT

center). The WPT center provides a distribution service node gateway as an entry and exit gate for imports and exports to the neighboring WPTs.

The central place theory, which states that there is a hierarchy of places and that each central place is supported by a number of smaller locations providing resources, is the basis for this hierarchical development of transmigration settlements. Transmigration also used the theory of growth centers for its development, as the purpose is to create new growth centers in the regions. It was expected that as the communities expand, they would become growth centers capable of stimulating large-scale expansion in the surrounding area via inter-industrial and demand-supply functional linkages.

In practice, however, this did not occur as anticipated since the areas outside the transmigration settlements to be centers of production process services (providers of inputs, financial services, product processing, and marketing) could not fulfill the desired role. This was due to the lack of proper infrastructure, facilities, and institutions in regions outside transmigration settlements to support a service center. If it is seen further, the problem resulted from poor coordination for development among relevant institutions. The initial design involved participation from all sides, including transmigration villages, ex-transmigration villages, and their surrounding areas. However, there was no coordination in terms of its implementation. Therefore, the establishment of transmigration settlements did not go in line with the development in other villages within the transmigration area. Suppose there is no strong engagement between the core (growth center) and the periphery. In that case, using the growth center theory in regional development will not achieve a significant expansion in the surrounding area. Therefore, the government must monitor the growth center development through its policies or interventions.

In addition to the economic interaction, regional policymakers believed that the current transmigration development had not properly encouraged community engagement between the transmigration area and its surrounding. As a result, there was a low frequency of interaction between communities and a failure to make transmigration a medium of "knowledge/skills transfer". The low degree of social interaction was mostly attributable to the lack of efforts to generate social capital at the community level, where one of the essential characteristics is network linkage. There are no established forums, institutions/associations/organizations that bring the community together. Furthermore, during the assistance phase (adjustment stage), aides or assistances were only provided to transmigrants in order to them to be able to adapt to their environment socioeconomically, culturally, and physically. There was no similar assistance for the community in the surrounding villages. As a result, the surrounding communities adjusted poorly to the new culture of transmigrants, and trust between local people and newcomers were not able to form at a later stage.

2. Incomplete Delegation of Authority: Whose Ex-Transmigration Villages Belong?

Transmigration was carried out in three stages: preparation, placement, and coaching/assistance. During the preparation stage, the location of settlements, the commodities to be developed, the pattern of transmigration, residential infrastructure, and transmigration candidates, including training provision were determined and carried out. Following the first stage was the deployment of transmigrants in designated areas. The next stage was coaching or assistance, which consisted of three sub-stages: adjustment, strengthening, and development (Danarti, 2014). During the adjustment phase, transmigrants were encouraged to quickly adapt to the new environment (social, economic, cultural, and physical) to live in their new place. In the next sub-stage, transmigrants' capacity to properly manage production assets was strengthened in order to fulfill their daily needs. In the development phase, they were encouraged to develop the community and its potential by active involvement to expand their business and sustainably enhance their life. Thus, they can fulfill their

daily needs independently and are prepared to enter the marketable surplus stage after training. This also implies that, within the transmigration system, transmigrants should have efficiently used their yards and business land. The assistance or coaching stage lasted five to six years, after which the transmigration area was handed over to the regional government as part and integral element of the regional area (Wibowo 2001).

Transfer of the transmigration area included the transfer of existing infrastructure in its area. In other words, the responsibility for infrastructure maintenance passed from the ministry to the regional. In this context, regional policymakers regarded this transfer to have increased the region's budgetary burden. This explained that the lack of feeling of ownership of the transmigration area is an implication of minimal involvement in establishing the settlements. Consequently, despite the fact that transmigration areas are the primary contributors to GRDP in some *kabupaten* or regions in Jambi Province, maintenance of their infrastructure (particularly market access roads) has not become a priority for their spending. This subsequently influences the damage of market access roads, which disrupts the product trade system.

3. Land-Based versus Skill-Based Transmigration: Future Prospects.

Given the low population density in Jambi Province and the need for human resources for regional development, it can be concluded that the transmigration program is still relevant to be implemented in this region. However, the execution of the land-based program, with the land division for each person around 2-3 hectares and the required number of families between 300 and 500 for each UPT, is nearly impossible. There are two primary reasons: First, no vast empty land is available in Jambi Province, and the available land is scattered and insufficient to build a transmigration settlement unit. Second, there is competition for land with plantation entrepreneurs, despite the fact that there are several locations of suitable size. For local governments, granting permits to the large private plantations is more profitable since it may contribute to PAD and GRDP faster than allocating land for transmigration settlements.

Based on these considerations, regional policymakers believe that skill-based transmigration is the most relevant in Jambi Province, particularly in the skills of processing agricultural products, including plantations, food crops, livestock, and fisheries. The such pattern does not require a vast area of land. The land allocated to transmigrants will be a yard for housing and cultivating food crops to meet their daily needs. Business land is deemed to be unnecessary because businesses likely to be established by them are non-agricultural. This pattern also allows for the execution of *transmigrasi sisipan* or interspersed transmigration that does not form new transmigration settlement units. It will be done by slipping transmigrants into existing settlements, ex-transmigration villages, and the surrounding villages and adjusting their quantity to the availability of land and the need for their skills in the community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study of the current condition of ex-transmigration villages and the perceptions of regional policymakers regarding the existence and sustainability of the transmigration program, it can be concluded as follows:

- Ex-transmigration villages with a food crop pattern tend to be less developed and have a lower standard of living than villages with rubber or oil palm plantations.
- The conversion of land for food crops (both mainland and yard) into plantation land causes an increase in the regional burden in achieving food self-sufficiency.
- The phenomenon of land fragmentation between generations causes a decrease in the scale of farmers' businesses and the emergence of the phenomenon of farmers without land.

- Monoculture cropping patterns that have an impact on the instability of the welfare of migrants,
- No replanting scheme can guarantee the level of community welfare does not decrease.
- The gap between the transmigration area and the surrounding area,
- The low impact of transmigration areas on the development of the surrounding area.

Transmigration as a form of implementation of the constitutional mandate is still relevant as a development approach in order to achieve prosperity, equal distribution of regional development, and national unity and integrity. Nevertheless, in the euphoric era of regional autonomy, changes in governance and negative excesses of the current implementation are causing concern.

Based on these, the policy governing the implementation of transmigration must be revised and adjusted. The following are the policy implications of this study's findings: 1) The construction of transmigration settlements must coincide with the acceleration of nearby village development. This necessitates effective cooperation between central and regional institutions; 2) The transmigration program must be conducted in accordance with the region's unique characteristics and conditions. In addition, the land-based transmigration pattern must be revitalized into a skill-based pattern required for the development of the destination area; 3) The transmigration program must be developed in the form of transmigration with a cultural perspective; 4) The need to increase the role of the public/private sector in the transmigration program in order to realize the diversification of business patterns; 5) It is necessary to revitalize the existing ex-transmigration villages in order to eliminate various negative impacts that will occur in the future, particularly those related to land fragmentation, land conversion, replanting, fluctuations in commodity prices, and the lack of linkages between transmigration areas and local villages.

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